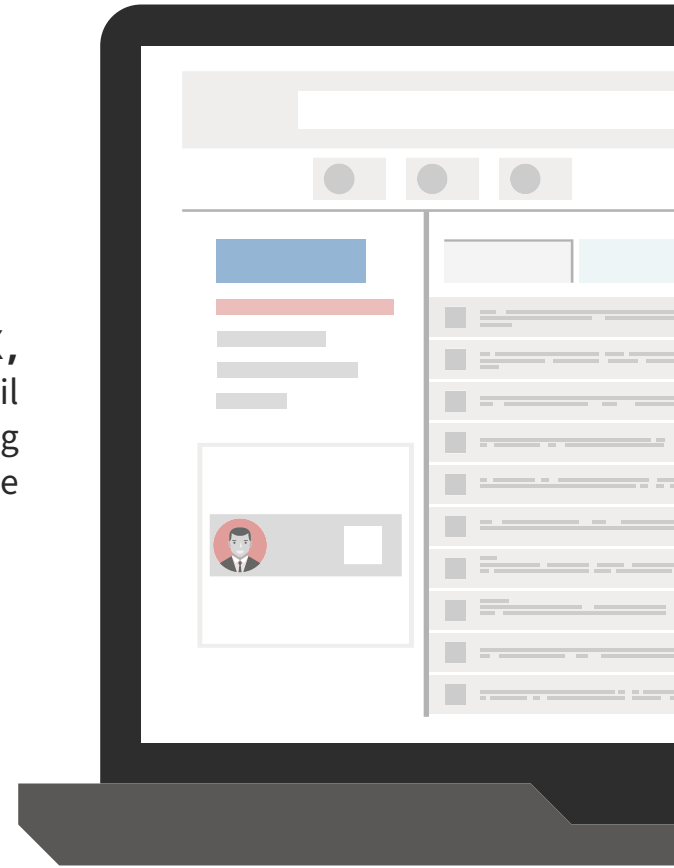


PITCHING THE MEDIA: HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP?

2021 MEDIA RELATIONS SURVEY REPORT

IT TAKES A LOT TO STAND OUT IN A JOURNALIST'S INBOX, even when armed with a great pitch and a newsworthy story. Inundated with email pitches (good and bad), journalists are being stretched increasingly thin, leaving even the savviest PR pros scratching their heads about how to generate positive coverage for their brand or clients.





Successful pitching is and continues to be a challenge in the industry as the countless blogs, webinars, and events dedicated to the topic can attest to. Industry-leading PR experts openly share tips and best practices on how to connect with journalists and earn quality media coverage.

Hearing from other PR pros (and willing journalists) on the topic of landing coverage is invaluable—but there comes a time when a pro must turn their gaze inward and analyze their use of standard media relations practices.

That's why we surveyed more than 3,700 PR professionals around the globe to get the cold, hard data on media relations and outreach standards. Understanding how your peers are pitching and knowing what's working for them can help you gauge where you may be ahead of (or falling behind) the pack.

In addition to examining overall industry standards, we also delved into how specific groups of PR professionals differ from each other. Do pitching attitudes vary by geography? Are agency professionals more likely to pitch to fewer journalists than in-house professionals? Do all seniority levels agree on media outreach measurement approaches?

THIS REPORT DISSECTS THE FOLLOWING SURVEY FINDINGS:

- The perceived change in difficulty of earning coverage (from June 2020 to May 2021)
- The average number of journalists pitched for a single story
- The media pitch value-adds that help generate coverage
- The common methods for including multimedia in pitch emails
- The best ways and times to follow-up
- The metrics used to measure media outreach results

Ready to see how you measure up? Let's check out the results!

DATA ANALYSIS

We wanted to know if media relations practices differ among PR and communications professionals based on the following demographic variables:

- *Geography*
- Work situation
- Seniority level

GEOGRAPHY

The majority of the 3,787 respondents are from the United States (78%), followed by Canada (12%), and the United Kingdom (9%). The remaining 1% are from around the world, including Spain, Poland, and China.



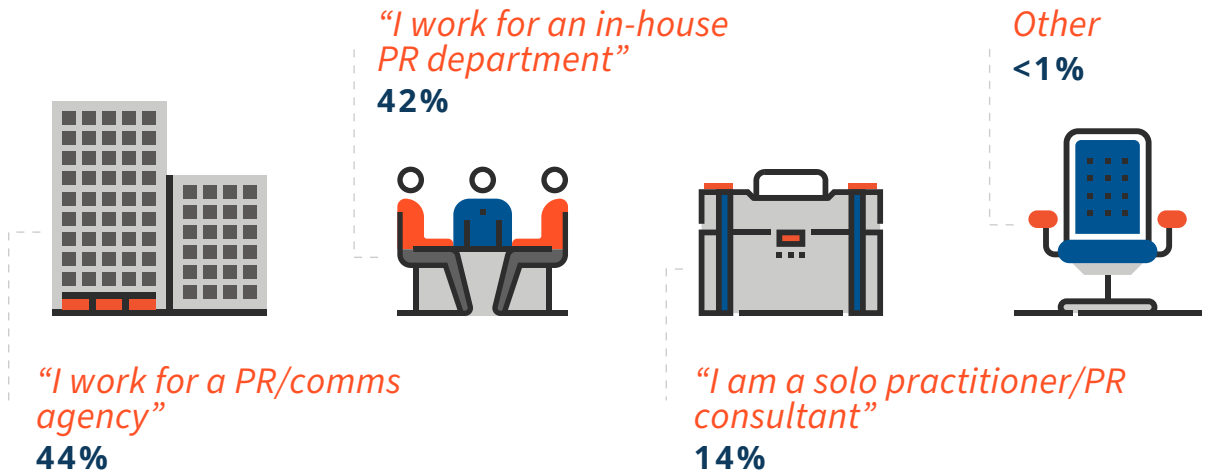
DATA ANALYSIS

We wanted to know if media relations practices differ among PR and communications professionals based on the following demographic variables:

- Geography
- Work situation
- Seniority level

WORK SITUATION

Almost 44% of respondents work for a PR/communications agency, while another 42% work for an in-house PR department. The remaining respondents are solo practitioners/consultants (14%) and those that identify as *other* (less than 1%).



