

SCATTERGUN OR EXCLUSIVE? GETTING THE BEST MILEAGE OUT OF YOUR MEDIA STORY

You believe you've got a good story that may interest a wide audience, so do you go scattergun or exclusive?

Scattergun involves sending a media release or alert to many media either using your own contact list or through an organisation that distributes media releases for a fee. The aim is to hit as many targets as possible in the hope that some will use your story.

With an exclusive, you offer your story to only one journalist or media outlet. Journalists obviously like being the recipient of exclusives and may invest time and energy into creating a great exclusive story.

If you offer an exclusive, make sure it's for a defined period of time. Otherwise, the media organisation may delay using it for any number of internal reasons, leaving you with no media coverage and the inability to offer the story elsewhere.

Another possible downside of the exclusive is that you may annoy other journalists, particularly on a specialist round, if you frequently play favourites. Best to spread the love around if you prefer to go exclusive.

The ABC's National Education Reporter, Conor Duffy, is an advocate for people being brave enough to give a story to only one journalist. "For most stories you're probably better off going with one person because they'll be able to invest time in your story rather than getting a media release hours before an embargo lifts. Good journalists do their own work and their own sort of investigations to tease out those ideas."

But Duffy agrees with having a deadline on the exclusivity. He says: "Maybe give people a week beyond what they've said because news cycles do fluctuate. Sometimes if I've got a good story I will hold it for a couple of days, because I know that when the Liberal Party spill or whatever is out of the news cycle, there's going to be a lot more space for it.

"But yeah, some journalists will, if they think they can get away with it, just have it sit on the shelf for way too long. So I think you just need to be firm and clear and say: We're giving this to you exclusively. Run it or give it up."

Duffy adds you can also put out a wider media release after an exclusive story has run, which would probably be picked up in a number of places.

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