

# How to do PR, by Stacie Tom, The Bungalow PR

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Stacie Tom was a TV producer. She got pitched a lot. She learned what kind of pitches to book and what kind sucked. She moved into Public Relations after leaving the industry. Here are her secrets for being successful in promoting your business.

*Where do you want to be seen?*

First thing you have to do is ask yourself, where do you want your product or service to be. Is it in *Martha Stewart*, is it in *People*, is it in *Los Angeles Magazine* or *Angeleno*, or *Oprah*? Make a list of ten media outlets, whether it is newspapers, magazines, TV shows; whatever it is, it gives you what I call “the recipe.” In other words, “what’s my direction,” keeping it short and to the point. If you make a list, you’ll kind of have the direction.

*What’s the point of PR?*

The whole purpose of PR, especially with social media, has changed. With **Facebook**, and **websites**, and other **social media**, we’re all in this PR game together. Using **Twitter** and **Instagram** and all, you’re kind of in charge of your own PR on a daily basis, so you now have so much more power than my clients ever had. So you can learn that.

So you have that *one minute elevator pitch*, pretend you get in the elevator with **Oprah** and you have from floors one to twelve to talk about your business. You have to really craft that one-liner about what you do, and also *what you need*. So introduce yourself, and say one thing that you need. Like, “I need clients.” Or, “I’m looking to build a web site” or “I need help organizing.” Whatever you need, somebody in here is gonna help you, and if we help each other, we’re just empowering each other.

*Read magazines. Watch the shows.*

So, one of the things about PR, really, is reading magazines. You know, ladies, when you get a mani-pedi, you always pick up that trashy magazine, because it’s just so easy; well, don’t pick up the trashy magazine, pick up a *Woman’s World*, or *Parenting*, because the circulation in those magazines is so much higher than the other ones. **Airline magazines** are super, super high circulation; think of how many eyeballs are looking at that magazine daily, hourly, by the minute, way more than any other magazines, and people don’t really think about that. Also, if you’re tech people, tag people on social media. Because it’s another way for us to build community and do PR as a group; if we band together we can be so much more powerful.

*Join HARO to respond to needs of reporters*

I want everyone to do one thing today, and that’s to join a group called **HARO** ([www.haro.net](http://www.haro.net)). HARO stands for *Help A Reporter Out*. It’s this collective of editors, producers, bloggers, etcetera, who are constantly seeking experts or someone to chime in about your businesses.

So they will ask you to sign up for education, or lifestyle, or travel, and you can receive it two times a day, or once a day, but the thing to remember is that if you see something that resonates with your business, you have to reply to them *like, right then and there*. Their deadline may say next Tuesday, but you have to remember there are two million other people reading this who will also chime in, so you want to just bang something out at that minute and get it off your desk.

Even if you can't answer it to the fullest, do bullet points. If they say, "Hey, looking for an expert who can chime in on vintage furniture, and how to seek out vintage furniture," that might be you.

So you would literally say (and have your bio ready), your spiel about you and about your business, like ready to go, and copy and paste that into the body of the email; and say, "Hi, so and so, just read your inquiry on HARO, and here's my web site, here's a little bit of blurb, here's three bullet points (whatever those bullet points are), and here's my cell phone, here's my email," and stop. Make a habit; like people overthink it, it doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to get out of your outbox. That's the most important thing about PR.

### *Actively respond to information requests, and fast*

And trust me, you're going to get so many of these [requests], and the reason why I want you to actively respond, is that most of your businesses are service businesses. I do a lot of product PR, which is much easier than services, because with services and what you do, you really have to establish yourselves as experts. [For example,] you own an organizing business. You should be replying to all the "declutter" and "change your life" stories. You should just jump on that bandwagon as soon as it hits December.

And so therapists and real estate agents, there's a lot of inquiries about those kinds of services, and the same thing with tech and social media, so the whole point of answering these, you might say, "oh, who the hell's that blogger, that blogger is like tiny." But that doesn't matter; as long as your name is mentioned, and your Google will pop up when someone says, oh, "social media expert" or "decluttering expert" or "organizing expert."