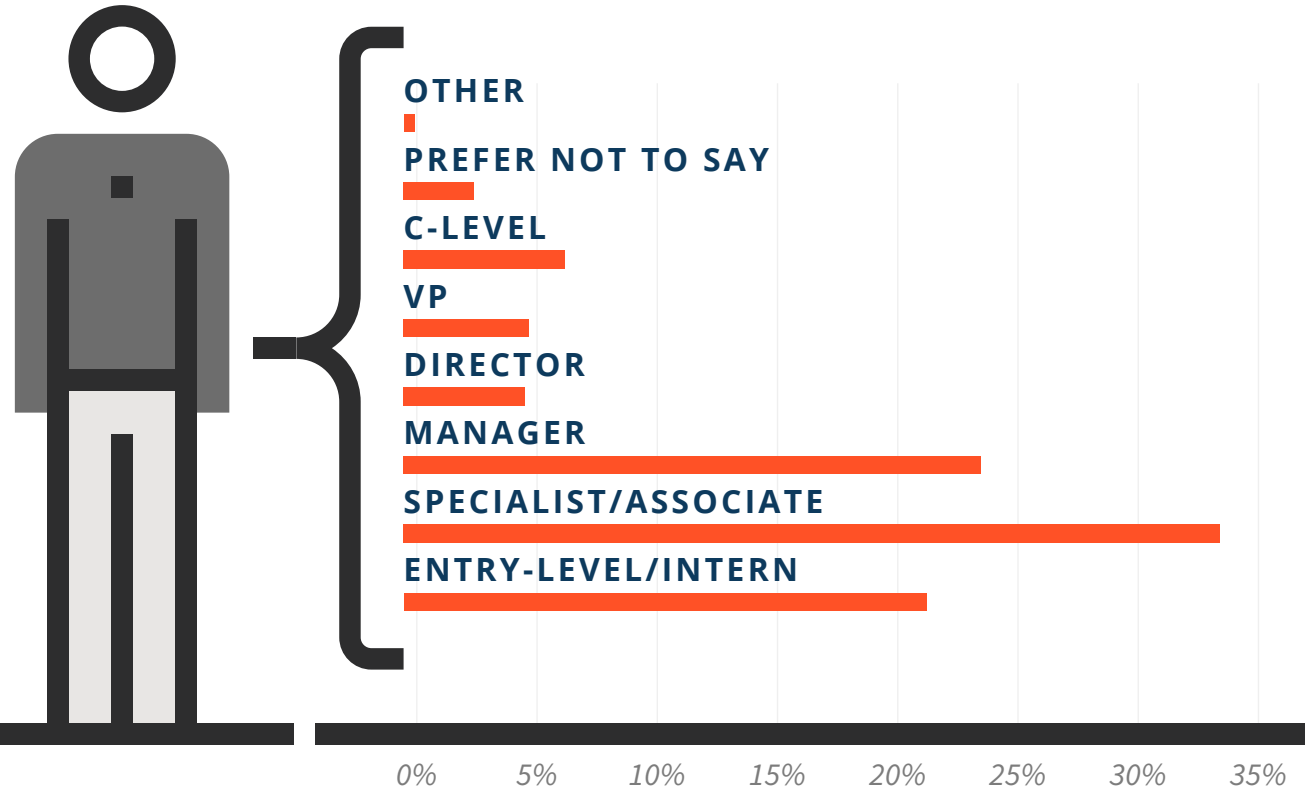
DATA ANALYSIS

We wanted to know if media relations practices differ among PR and communications professionals based on the following demographic variables:

- Geography
- Work situation
- *Seniority level*

SENIORITY LEVEL

Respondents are from a wide range of experience and management levels including VPs (5%), Directors (5%), C-level (7%), Entry-Level/Interns (22%), Managers (24%), and Specialists/Associates (34%).



HAS EARNING MEDIA COVERAGE GOTTEN MORE DIFFICULT OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

IT'S NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM FOR MEDIA OUTREACH IN 2021.

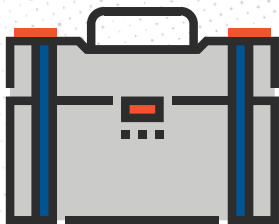
Less than 30% of PR and communications professionals report an increase in the difficulty of earning coverage between June 2020 and May 2021.

More than a third of respondents (38%) report that it was about the same while a combined 35% say that earning coverage has become somewhat less difficult or much less difficult.



A CLOSER LOOK

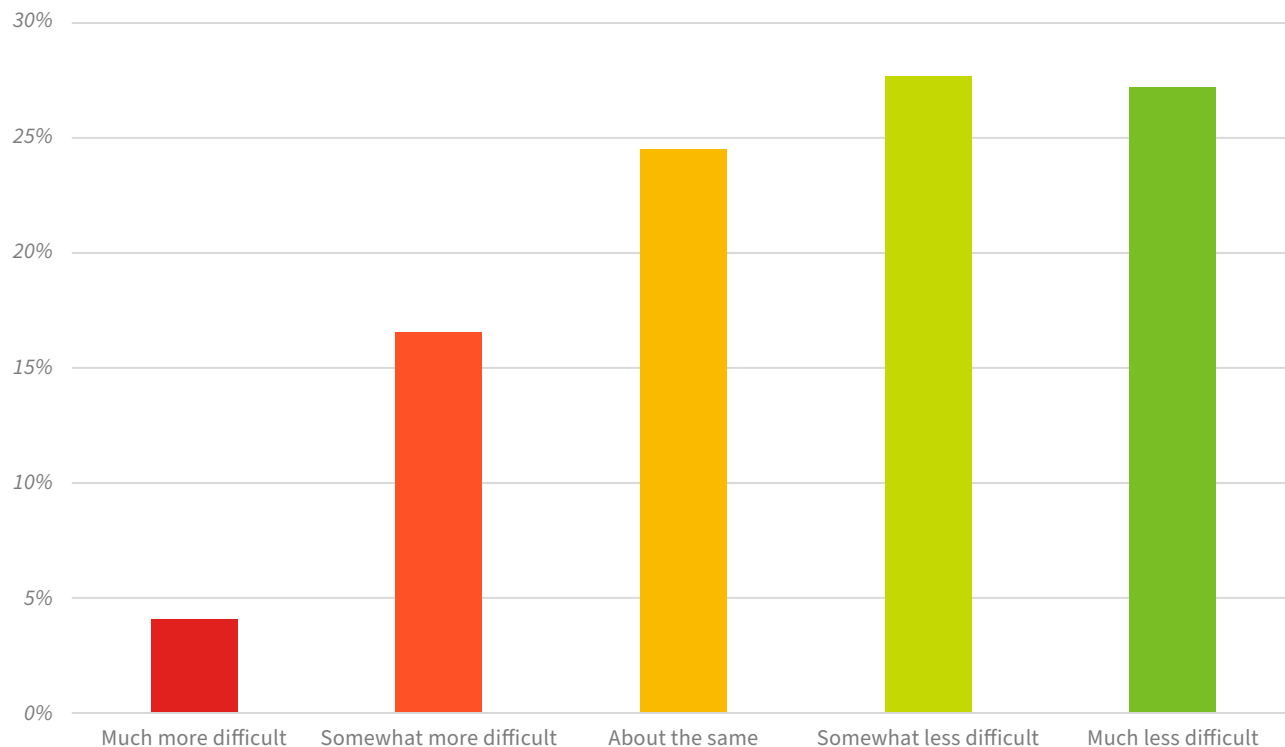
Work situation (agency, in-house, or solo/consultant) seemed to have little impact on level of perceived difficulty, but when examining responses by seniority level and geography, notable differences emerged.



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY BY SENIORITY LEVEL

VPs and C-level respondents have the most positive outlook, with 55% believing that earning coverage has become somewhat less or much less difficult over the past 12 months, while only 34% of those with Director titles and below say it has become somewhat less or much less difficult.

