

How to get your  
Covid-19 story  
heard

“If you have any New York media contacts — please reach out to them.”



Amid the current pandemic—

“...everyone is covering the same stories, with very similar levels of (nonexistent) access. The result is many of the same stories and takes getting published over and over.”

**Kyle Chakya**  
(Writer/Essayist/Journalist)



What does this tell us?

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Reporters are craving access and looking for stories to tell



Many individuals – **nonprofit employees, healthcare workers, patients, patient advocates, or small business owners** – think that getting media attention is like playing the stock market

- *You need “contacts”!*
- *Only those who are “in the know”!*
- *It takes a learned skill-set unavailable to the public!*



Not the only way to tell your story

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In this webinar we'll discuss strategies for:



## Media Relations

*Who to pitch and how to pitch them*



## Social

*Tips for spreading the word on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.*



## Content

*Op-ed fundamentals*

# Messaging in a Crisis

101





In a time of crisis, the most compelling stories reveal an authentic, urgent *need*.





These stories also contain a *call to action* – the steps that can be taken to attend to and/or expose this dire need.







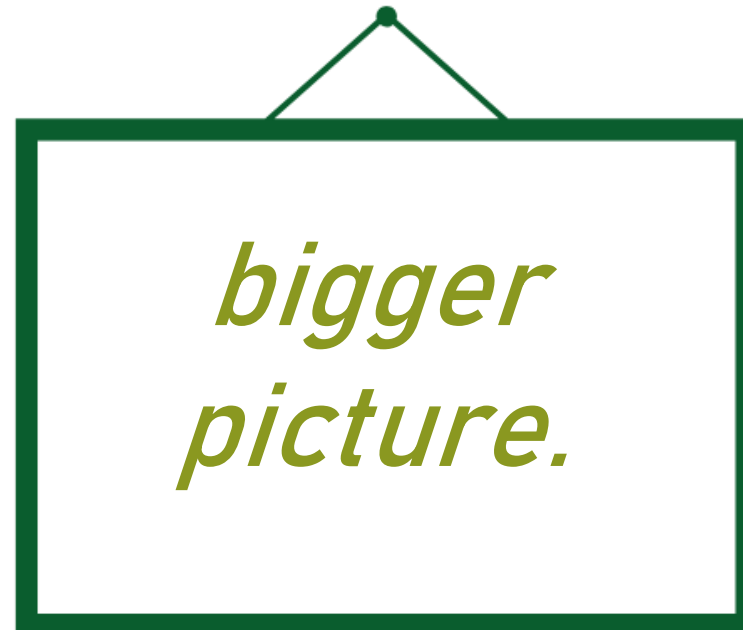
They are both *specific* and, ideally, *personal*.

And they connect to broader, systemic issues that align with reporters' interests.





The ideal story is *urgent*. It's *actionable*.  
It's *human*. It's *authentic*.  
And it's part of the

A green-bordered rectangular box with a thin green line forming a triangle at the top center, pointing upwards towards the text above. Inside the box, the text reads:

*bigger picture.*



# Messaging in a crisis 101





Remember: connecting with reporters isn't so much about persuasion as it is **empathy**

# Media Relations





You don't need  
"contacts."  
You just need  
Google



Questions to guide your search

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## WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

Is your story **local**? Is your story **hyperlocal**? Is your story **national**?





Does your story have any **trade angle**? What **“beat”** might it also fall under?

Healthcare industry? Small business?  
Nonprofit organization? Personal interest?



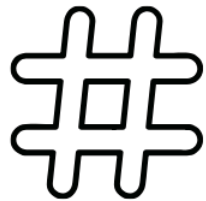


**Search the outlet's website  
(try the masthead or the "contact us" page)**



Search **twitter** 





Or cheat by guessing **common email formats**

[first letter of first name][last name]@website.com  
[last name]@website.com



## Finding emails

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### TIP #1:

For television / radio stations, email the assignment editor or the news desk



### TIP #2:

Most local television/radio stations will also have a tip line — and most publications will have a general editorial inquiry contact

### TIP #3:

Free sites that may help: [MIT Radio Finder](#), [Mondo Times](#)

# The Pitch





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**SUBJECT** RE: remdesivir story -- 30 yo NYC schoolteacher in need -- any future  
**LINE** stories?

