

Report: International journalists responded to less than 3% of pitches in Q4

Propel has released its Q1 2023 Propel Media Barometer, which found that international journalists only responded to 2.66% of the nearly 500,000 pitches sent through the platform in Q4 of 2022.



Source: www.pixabay.com

This is a 20.6% decrease from the previous quarter which saw a 3.35% response rate, and represents the continuation of a worrying, year-on-year downward trend in journalist responses to pitches from PR professionals.

Mass retrenchments

While many journalists were on vacation for the December holidays, this is likely not the reason for the low responses, as Q4 of 2021 saw a 3.23% response rate. However, the significant decrease in the number of responses coincides with mass layoffs seen in the industry at major outlets such as *Buzzfeed*, *CNN*, and *BBC*, with publications such as *Protocol* folding, and with Gannett owned newspapers in the US either dismissing reporters en masse or simply shutting down local newspapers.

Meanwhile, there are more PR professionals than ever before. However, people in communications are doing all they can to give the journalists that remain the shorter, easier to read pitches they want, with a 33% increase in the number of pitches with subject lines of between six to nine words and a 30% decrease in the number of pitches with subject lines between 10-15 words, with the shorter subject lines receiving open rates of 2.6% and the longer ones of 2.03%.



Propel Media Barometer finds most journalists respond within 4 hours of receiving pitch

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Meanwhile, pitches with body lengths between 50-150 words had nearly double the average overall response rate at 5.06%. However, only 5.58% of pitches sent during Q4 of 2022 fell within this range. Instead, the word count with the highest number of pitches pitched was 501-1,000 words, with 32.77% of pitches being sent in Q4 within this range. And yet, they only garnered a tiny 1.43% response rate. Given how large this word count is, Propel believes that PR pros were pitching

full, contributed content articles to drive up the number of results for their clients for the end of the year.

The magic of Tuesday

The numbers also show that Tuesday was the day with the most pitch responses, with 23.73% of all pitch responses occurring on this day. However, the day with the most pitches being sent was Wednesday, with 26.17% of all pitches being pitched on this day (and 21% of all replies happening on Wednesdays). Interestingly, for the first time since the Media Barometer began collecting data, Mondays were the day with the second most pitches sent, with 26.09% of pitches going out on the first day of the work week, and even garnered the second highest share of total replies, at 22.05%.

Yet despite the lower journalist response rates, those which were responded to were answered 1.5% faster than in Q3 of 2022 on average, with 39.71% responded to within one hour, 60.01% within four hours, and 66.58% of responses happening the same day a pitch was sent out. Finally, Propel was able to find the most pitched outlets of Q4 of 2022. They were:

1. *BBC News*
2. *ITV*
3. *The Wall Street Journal*
4. *The New York Times*
5. *NBC Universal*
6. *Bloomberg*
7. *The Guardian*
8. *Forbes*
9. *Business Insider*
10. *The Sunday Times*

While these numbers all point to the fact that journalists prefer to read succinct pitches with short, clear subject lines, the combined factors of reduced newsrooms and increase in people working in PR are leading many PR and communications professionals to feel they're still facing an uphill battle to obtain earned media coverage for their clients and companies.

"We're excited to present our Q1 2023 Propel Media Barometer," said Zach Cutler, Propel co-founder, CEO & chairman. "This most recent, significant decrease in pitch responses points to a worrying trend in the industry, leading many to wonder how much farther responses can fall before hitting the bottom.

"However, the good news is that while traditional newsrooms have cut staff, the number of freelance/micro journalists, bloggers and new media outlets continues to grow. Navigating the rapidly shifting brave new world of media is becoming more complex by the day, but also presents great opportunities. By shifting their mindset and leveraging new technologies into their workflows, PR professionals can rest assured that not only can they still be successful, they can actually be more effective than ever before."

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