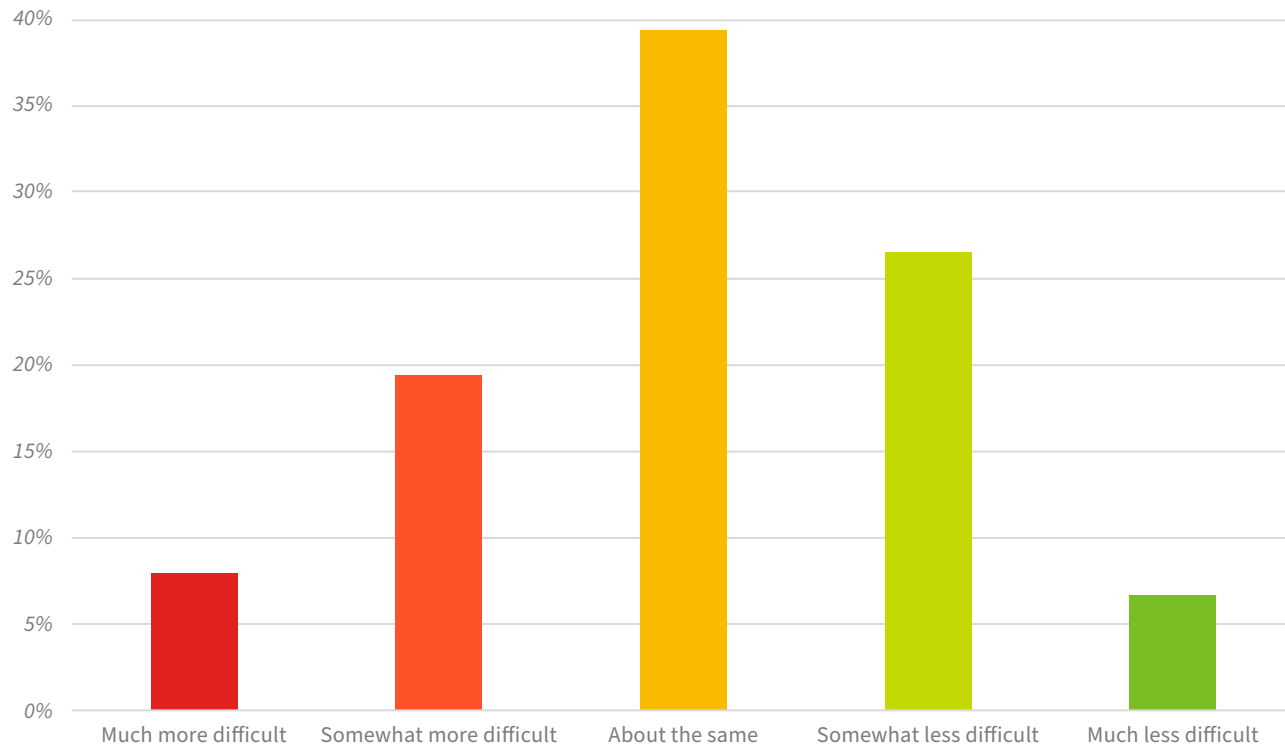
VPs AND C-LEVEL RESPONDENTS





LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY BY SENIORITY LEVEL

ENTRY-LEVEL/INTERN, SPECIALIST/ASSOCIATE, MANAGER, AND DIRECTOR RESPONDENTS

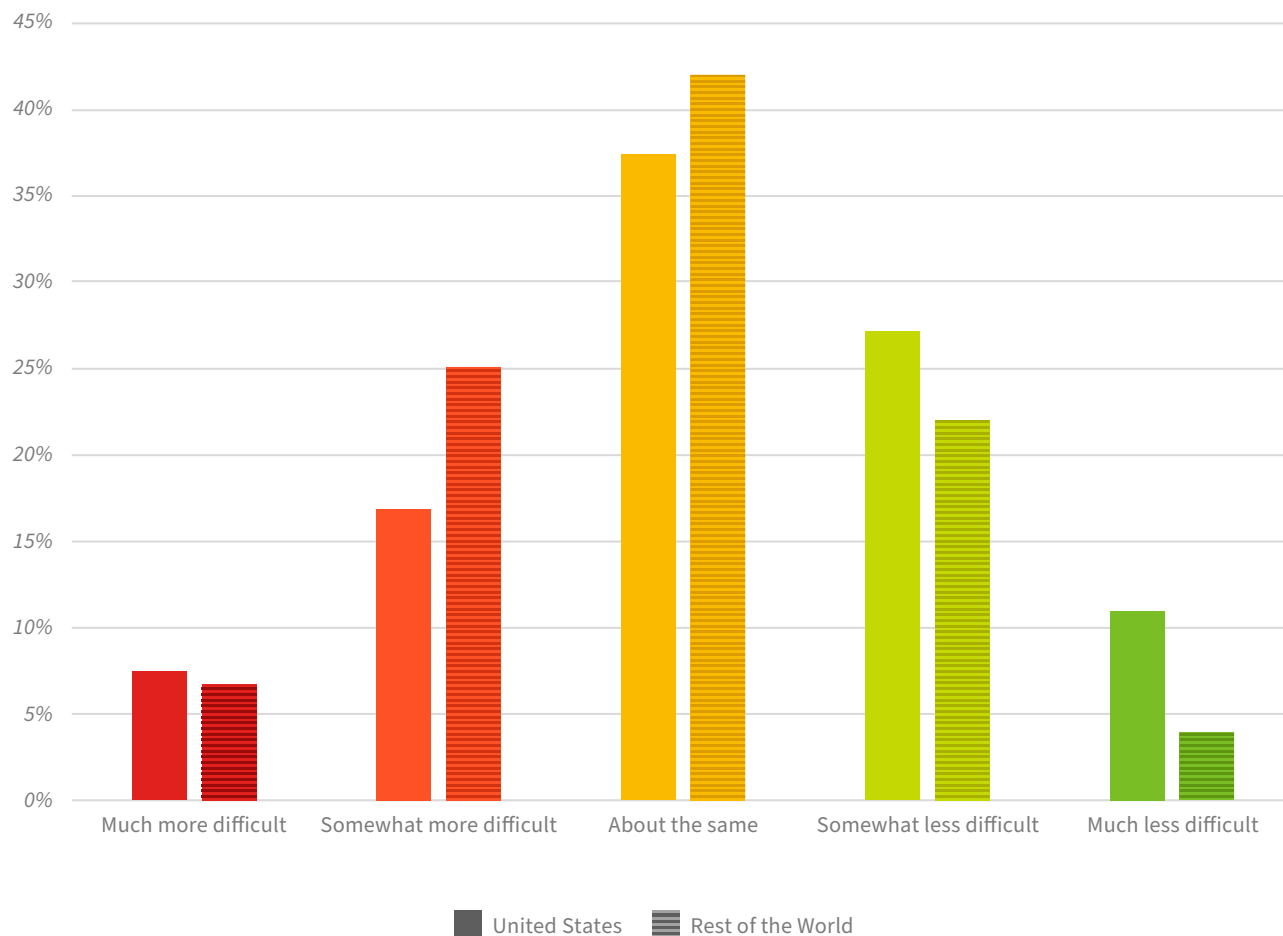




LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY BY GEOGRAPHY

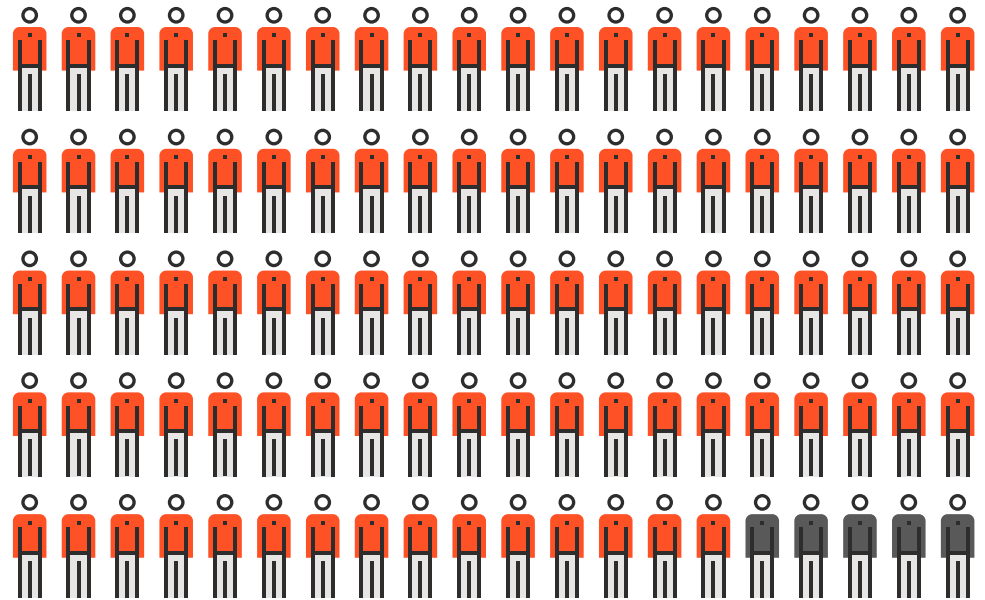
Over 38% of U.S. respondents say that earning coverage has become somewhat less or much less difficult in the past 12 months, compared to only 26% of respondents in other countries.

THE UNITED STATES VS. THE REST OF THE WORLD



HOW DO YOU MANAGE YOUR MEDIA OUTREACH?

The media database remains a power tool in the PR industry. A whopping 95% of respondents answered yes when asked if they use a media database to manage their media outreach.



A CLOSER LOOK

Breaking down the question by geography and work situation revealed little significant difference in responses—it doesn't matter where respondents are, the media database remains a go-to industry tool.

- PR professionals in the U.S. are slightly more likely to use a media database (97% said yes) than the rest of the world (90% said yes)
- Most PR professionals in any work situation use a media database
 - Agency – 97%
 - In-house – 95%
 - Solo practitioners/consultants – 93%

MEDIA DATABASE *pro tip*

THE MEDIA DATABASE IS A PR PRO'S BEST FRIEND.