- If they wrote a story on your topic recently, try using that in addition to what you're offering on it...
- Think of the subject line as an ideal headline of the story the reporter would like to write
- Use (Story) or (Urgent) – if it's urgent – before you write the subject line



**GRAPH** Hi

**ONE** I know you're probably being inundated with emails right now, but wanted to reach out on behalf of my friend who was just denied compassionate approval for remdesivir (which I saw you'd written about).

## THE OPENING

Keep it short and to the point—the first line should include why you're reaching out and what you're offering.



## GRAPH TWO

is a 30 year old, sixth grade social studies teacher and alum of my grad program at UMass (I'm a PR person by day, so wanted to do anything I could to help). She contracted Covid-19 from her sister, an NYC nurse, and is in critical condition in Brooklyn. See her sister's tweet [here](#))

### THE BODY

This is where you include background context, specific details or why your issue is important. You can also include links to relevant information.

*Your website, Twitter page, a Google doc, etc.*





## GRAPH THREE

Any chance you or someone else at the Times is doing any follow up on this story? Would be happy to connect you to her family. Feel free to call me on my cell 847.309.9983 if that's easier.

Know these are crazy times, and that this may be a long shot, but thought it couldn't hurt to reach out.

Hope you're staying safe.

Best,  
Joe Eichner

### IN CLOSING...

This is where you reiterate your ask and include relevant contact information.

*If you'd like to discuss, please call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx*

Some sign off that shows you're empathetic to reporter's time and interests – they are people too – you don't need to write this in an overly formal way.

*"I know you're being flooded with stories, but..."*

# Content





Want to write an op-ed?

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# Should you write an op-ed?

Do you have a fully formed POV?

Is it relevant to the publication's readers?



Can you marshal support for your POV?

Do you have unique credibility?



Want to write an op-ed?

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# Should you write it now?

Has anyone else  
written about this?

Is it urgent today  
more than ever?



Do you have a  
specific call to  
action?



# Rules of Thumb

- Keep it between 500-700 words
- Send a completed draft
- Read the guidelines
- Read others!





# The Headline

In one line: What does your op-ed say? What will a reader get out of it?



- Be explicit
- Be descriptive
- Be brief (60-100 characters)



# The Lede

The opening sentence or two. It draws the reader in immediately. It makes them care.





# The Nutgraf

Typically the second or third paragraph. It should establish your argument and tell readers what the rest of the piece will be about.







For example

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# Lede + Nut – The Strawman

“Rationing ventilators might be a necessary response in the new Covid-19 world. Many hospitals decide who gets them by selecting patients most likely to benefit. Experts agree this is the best way of saving most lives. The approach, the model guidance, may sound fair. But baked into it are biases that disadvantage groups who, even without a Covid-19 infection, experience worse health because of historical and structural reasons, especially black people.”



READ THE  
ENTIRE ARTICLE



For example

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# Anecdotal Lede

“Like most Chicago kids you probably know, Dr. Dana Suskind's grew up in a home filled with books. But when her research takes her into the homes of low-income children, she often sees something completely different.

‘In so many homes, there's not a single book,’ says Suskind, a pediatric surgeon and co-director of the TMW Center for Early Learning + Public Health at the University of Chicago.

Suskind is seeing the manifestation of a literacy crisis that plagues Chicago's underprivileged communities—and handicaps our educational system. Research has shown that while more affluent homes contain about 13 books per child, poor communities have only one book for every 300 kids. The absence of books is especially crippling for the very young, because 85 percent of brain development happens before kids begin school.”

**CRAIN'S**  
CHICAGO BUSINESS.  
READ THE  
ENTIRE ARTICLE



For example

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# First-Person Op-Ed

“I am one of the thousands of farmworkers across the country making sure there is still food to put on your tables. Since I came to New York from Guatemala 11 years ago, I have cleaned cabbage in a packing shed, milked cows on dairy farms, trimmed apple trees in orchards and wrapped and pruned tomatoes in a greenhouse.

If I get sick with Covid-19, I’m afraid of what it will mean for my children, my compañeros and my community. But unlike many other workers in the United States, my workplace has not shut down. Farmworkers are considered essential, and yet we are left out of government support.”



