How to Build and Maintain Strong Media Relationships

For small and midsize businesses, the right media connection can make the difference between being featured in your local paper or being invisible. Here's how to build—and more importantly, maintain—those relationships over time.

1. Do Your Homework

Before reaching out, research the journalists you're contacting. Look at:

- What they write about (topics, industries, tone)
- Where they publish
- Their recent stories and bylines
- Their social media presence

Create a media list in a spreadsheet or CRM. Include notes about their beats, preferred contact methods, and past coverage.

2. Make it Personal and Relevant

Nothing tanks a media pitch faster than a generic email blast.
Reference a specific article the journalist wrote and explain why your story idea fits.
Pitch stories that align with their beat. If someone covers tech startups, don't send them your pet grooming app unless there's a tech angle.

One notable example of a Phoenix-based small business effectively leveraging public relations and media relations is CO+HOOTS, a coworking space and entrepreneur support organization founded by Jenny Poon. In 2024, CO+HOOTS expanded its impact through the launch of HUUB, a free small business support platform aimed at providing incubation, education, and resources to entrepreneurs in the Metro Phoenix area.

The launch and success of HUUB garnered significant media attention, highlighting the importance of community-driven initiatives in fostering economic development. This media coverage not only elevated the profile of CO+HOOTS and HUUB but also underscored the value of strategic public relations in amplifying the reach and impact of small business initiatives.

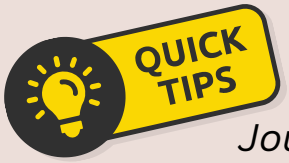
Additionally, AZ Big Media covered the launch of HUUB and its significance to the Metro Phoenix small business community. You can read the full article here: HUUB offers incubation and resources to Metro Phoenix small businesses.

3. Be a Helpful Resource, Not Just a Pitch Machine

Don’t only reach out when you want coverage. Offer data, insights, or access to experts—even if it’s not about your brand directly. If you're known as someone who brings value, you're more likely to be top of mind when a journalist needs a quote or case study.

4. Respect Their Time (and Deadlines)
Keep pitches short and to the point—150 words is a good sweet spot. Don't follow up aggressively. A polite check-in after 3–5 business days is fine.

If they say "not a fit," don't push back.



Journalists live on deadlines. If you say you'll send a quote or image "ASAP," make sure it's within the hour.

5. Say Thank You (Publicly and Privately)
When you do get featured:

- Send a thank-you email. A handwritten note is even better.
- Share the story on your platforms and tag the journalist and publication.
- If possible, highlight how the story helped your business (journalists like knowing their work had an impact).

6. Stay in Touch

- Follow journalists on social media and engage thoughtfully with their posts.
- Share relevant updates even when you're not pitching (new product launches, community efforts, awards).
- Invite them to events or webinars as guests, not just as media.

Over time, this builds trust and familiarity. You're no longer a random name in their inbox—you're a trusted contact.

7. Use Media Platforms Wisely
Tools like ***Help a Reporter Out (HARO)***, ***Qwoted***, and ***Muck Rack*** can help you get found by journalists actively looking for sources.

And if you're ready to invest a bit, PR software platforms like ***Cision***, ***Prowly***, or ***Meltwater*** offer media databases and analytics to track your outreach and build long-term relationships.

Wrapping It Up
Media relations isn't about mass pitching—it's about authentic, human connections. If you're consistent, helpful, and genuine, you'll build a network of media contacts who not only return your emails but also look to you when they need a reliable story source.

About Pat McGraw
I've spent 15+ years building marketing strategies that actually move the needle—whether it's launching new products, growing leads, or opening up new markets. I love blending creativity with data to deliver real results, not just pretty reports.

I've led campaigns that drove serious growth, built strong teams, and mentored up-and-coming marketers along the way. Whether it's B2B or B2C, digital or brand, I'm all in on turning big ideas into measurable wins.

3 SAMPLE MEDIA PITCH TEMPLATES

pat-mcgraw.com

1. Product or Company News Pitch (Launch/Update)

Subject: Local Business [NAME] Launches [Product/Service] to Solve [Specific Problem]

Hi [Journalist's First Name],

I’m reaching out with a story I thought might be a great fit for your coverage on [beat/topic, e.g., small business innovation, local startups, sustainable products].

[Your Business Name], a [1–2 word descriptor: “family-owned,” “Arizona-based,” etc.] company, has just launched [brief name of product/service]—a solution designed to [what problem it solves]. We created it after hearing from customers who struggled with [problem or gap].

Our founder, [Name], has an interesting backstory as well—[quick 1-sentence human hook]. We’d love to share more details, images, and customer reactions if you're interested.

Happy to set up an interview or provide a sample if you'd like to explore it further.

Thanks for your time,
[Your Name]
[Your Title, Company Name]
[Phone number] | [Email] | [Website]
[Social media links]

2. Trend Pitch (Your Business Tied to a Larger Trend)

Subject: [Trend Name] in [Your City/Industry]—Local Business Weighs In

Hi [Journalist's First Name],

I saw your recent article on [specific story or trend] and wanted to offer a local perspective from [Your Company Name], which has seen this firsthand.

We've noticed [describe relevant insight or shift—e.g., "a 40% increase in demand for remote pet training since early 2024"]. It's been changing how we operate, and we've adapted by [brief description of innovation or response].

If you're working on a follow-up or exploring the topic further, I'd be happy to share some data, quotes from our founder, and customer insights.

Let me know if it's useful—I appreciate your time.

Warm regards,
[Your Name]
[Title, Company]
[Phone] | [Email] | [Website]

3. Thought Leadership/Expert Commentary Pitch

Subject: Available Expert for Stories on [Topic] – [Name], [Your Business]

Hi [Journalist's First Name],

If you're looking for sources for upcoming stories on [relevant industry or issue], I wanted to offer our founder [Name], who brings [years of experience, specific expertise] in [field].

They can speak to topics like:
[List 2–3 specific subjects—e.g., "Navigating inflation as an SMB," "Why Gen Z prefers purpose-driven brands," etc.]

[Another timely or trend-related insight]

We've recently been featured in [mention any other coverage, customer growth, awards], and have local customer examples and stats available. Would you like me to send more details or set up a quick intro?

Thanks again,
[Your Name]
[Contact Info]

Quick Tips to Boost Your Pitch:

- Always personalize the subject line and greeting.
- Attach or link to relevant visuals (product shots, infographics, video clips).
- Keep it short—under 200 words if possible.
- Make it easy for them to say yes (offer a quote, a sample, or a fast call).

WAS THIS HELPFUL?

BE SURE TO SAVE IT SO YOU CAN COME BACK TO IT LATER!