The ubiquity of media databases comes as no surprise as they can help with a wide variety of media outreach activities, including:

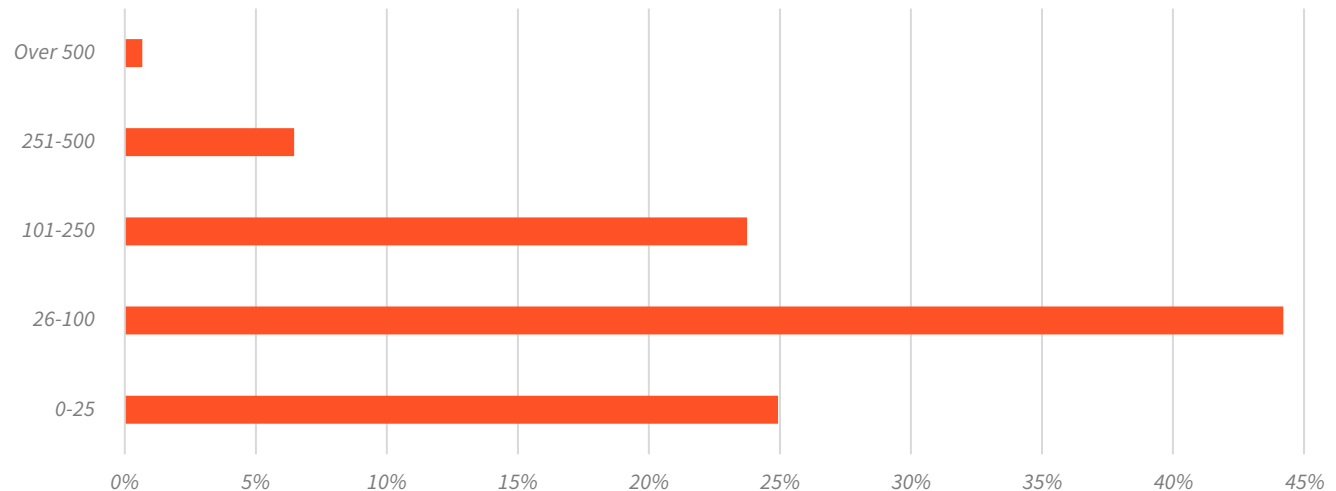
- Providing accurate, up-to-date media contact and influencer information across a variety of media types including online, print, broadcast, and social
- Sharing detailed information about a specific journalist's or influencer's area of interest, most recent published stories, and latest social media posts
- Making media list creation and distribution of outreach emails quick and easy
- Tracking email activity for the building of detailed reports on which contacts are engaging with pitches
- Offering additional features to amplify stories like built-in newswire services and newsroom publishing

The quality of media databases can vary greatly. If you're in the market for a new tool, we recommend checking out a third-party software review site like G2 for unbiased reviews.

HOW MANY MEDIA CONTACTS DO YOU PITCH AT A TIME?

BEST PRACTICE SHARED BY EXPERTS DURING OUR ANNUAL EARNED MEDIA MASTERY VIRTUAL SUMMITS SAYS THAT PERSONALIZED PITCHES SENT TO SMALLER, TARGETED LISTS YIELD FAVORABLE RESULTS.

Our survey data shows that 69% of PR and communications professionals regularly send pitches to lists of 100 media contacts or less. A quarter of all respondents stick to lists of 25 contacts or less.



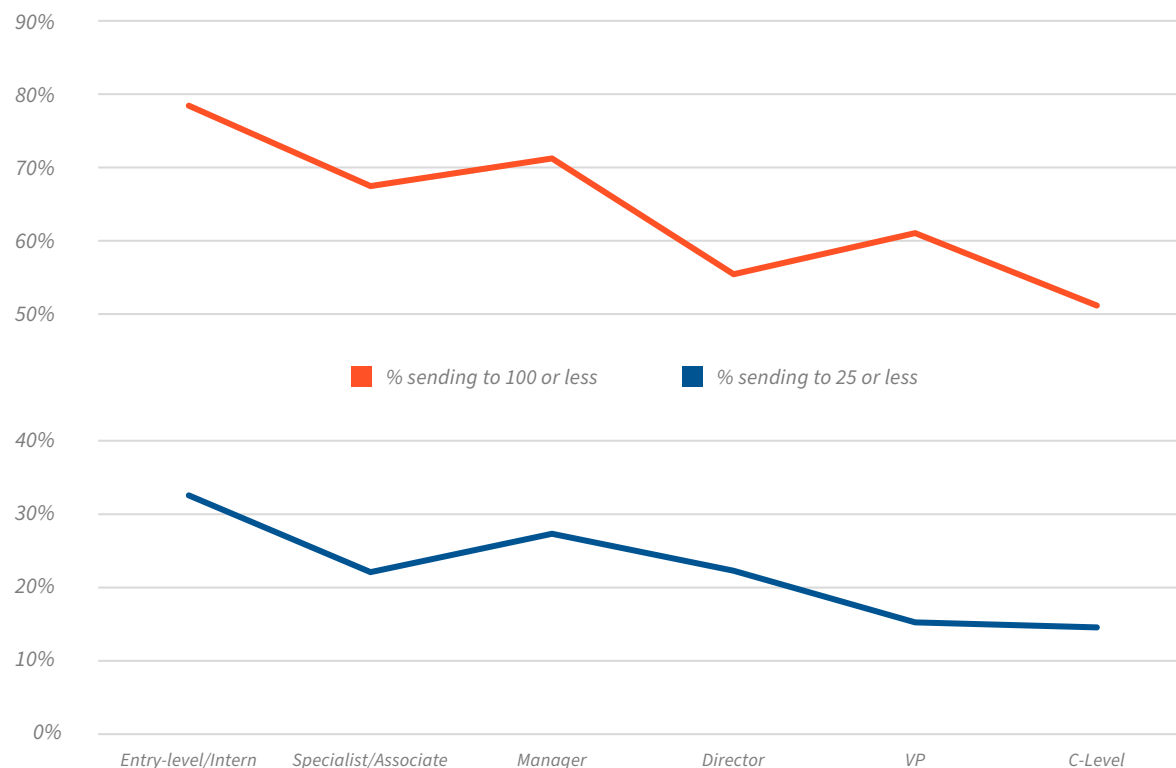
A CLOSER LOOK

When examining list size preference by seniority level, we found that respondents with entry-level/intern titles are more likely to send their pitches to smaller lists, with 79% pitching to lists of 100 journalists or less and one third sticking to 25 or less. Whereas only 51% of those in the C-level pitch to list sizes of 100 or less and only 15% pitch to lists of 25 or less.

MEDIA OUTREACH LIST SIZES BY SENIORITY LEVEL

As list size decreases, seniority level increases.

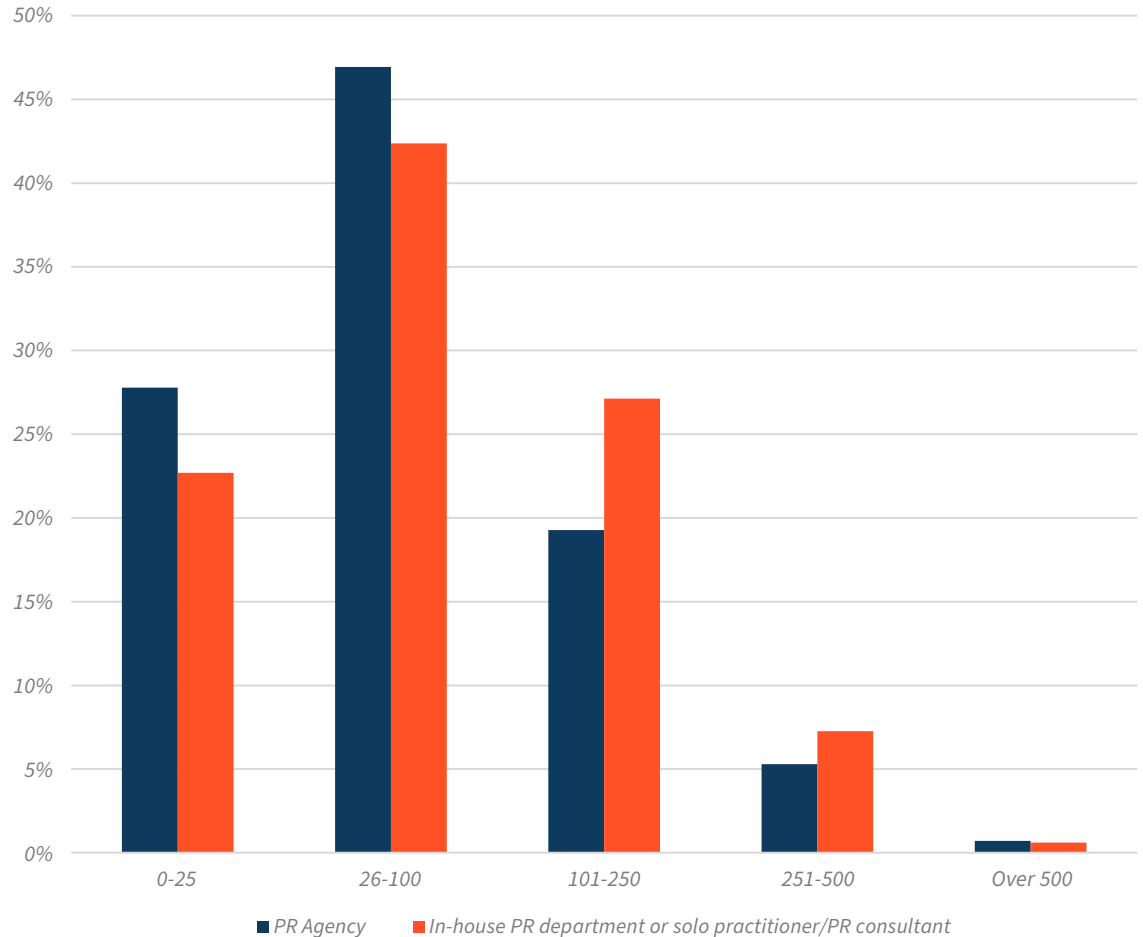
The **orange** line shows the percentage of respondents who send pitches to lists of 100 contacts or less while the **blue** line shows the percentage of respondents who send pitches to lists of 25 contacts or less.