You may respond to twenty-seven of these before you get a response, but think of it like building a muscle and practicing; there's no waste of time, just keep responding. Like, my staff probably pitched [one blogger] like thirty pitches that were kind of irrelevant or whatnot, and maybe off-topic a little bit, or sometimes they may say, "Hey, [blogger], we saw this, thought it might be of interest to you." You can also do that; if you see a story that the writer might be perfect for this, you can forward it on for her or for him, and you can drop that editor a note that says, "Hey, I saw your inquiry, I'm not actually a great fit, however I have forwarded your email to [blogger]," and that way, the editor will say, "Oh, that's a very helpful person." *We love helpful people.*

### *Be a producer's friend*

As a producer, I love when people say, "I saw you guys were looking for someone who has really big calves on their legs, and that's not me, but I have three friends, you know..." and there you go. And as a producer, I'm like, "Oh my God, thank God." I remember when I was a producer for **Rickie Lake**, and I would email my blogger and say, "Hey, I need ten moms to sit in our audience who, you know, this, that and the other," and she's like, "Okay, let me put out a thing." So, it's just like that whole community of passing it on, and connecting, it's not old school, it's like, hey let's just talk to each other and refer to each other, because that's the best PR, right?

So, do we have a **Facebook** page [for the networking group]? Okay, so if I [as a producer] find a helpful reporter for you, they [HARO] might get a little picky about that; so if they start seeing me officially post, I can't call us out on it [?], so I'm going to say, "Hey, guys, check your HARO today, there's some great real estate, or tech or something," I'll pop it on [Facebook] and get it out. Or I might come across something personally in my PR business I will holler it out to you.

### *How the conversation might go...*

So, let's say for example you might want to pitch ten editors, and you're like, I don't even know how to find them, right? So here's how you find them. First of all, **Google**, obviously. Type in, simple, for example, *The Santa*

*Monica Star*, editor, or just phone number. Call the main number. Sometimes it's as simple as,

"Hi, *Santa Monica Star*, I'm looking for your food editor, can you possibly let me know who that is?"

"Oh, it's Ashley Jones."

"Okay, how do I reach her?"

"Ashley's email is 'ajones@santamonicastar.com.'"

"Great, thank you so much; is there a voicemail that I can leave her?"

"No, she works from home, you can just email her."

"Okay, thanks."

You can call *Angeleno Magazine* and do the same thing:

"Hi, I was wondering, who is your real estate editor?"

"Hi, real estate editor, I was wondering, do you have a real estate issue coming up? Our area is Mar Vista, and it's really bustling and coming up, and people are moving in this and this and that, and I'd love to chime in, etc."

*Publications are always looking for content*

Anything you can do, editors are always looking for content. A lot of the time, up to fifty percent of the content, it's not relevant or it's not talking to us; but trust me, the minute I'm looking for that random expert or story, "Oh, it's that guy who called about Mar Vista, and now we're doing a whole real estate section about Mar Vista. I need to find his email." Now, that guy is my guy. So I'm going to say, "Hey I'd love to meet with you. And maybe give me a tour of what's going on," that kind of thing.

*Warning: pet peeves ahead*

I'm also including a pet peeves list here. It's a little advanced, but *People Magazine*, *Oprah Magazine*, *Angeleno*, *Men's Journal*, most of those big magazines, and I polled all my favorite editors, I polled about fifteen editors and producers, and asked them their pet peeves, and pretty much nobody loves talking on the phone; they don't really want to be pitched on the phone, which is really sad and it annoys me personally, or if I DO call them, for example I called somebody yesterday at *InStyle Magazine*, and she answered her phone, and I said, "Oh, hey," and it was something, and she said, "I really can't talk right now." And I was like, "Okay, I'll drop you an email." Then I said, "So why the hell did you answer your phone?" I mean, this is not brain surgery, you know?

So, people aren't that smart, remember that; there are some really smart people and some not so smart people, and that's okay. And if an editor answers, you can say, and I always send an email before calling, so I can say, "I sent you an email, just wanted to double-check that you got it." "Oh, yeah, I got it," And you can say, "What issue are you working on?" If you have nothing to say to an editor and you don't know what to say, just say,

"What issue are you currently working on?"

"Oh, Valentine's Day."

"Are you doing any special pages or any special stories?"

"Oh, yeah, we're actually doing all orange and all red, you know."

"Okay, random, but great."

