

ASSESSING YOUR STORIES AND MESSAGES

So, you're ready to seek publicity for a new piece of research? Great! But do you know how to assess your story value, refine your media pitch and improve your chances of publicity?

Check out these 10 points from our media experts.

What is your story? What key points do you want to convey?

If you can't explain it simply, don't expect anyone else to get it.

Will others find it interesting?

Road test your potential story with people in your target audience. If you get the thumbs down, rethink your storyline.



How far will your story travel? Has it got legs?

What's the audience? Just your field of academia and associated industry? Your city or state? Is the issue a national or international one? This helps you choose your media targets: research publications; local media; national print, radio and TV; or international media.

What makes your story different?

Is there something new? Are there important trends? Can you highlight novel parts of your research to grab media and public attention?

Have you looked for the human angle?

A great case study will help humanise and better explain an issue.

Can you relate your story to a newsworthy event?

There's a day of the year for just about everything but only some – like International Women's Day – will give you a story tie-in. However, there may be a seasonal event, a conference, an election or a prominent holiday you can link into.

Can you give your research a snappier title?

There's a reason why headlines are important in the media: they grab people's attention. A short, pithy, clever title is best, or at least one that's to the point. And make sure the abstract of your paper quickly conveys the research outcomes.

Have you chosen the right front person to promote your story?

Ensure you include the person or people who can talk about the nitty-gritty of the work and provide the best quotes to journalists.

If your story is time-sensitive, are you releasing it at the best time?

Is it likely to be overtaken by other clearly predictable events? If so, rethink the timing.

Is there a story in your academic area you have overlooked?

Put yourself in an outsider's shoes and look at what you do with fresh eyes. Bounce some ideas off your colleagues.