

# So you want your business to be in the media

Tracy Schuhmacher  
Food, drink and culture reporter  
Rochester Democrat and Chronicle  
[tracys@gannett.com](mailto:tracys@gannett.com)  
Instagram and Twitter: @rahchachow

Reporters need to know:

- Who, what, where, why, when, how
- Even better: heart

Story ideas for the D&C

- New brick-and-mortar businesses
- National TV appearances
- Where to dine out/take out for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day – send info 3 weeks in advance
- Veterans Day deals
- Healthy living stories in January (avoid health claims, fat phobia)
- Holidays, cultural celebrations
- Food trends, dishes new to Rochester
- Elevate issues
- Comment on news stories

Pitching TV

- There needs to be something to show.
- Watch before you pitch. See where your story might fit. (Some possibilities are early in the morning.)
- Research to see who is covering
- Follow up close to date of story.
- Less lead time than print.

How to find out who to pitch

- Lots of turnover in media.
- Don't spend time making a huge list that will go out of date.
- Search for terms related to your business or story. Search for competitor names. See if they cover, who the reporter was.
- You can email more than one reporter but don't email everyone.
- If unclear, try a general email.

Make sure the media can reach you

- Reporters work on deadline. Returning calls a few hours later may be too late.
- Make sure the person answering the phone treats calls from the media with urgency.
- Check your emails and social media messages.
- Ask for the reporter's deadline.
- Responding – even if you don't think the topic is a direct benefit to your business – increases likelihood you'll get called again.

Interview tips:

- Feel free to clarify the topic/approach of the story.
- Expect that everything that comes out of your mouth could be used in the story.
- Don't expect the reporter to know when you're saying something that you don't want to appear in a story.
- Be you! An entertaining interview makes for an entertaining story.
- You can go "off the record" – but be very clear.
- You may ask to have quotes read back, especially on a sensitive topic.

#### Video and TV interview tips:

- Have your “elevator speech” ready. Describe your business in a sentence or two. Practice it until you have it down. (Then make it your boilerplate.)
- Keep your answers concise – a few sentences at a time.
- If you are cooking, don’t stop to talk. Practice cooking and talking at the same time.

#### Thoughts about bad news:

- Examples: Foodborne illness, sexual harassment lawsuit, zoning issues, dress code controversies
- Bear in mind that “no comment” does not mean no story. This is how “one-sided stories” happen.
- You can ask to speak to a reporter off the record, but the reporter can’t use what you tell them.
- Know that reporters can (and will) quote social media posts.
- Know that the story may say you declined to comment

#### Story runs. What next?

- If something incorrect runs, reach out to the reporter immediately.
- You will likely get a crush of new business.
- It will not last, at least at that level.

#### Make a plan to retain new customers:

- Share coverage on social media
- Encourage new customers to follow you on social media
- Collect email addresses for future communications
- Give customers a reason to return: a coupon for their next visit, a flyer for an upcoming event, a menu for an upcoming holiday

#### Why share a story

- It gives you a reason to post on social media.
- It gives you credibility.
- A lot of people clicking on your story tells the reporter that a lot of people are interested in you or the topic (examples: Garbage Plates, Wegmans).
- More readership becomes more coverage.

#### How to share a media story:

- The media is a business. Stories, photos, videos are their product.
- Content is copyrighted.
- Link to the story. Do not copy and paste the whole thing into a social media post or email.
- Do not use photos in your marketing, social media without permission.

#### You pitched a story and didn’t get an answer:

- Reporters/editors get hundreds of emails. They can’t answer them all.
- Sometimes they are busy working on other stories.
- Start with #1 on your wish list.
- If you don’t get a response, follow up after a week or so.
- If you don’t get a response, try #2 on your wish list, and so on.
- Didn’t work? Think of a different pitch and start over.
- None of this effort is wasted. Reporters/assignment editors will start to remember you.

#### Get started:

- Don’t let perfect get in the way of good enough.
- Make a plan, but don’t procrastinate until you have one.
- Get good pictures. Update social media.
- Think of a pitch. Research a media person. Send an email. Don’t get discouraged.