But you might know somebody; say a child might have that. That's our girl, let's forward that to her and say, "Hey a magazine's looking for orange or red designs, and do you have any designs that might include that," and

she might say, “Yes, I actually do. I did a craft room, or a kid’s room that might have that.” So it’s really random stuff, but again, being a community and supporting each other and forwards things on is really a good thing.

*Give editors whatever you promise, or else*

If you do connect with an editor on a story, you want to deliver what you promised, so if you said, “Yeah, I have really great pictures of that,” you better deliver those. And ask what format do you want them, do you want high-res, low-res, those kind of questions which are important.

*Sidenote: about scheduling social media releases*

About social media. One of the things about social is that there’s this thing called “**ScheduGram**,” you can schedule your tweets and your **Instagrams**, which is really helpful because you don’t want to be doing that all day long. Second thing is, if you’re a store, put your prices on things you’re taking a picture of, because people are going to say, how much is that. Or put some information; like if you’re selling a vintage chair, for example, post a lot of product, because I will tag people if I see a beautiful vase and I know an interior design friend or somebody who just loves vases, I will tag them, and it’s going to get more traffic.

*Be the expert*

So if you have a product, do that. If you [wrote] a book on Cuba, call every travel editor in L.A., and the airline magazines, and pitch that book like crazy. You should just be the expert on Cuba, but you need to establish yourself as the travel expert on Cuba, or on traveling to Cuba, questions on where to stay, what to eat, what to do, just start crafting those little tidbits you can pitch right now. On social media, post a picture from your book every day; and talk about something really cool and hash-tag it to crazy time, and ask your social media experts, but, you know, travel, Cuba, palm trees, peanut bowls, whatever it is.

And travel inquiries, try to answer as many travel questions as you can that might be relevant, or suggest to editors, “Hey, Cuba’s really hot. Statistics say that this many people went there last year.” If you’re pitching news stations, they love statistics. If you’re a realtor, at the top of your pictures, say, “Real estate prices in Mar Vista have rocketed from this to this in the last twelve months.” Oh my God, that’s a story right there, just based on the statistic. We love the statistics.

So just remember all those things; ninety percent of people’s web sites are ten years old, and web site tips, become an expert on that stuff.

Q&A

## **The press release is dead, dude**

*Q: So for sending people stuff, what do they want? Press releases?*

*A: No, press releases are dead. Everybody is reading 140 characters; this generation has the attend span of a grape. It’s changed my business a lot, and it’s changing your business a lot. The pitch should be, subject line clear, don’t try and be cutesy, “New Book on Cuba.” “Hi, so and so, as you slide into winter travel, family travel, consider Cuba, blah blah, new book out...”*

## **Always use the word 'new'**

New is a nice word for the subject line, new expert, local expert, that kind of thing, write a little pitch and then send it out.

## **Be relevant**

*Q: I get pitched hundreds of times a day, and if I don't understand it in the first three seconds, delete. If it's relevant in any way, I'll think about it. But it really has to be relevant to me. So you have to be relevant and super, super clear. I used to have time, I could read the whole way down, and now I know what this is.*

A: So, quick subject line, link to your web site, what you can offer, what you do, bam! and then out. You don't need to write your whole life story in an email, nobody cares; really it has to be this morsel of information delivered on a platter, literally short and sweet, and boom.

## **Master the 140-character blurb**

*Q: I just wanted to add that if you can become a master of that 140-character tweet, it's going to serve your business so well, with your emails, and on Twitter.*

A: It's short, sweet, to the point; editors say you don't need to be cutesy and creative, that's our job, not your job. Your job is to deliver the information in the shortest, most concise way possible.

## **How to give new life to old news, and being the expert**

*Q: I'm an architect, and I do a lot of work that doesn't get published, right? So I have several projects that have been photographed professionally and they look gorgeous, and everybody loves them, but they're getting a little long in the tooth, and I need to be thinking about how to repackage, or is there a way to think about that kind of thing, to mix it up?*

A. You mean repackage...

*Q: they weren't formally published other than in local newspapers and that kind of thing.*

A. But they're actual projects that exist...

*Q. Yes.*

A. Okay. You choose a really relevant local one, that maybe the client was [relevant], or even if they weren't, but there are that are very beautiful aspects and they were specific or unique in your industry that deserve to be highlighted, then you need to pitch them and pack that pitch in a very effective way. And I think that as long as those are on your web site, and they're featured and really beautiful and authentic to your brand, then it's a matter of responding to those pros as an interior designer.