HOW MANY JOURNALIST DO YOU TYPICALLY PITCH FOR A STORY?

The size of the outreach list also differed depending on the respondent's work situation. Most agency professionals pitch to fewer journalists, with 75% sticking to lists of 100 contacts or less.

AGENCY VS. IN-HOUSE/SOLO



MEDIA DATABASE

pro tip

SEGMENTING PITCHES BASED ON JOURNALIST CHARACTERISTICS

We agree with the experts—keep your list sizes small when sending pitches. But... you don't need to stick to just one list.

Regardless of the total amount of journalists you choose to pitch about a certain story, your media database should make it easy for you to segment contacts into lists based on characteristics, such as beat, location, media type, and interest area (to name a few). This allows you to tailor your pitch to select groups of journalists with shared characteristics.

For example, you may choose to pitch your story to 50 contacts who report across different media types including online, print, broadcast, and blogs. You'll likely want to segment this list of 50 into four sub-groups and tailor your pitch to each of these groups as different story elements/value-adds may interest them (e.g. b-roll, photography, links, bios).

This approach generally garners more success than a one-size-fits-all-email which lacks personalization.

HOW DO YOU ADD VALUE TO YOUR PITCHES?

JOURNALISTS NEED TO BE ABLE TO IMMEDIATELY SEE THE VALUE YOUR STORY HAS FOR THEIR AUDIENCE. Whether you're pitching a journalist for the first time or someone you've worked with in the past, it's essential to show that you've got everything they need to produce a compelling story. Most PR professionals like to include value-adds like b-roll, photos, or research data in their pitch as these helpful additions can increase the chances of getting their story picked up.

But what kinds of value-adds do PR pros find result in the best outcomes?

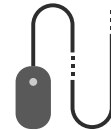
Video footage narrowly won out, with 45% of PR and communications professionals agreeing that it helps them land coverage. Close behind are exclusive interview offers at 44%; external links to web pages, documents, etc. at 38%; and, high-quality images at 35%. A less popular multimedia inclusion is research data at 21%.



VIDEO FOOTAGE
45%



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS
44%



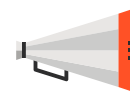
LINKS
38%



QUALITY IMAGES
35%



RESEARCH DATA
21%



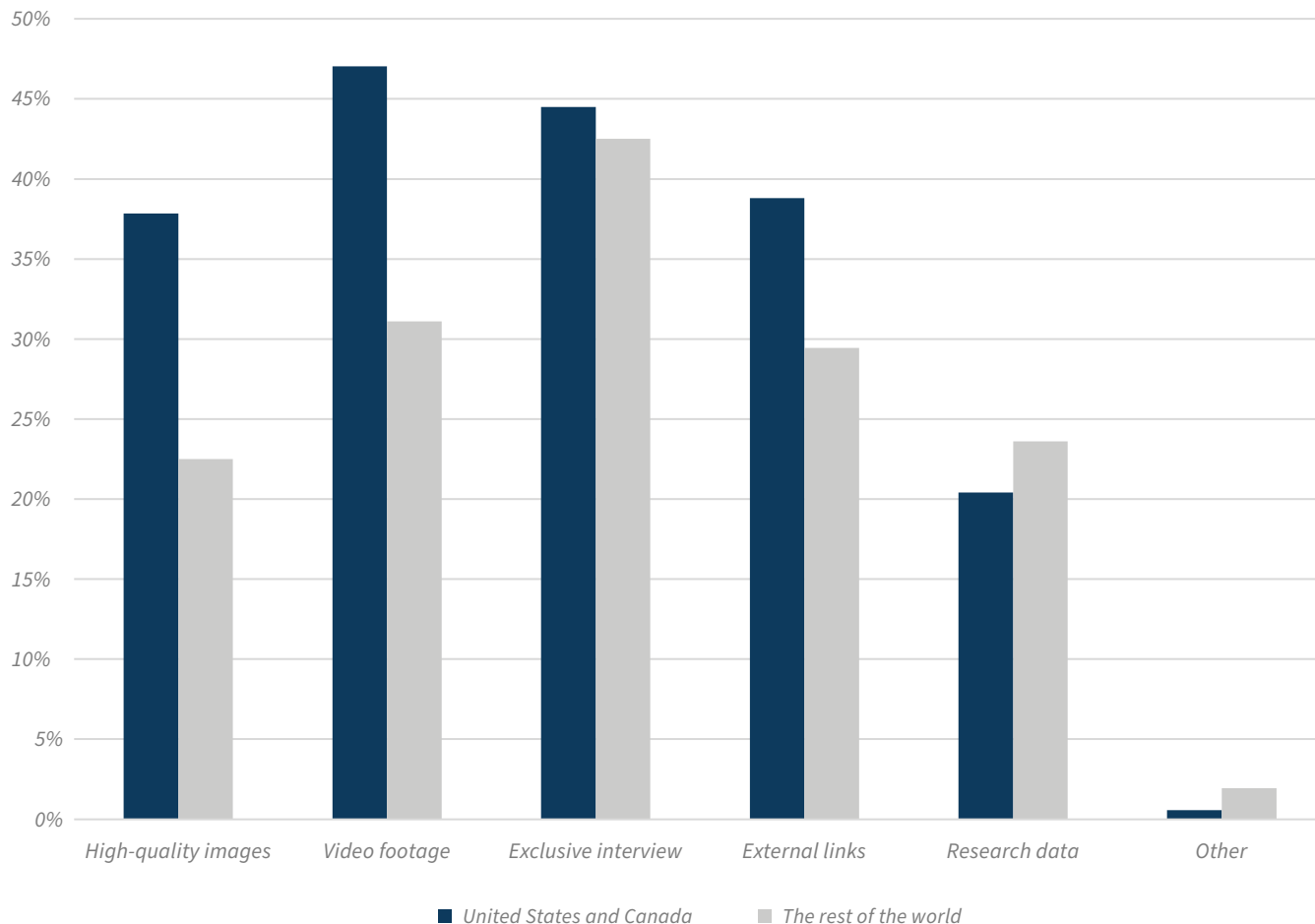
OTHER
<1%



A CLOSER LOOK

Video footage reigned as the most popular value-add for respondents from the United States and Canada, but exclusive interview offers took the top spot in other regions.

