



Media Relations Resources for ICF Coaches: Tips for Connecting With Journalists

Reporters' inboxes are constantly flooded with dozens of e-mails from public relations professionals and other sources vying for their attention. Unfortunately, most of those pitches have nothing to do with the topics they cover. To be confident your media outreach efforts are in line with their coverage areas, and that you are viewed as a credible and reliable source of information, the following five tips along with a sample media pitch can help you on the path to success.

1. Preparation is Key

Gathering all the necessary information sources will help make your story idea compelling and concise. This can include relevant client testimonials that illustrate the power of coaching, along with ICF research that quantifies industry trends and the broader story of coaching's great value. Another important aspect of preparation involves researching the right outlets and reporters. Compiling your own curated media list will ensure you are being methodical and targeted in your media relations approach instead of casting too wide a net.

2. Make it Personal

A reporter knows when a pitch was sent just to them or to dozens of other journalists. Doing research beforehand and expressing why you believe they are the correct reporter for your story idea goes a long way toward fostering a working media relationship. Acknowledging a recent story and offering a way to build upon the topic is an easy way to let the reporter know you've taken the time to familiarize yourself with their content.

3. Be Brief

The last thing a reporter wants to see is a dense pitch with excessive information. Similar to first impressions, it can take a journalist mere seconds to determine if a story idea is newsworthy. Distill the coaching information you are trying to convey into a few short sentences. This also increases the likelihood that your entire e-mail will fit on one screen so the reporter doesn't have to scroll down to reach the end. Including key ideas or topics in bullet-point format also improves the flow and readability of your pitch.

4. Craft a Compelling Subject Line

The subject line of an email is arguably the most valuable piece of virtual real estate. It determines whether or not a reporter will open your e-mail even before deciding to act upon the information. Referencing a previous article of theirs — "Your Story on Effective Managers"—will indicate that this pitch isn't being sent to your entire media list. You also can keep it brief and direct—"Career Coaching Source" — to let a reporter know your purpose is to serve as a trusted subject matter expert.

5. Follow Up

You can have the most compelling and captivating coaching story in the world, but it won't mean anything if your intended reporter target doesn't see your pitch. Reporters are juggling multiple deadlines and responsibilities as they are constantly bombarded with e-mails. To avoid getting lost in a never-ending inbox, make sure to follow up a few days after sending your initial pitch. A quick reminder, such as "Any interest?" or including additional information about your coaching story idea can help advance conversation.

Sample Media Pitch

Subject line: Your COVID workplace story

Hi Emily,

Great article about how companies are rethinking the post-COVID workplace. I shared your piece with a dozen of my executive coaching clients who are grappling with this same dilemma. Many of them found the 'barriers to productivity' especially enlightening.

I'd be happy to lend some of my insight if you ever need an additional source for upcoming workplace or career-focused stories. On brief background, I'm an ICF-credentialed executive coach with ten years experience helping individuals and organizations navigate growth and change.

Here are some issues that I've helped my clients work through and can generally discuss:

- How to effectively lead a remote team
- Using coaching skills to foster inclusive leadership
- Transitioning to virtual onboarding

I also can make some of my clients available to discuss how coaching helped them build their capacity to problem solve such issues on their own. By asking thought-provoking questions instead of doling out advice, I helped one manager realize his command-and-control style of leadership was a barrier to team communication and productivity.

And if you need industry research on the effectiveness and popularity of professional coaching, I can provide that as well.

Best,
Adam

Every pitch you send will not result in a reporter response or end up in a story. But using these steps —which eventually will become second nature through repetition — will go a long way in setting yourself up as a reliable media resource.

For more media relations information, please contact icfpr@coachfederation.org.