There's a lot of interior design questions, and positioning yourself as an expert, then you're going to get called to chime in for bigger stories, or even be an expert for a feature story or that kind of thing, and that'll ultimately

bring you more business. And also on the social front, take pictures of those projects, and tag them, because people are always looking on there; like if I know my friend's building a house, or wants to build a house and rebuild or remodel, then you're the first person I'm going to want to tag, and oh look, look at so-and-so, meet so-and-so. But I think it's just a matter of [content], especially with interior design and architects, make it be really beautiful, highlighting the really unique aspects of it, because that's what the media is looking for.

### **RTFM (read the freakin' magazine)**

And, read the magazines you're about to pitch; so if I'm emailing the *New York Times Magazine* Travel girl and I'd say, "Hey Ashley, I loved your piece on Bali, it's so cool the way you talked about the peanut sauce, I never knew about that," and they're like, wow, she actually read it. It also shows that you read their stuff, you know their beat, you know what they're covering, it's like applying for a job. So if you pitch someone men's clothing, she'll be like, "Did you not notice it's called 'Moms L.A.?' So those kinds of things show you have absolutely no interest in their outlet and you're really not paying attention and it's just a waste of everyone's time, so you want to maximize your time.

### **Don't burn out with constant PR**

And another thing about PR that I was told is, don't try to do PR every single day; you're just going to get frustrated. So pick a day and a time, like Thursdays from ten-thirty to eleven, that's going to be my self-promotion day. So let's say Thursdays's your day, and you pick that day and you say, "I'm going to rock it on Thursdays from ten-thirty to eleven," you'll be more apt to be really productive and effective and have results because you're really focusing, rather than trying to one-off it during the day while you're trying to do twenty other things. It's like make a little PR date with yourself.

### **About my business**

One of the reasons I started my business, my business is a lifestyle firm, a boutique lifestyle firm, we're small, and I get really big companies to do stuff for them, like Quicksilver, and L'Oréal and whatnot, and I say no a lot, because I do prefer working with emerging companies; I found it's a little more satisfying for me, because we feel like we can say, "You know, your web site's kind of sucky right now," step it up, or let's at least change the images on your landing page, or let's change the font, because a fat font can hold me up for three hours.

So I choose to work with smaller companies. Your businesses are my thing. But what happened was, about ten years ago, I met so many women who were so smart, they left their sucky jobs to start this great handbag company, they jump on to do PR, they sign on for six months or a year thing, and within three months, they're like "I don't want to do PR any more, I want to buy...leather, or whatever, buckles or something, and I say that I totally understand, but it would be really hard, because we would invest all this time and energy at the three month mark and oh great, they're giving up, because one month you get stuck, and two months, really, three months is the happy place.

### **The PR To GO brainstorm**

So it was frustrating for me, and I thought, I have to figure out a way how to get all these small businesses in the game with the least amount of risk, and I created this program which was really for ladies who launched, you know, women, and it was called PR To Go, and essentially it was three differently priced options, PR packages, for whatever your budget was, and it was give me your twenty-five list of top media that you want to be in, or where you think you should be, we'll turn around and give you a list of all contacts, we'll write press release for you, we'll do a blurb for you, it's really like a DIY, you know, we sit next to you, then there's the next level, and then there's the third level where we give you a month of service in addition to all that other stuff.

So that, all of a sudden, was the boom, and that became my whole business. I primarily just did PR To Gos because it was the sweet spot; And even my publicist, who I reached out to to see if, you know this was a good idea, and she said, this is genius. But it was all because of my true, authentic desire to help like-minded women like me, which spread out to men, to kick ass and be empowered to do this themselves.

So that is the goal, ultimately, to doing PR. Nobody should hire a publicist if they have the desire to do PR themselves a little bit; even if it's for a month. Because you ultimately start to understand, from a media standpoint and from a business center; it requires an effort, and it requires a little bit of being assertive, and if that's not your thing, that's okay, like your job is to be good at your business, right? And it doesn't mean you have to be good at PR; but it's good to at least have those skills and know from that perspective what it's like.

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