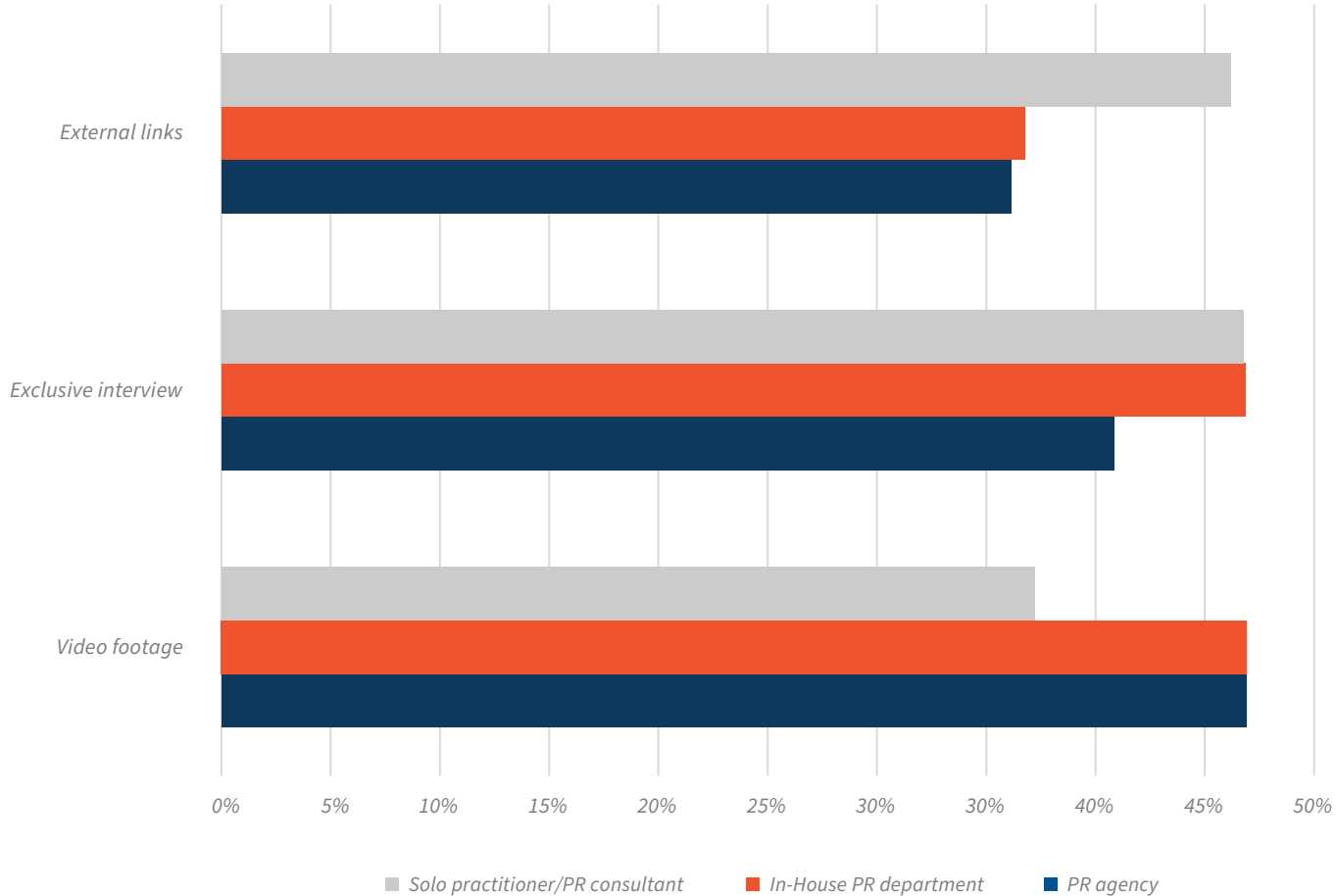
VALUE ADD TO EARN COVERAGE BY GEOGRAPHY



ADDITIONALLY, THERE WERE SOME VARYING PREFERENCES ON VALUE-ADDS BASED ON WORK SITUATION, PARTICULARLY REGARDING VIDEO FOOTAGE.

- Among PR agency professionals, video footage is the most popular add-on at 47%
- Among in-house practitioners, video footage edges out exclusive interview offers (by 0.07%) to win most popular at just under 47%
- Among solo practitioners/PR consultants, video footage is only third at 37% (behind exclusive interviews and external links)

VALUE ADD TO EARN COVERAGE BY WORK SITUATION



HONORABLE MENTIONS FOR OTHER VALUE-ADDS INCLUDE:

- Interactive content
- Relevant analysis of a current news topic
- New angle on a trending story
- Community-focused stories that resonate with specific media locations

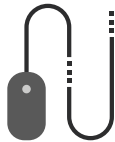
HOW DO YOU INCLUDE MULTIMEDIA IN YOUR PITCHES?

According to survey results, the majority of PR and communications professionals (57%) include value-adds like video, images, or research data via links to popular file-sharing platforms such as Dropbox or Google Docs.

Only 22% of respondents attach files/documents to the email, and even less (21%) embed the media directly in the body of the email (such as such as adding a jpeg to the copy).



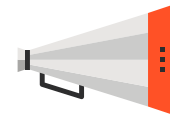
ATTACHED FILES
22%



LINKS
57%



EMBEDDED
21%

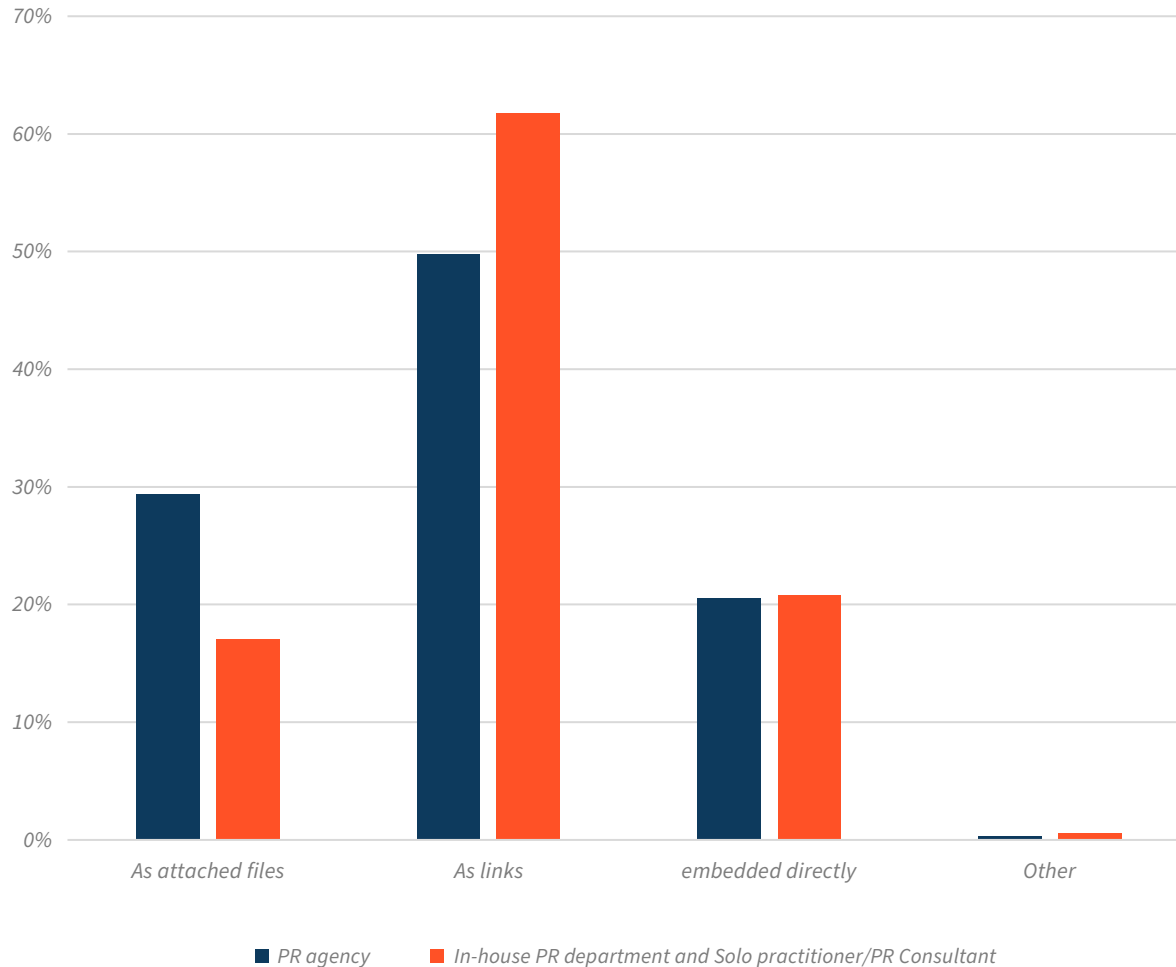


OTHER
<1%

A CLOSER LOOK

At 30%, agency professionals were more likely than their in-house and solo/consultant peers (17%) to include their value-adds as attachments.