READ THE  
ENTIRE ARTICLE



Tips to start writing

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Remember your **7<sup>th</sup>** grade principles



Tips to start writing

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# Ethos

Establish your credibility and inform the reader why *you* are writing about this.

*“As an ER doctor for over two decades...”*



Tips to start writing

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# Logos

Use statistics or facts.

*“According to this research...”*



Tips to start writing

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# Pathos



Use personal anecdotes, stories or details to incite emotions in your reader.

*“My best friend is an ER nurse...”*



Tips to start writing

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**Then connect to a broader issue  
that's currently on this publication's  
readers' minds**

**Make the specific universal.**









Social success is built around *momentum*— the more people who engage with your content, the more likely networks are to show it.





To gain momentum you need to leverage your **networks.**





Who do you **know**?

Can you trade promotions with **another organization**?

Are there any **elected officials** to reach out to?

Who do you want to get the content **in front of**?

Any active **#hashtags**?

Who can you **tag**?





## Get creative with your personal networks.

Look at your alumni networks, co-workers or other professional organizations, local nonprofits / businesses and ask them if they'd be willing to share or repost.





**With each message, and each network, think about who you're trying to reach.**

**You have so little time to make them care, so what's the thing that will hook them?**





**Ask your users to join you – give them something to do. Just make it easy to execute. Create a Google doc that you can share with your post that includes sample campaign language, relevant accounts to tag in posts and sample posts. Ask people to share a call-to-action with their networks additionally.**





**Consider the format. How can you make it easy for people to understand and easy to share?**

Images are powerful on Twitter and Facebook.

Videos can be great, but most people won't have audio.

Use emojis, line breaks, arrows or other visual tricks to stand out.







**In general, try to follow this order:**

Tag relevant people. @

Then reach out to people. 

Then create hashtags. #



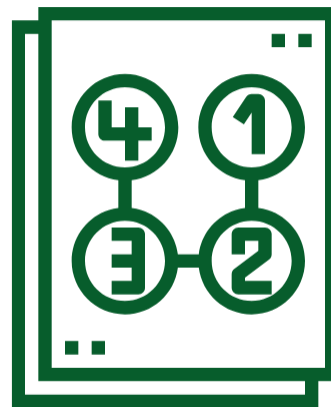
**Social media is all about *consistency*.**  
Having success on social media means staying consistent with posting.





# The algorithm favors it.

Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn– all of these channels look for and favor consistency. This means that they prefer accounts that post regularly.





# Develop a schedule.

Aim to post on the same days of the week – every Monday, Wednesday and Friday – and post at the same time of day as well.





## What makes something go viral?

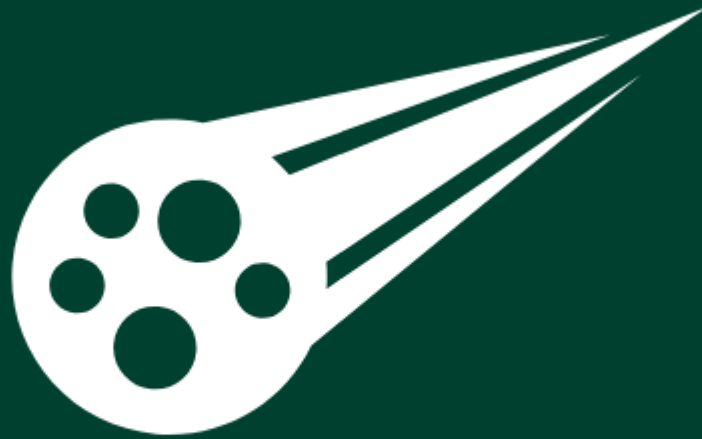
Stories trigger oxytocin – that trigger empathy and emotion.

Heart rate + oxytocin = immersion



You are able to predict purchase actions with a 83% accuracy based on immersion levels while hearing a brand story ([Contently](#))

# The Impact





## The impact

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Think about how your story will **impact** readers – that's what will appeal most to reporters and editors who look for stories that impact their reader community.

Think through how your story and organization touches the:

 public's heart

 health

 and pocketbook.

# Contact Us



## Matt Kasik

[mkasik@greentarget.com](mailto:mkasik@greentarget.com) or (312) 253-7285