INCLUDING MULTIMEDIA BY WORK SITUATION



OTHER APPROACHES THAT PROFESSIONALS OCCASIONALLY TAKE WHEN SHARING MULTIMEDIA FILES IN THEIR PITCHES INCLUDE:

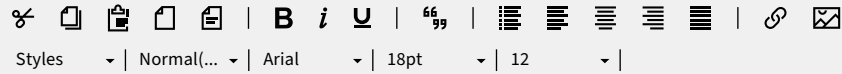
- Mentioning that multimedia is available upon request
- Linking to social media platforms like Facebook
- Including a link to a virtual newsroom

MEDIA DATABASE *pro tip*

WE RECOMMEND TAKING THE MAJORITY APPROACH AND INCLUDING VALUE-ADDS AS LINKS.

Some mail systems will send emails with attachments or embedded multimedia straight to the junk folder, which is exactly where you don't want your pitch to end up.

Example pitch on the next page!



Hello Jessica,

We just released the results of our analysis of over 5,000 emails sent through the *Agility outreach platform*. In our analysis, we looked for meaningful patterns that the savvy PR pro can use to send an attention-grabbing email.

We learned some things that didn't surprise us (such as Tuesday and Thursday are prime delivery days for open and clickthrough rates), and some things that did (such as PR professionals are still applying the spray and pray method when it comes to email distribution).

I thought you'd be interested in the results, which is why I've included the link to the *report*.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Sincerely,

Anne Davis
PR Manager, Fireworks PR Agency

DO YOU FOLLOW UP ON YOUR PITCHES?

PR professionals will often send a follow-up email if their initial pitch isn't a hit. In fact, many media relations experts consider the follow up to be as essential as their first pitch.

Results from the survey reinforced this norm, with 89% of respondents saying they follow up with journalists after an initial pitch. Another 7% say they only follow up if they see that a journalist has interacted with their pitch using their media outreach tool. The remaining 4% don't follow up at all.



YES
89%



NO
4%



MAYBE
7%

Follow up practices did not vary significantly across work situations, locations, or seniority levels.

MEDIA DATABASE *pro tip*

PERSONALIZING JOURNALIST FOLLOW UPS

If your media database and outreach tool provides tracking and allows you to see the opens and clicks your pitch received, use that information to your advantage. Most PR professionals will choose a different follow-up approach for a journalist who has already opened/clicked on their pitch (and thus shown some initial interest) than a journalist who has not engaged with the pitch at all.

For journalists who don't interact with your original pitch, you may choose to follow-up with a new subject line or story angle to see if that fares better than your previous attempt.

example
**FOLLOW UP
EMAIL TO A
JOURNALIST
WHO HAS
OPENED
ORIGINAL
PITCH EMAIL**

✂ 📄 📧 📁 📧 | **B** *i* U | “” ‘’ | ☰ ☱ ☲ ☳ ☴ | 🔗 ✉
Styles | Normal(...) | Arial | 18pt | 12 |

Hi Donna,

Are you interested in speaking to Eric Ericsson, owner of the garage Happy Motors, about his initiative to give local teachers free oil changes this September? He could discuss:

- Where the idea came from
- Why he wants to give back
- How teachers can take advantage of this offer

I would be happy to arrange the interview.

Alex

example

FOLLOW UP EMAIL TO A JOURNALIST WHO HAS NOT OPENED ORIGINAL PITCH EMAIL

✂️ 📄 📧 📧 | **B** *i* U | 🗨️ | ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰ | 🔗 ✉️
Styles ▾ | Normal(...) ▾ | Arial ▾ | 18pt ▾ | 12 ▾ |

Hi Donna,

Eric Ericsson, local garage owner, is giving away free oil changes to say thank you to teachers in the area and make the return to school a little easier.

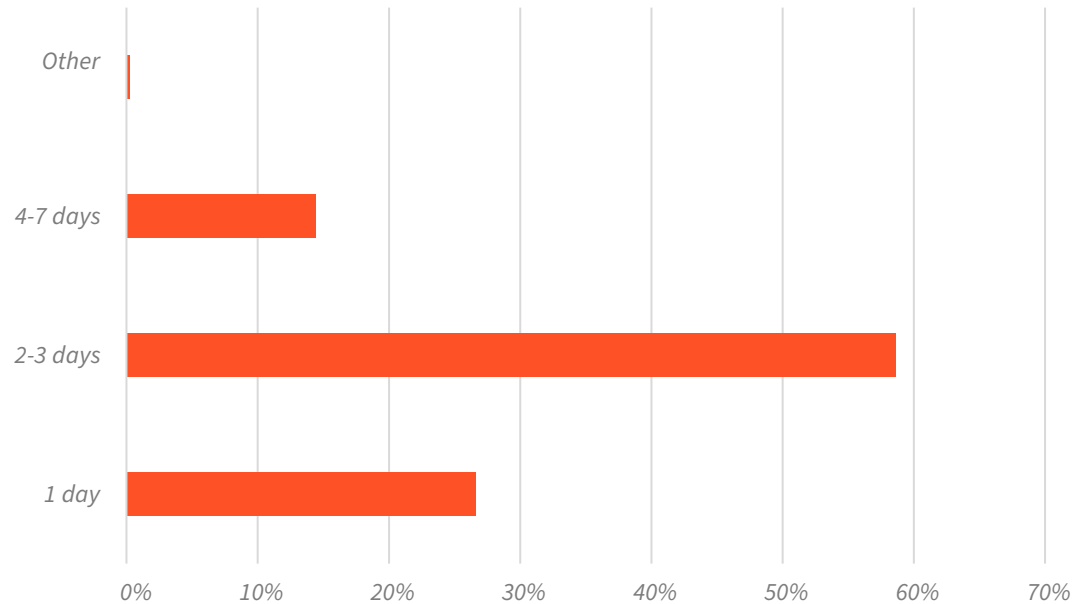
So far, he has fifty teachers lined up for service. Would you be interested in speaking to Eric and one of the teachers?

I would be happy to arrange the interviews.

Alex

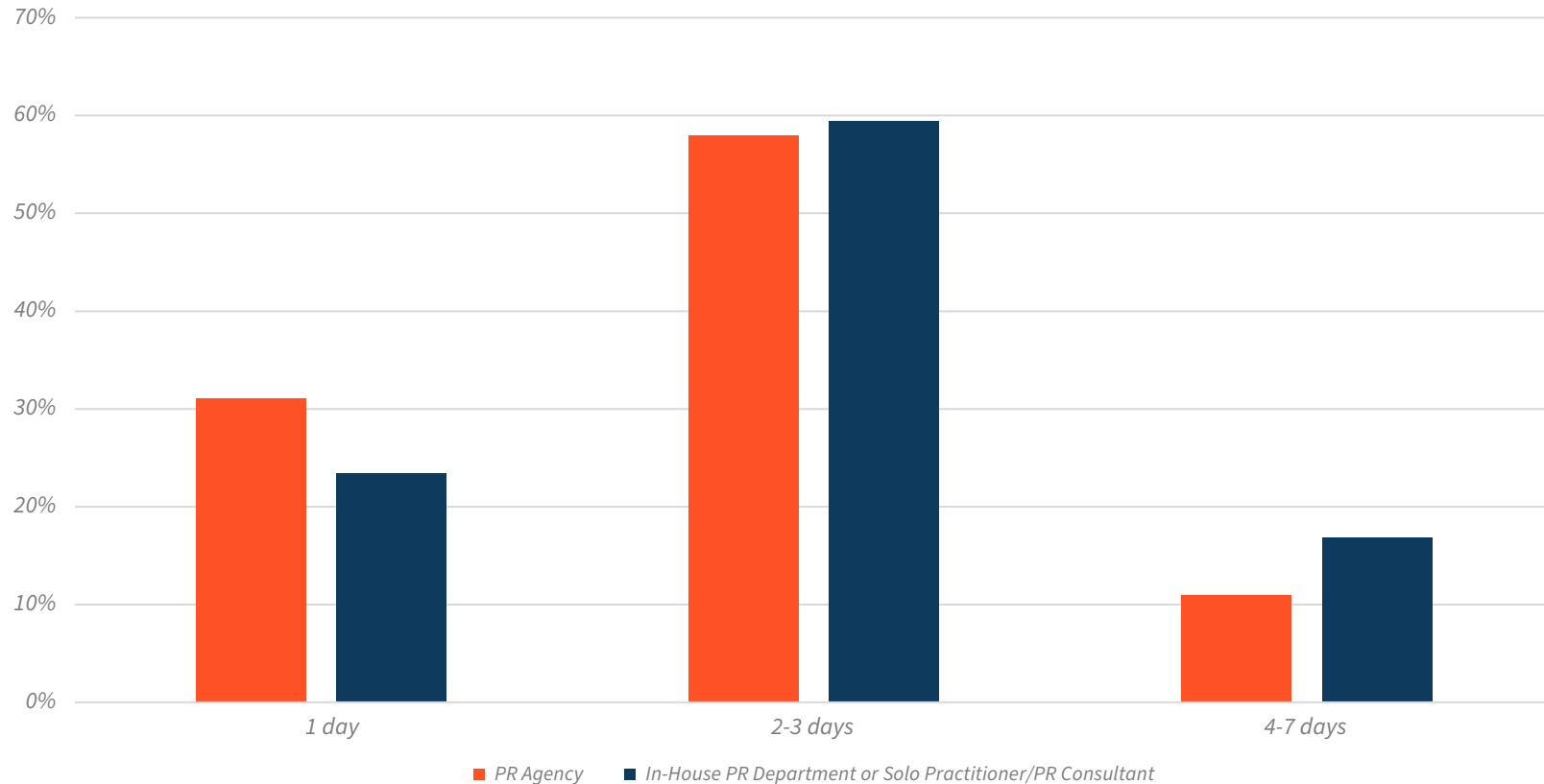
WHEN SHOULD YOU FOLLOW UP ON YOUR PITCHES?

For respondents who said they follow-up on their pitches, the majority (59%) wait 2-3 days after their initial pitch. About 27% follow up sooner, waiting only one day. The remaining 14% of respondents wait between 4-7 days.



A CLOSER LOOK

Professionals in PR agencies are more likely to follow up within one day (31%) than their peers working in-house or as solo practitioners/consultants (24%). However, the majority of all three groups stick to the 2-3 day follow up range.

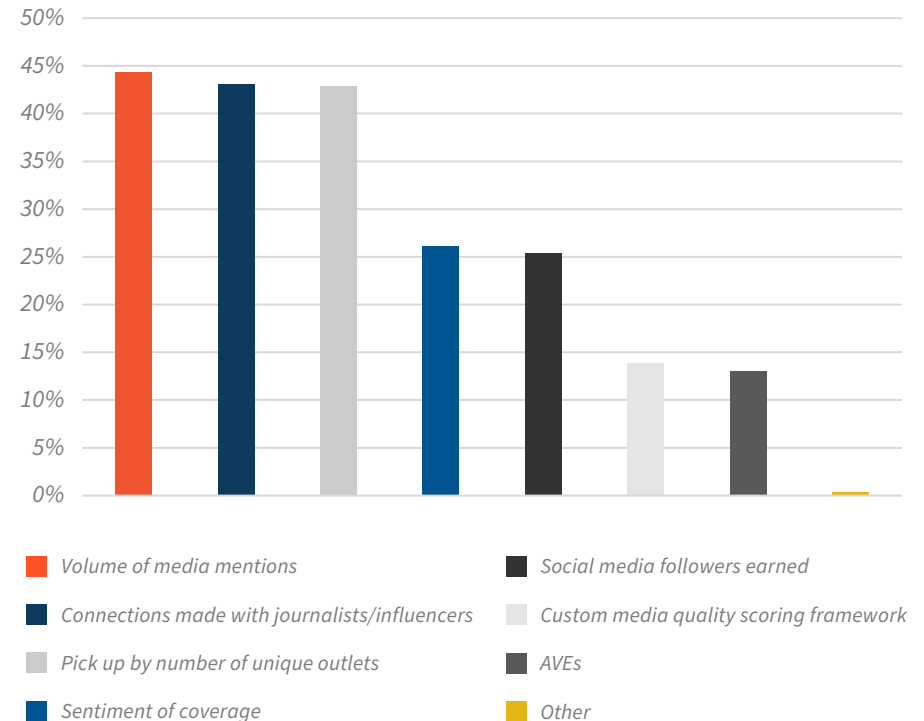


HOW DO YOU MEASURE YOUR MEDIA OUTREACH EFFORTS?

When asked to choose the top three ways they measure media outreach outcomes, survey respondents had some clear favorites:

- 44% said volume of media mentions
- 43% said connections made with journalists/influencers
- 43% said pick up by number of unique outlets

Other metrics to evaluate outcomes included sentiment of coverage (26%), social media followers earned (25%), a custom media quality scoring framework (14%), and Advertising Value Equivalency (13%).



A CLOSER LOOK

Although the PR industry is moving away from the use of AVEs, more agency professionals (17%) than in-house and solo practitioners/consultants (10%) still include them in their top three measures of media outreach efforts.

Some other measurement approaches included:

- Share of voice
- Backlinks
- Number of direct follow-ups or interview requests
- Potential audience reached

CONCLUSION

The survey data showed some clear media relations standards that most PR and communications professionals implement, including:

- Using a media database to manage media outreach efforts
- Following up with journalists 2-3 days after an initial pitch
- Using volume of media mentions, connections made with journalists/influencers, and pick up by number of unique outlets as measures of media outreach success

But that's not to say everyone agreed all the time. There were some clear differences in practices depending on geography, work situation, and seniority level:

- Respondents with more senior titles (Director and above) and those located in the U.S. generally had a more positive outlook on the difficulty of earning coverage from June 2020 to May 2021
- As respondents' seniority levels increased, so did their preferred list sizes for media outreach
- The top preference for a pitch value-add in the U.S. and Canada was video footage, while other regions preferred exclusive interview offers
- Respondents in PR agencies were more likely to follow up with a journalist quicker than their peers
- PR agency professionals were more likely to use AVEs to measure their media outreach efforts than their peers

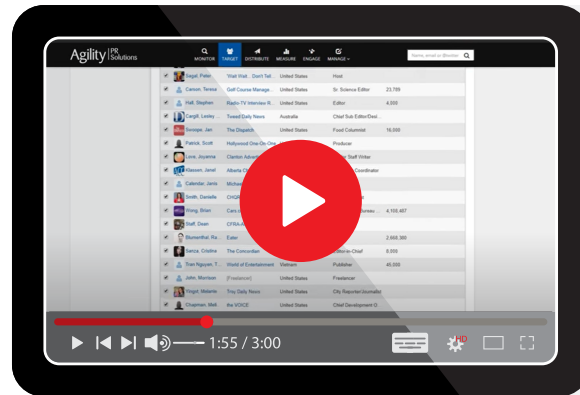
**THE DATA SHARED IN THIS REPORT IS MEANT TO SERVE AS A
BENCHMARK FOR YOUR MEDIA RELATIONS ACTIVITIES, BUT WE
RECOGNIZE THAT ALL BRANDS ARE UNIQUE.**

Your (or your client's) brand may require a different approach than the methods found in the survey.

NEXT STEPS

When looking to level-up your media relations, it's essential to find the right journalists and have the means to reach them. No matter how amazing your story, it likely won't go beyond your company's newsroom if you can't reach the relevant media contacts.

Investing in the right media database will get you into inboxes—the first step in amplifying the reach of your story. If you're part of the 5% who don't use a media database or are looking to reevaluate your current tool to make sure it's meeting your pitching needs, we recommend comparing the top media database tools on the market to see which one is the best fit for you.



Got three minutes? Find out how you can identify your ideal influencers, make a meaningful connection, and get your message in front of the people that matter with a tour of Agility PR Solutions' media database.

METHODOLOGY

All data-related insights shared in this guide are based on a survey of 3,787 respondents conducted between May 17-31, 2021. Responses were collected using an online survey tool. The survey consisted of 17 questions. Respondents could submit answers anonymously, but also had the option to share their email address to receive early access to the survey report and be entered to win a contest.

ABOUT AGILITY PR SOLUTIONS

Agility PR Solutions streamlines media monitoring, outreach, and media intelligence in one intuitive platform for public relations professionals. Global organizations have relied on Agility to help them achieve ambitious business goals using an outcome-based approach. Providing innovative technology, outstanding data quality, and high-caliber support, Agility enables success for today's communicators.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.AGILITYPR.COM