

# Pouncing on Reporters' Leads

By Marcia Yudkin

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Creative Ways <http://www.yudkin.com/marketing.htm>

You see a notice from a reporter seeking examples for an article. You should:

- (A) Ignore it.
- (B) Reply immediately to say you have a good story for him/her.
- (C) Reply immediately with your complete story.
- (D) Consider the request for a few days rather than acting hastily.

For more than two years this question has been part of a quiz at my Web site, and a majority of those taking the quiz have guessed the answer was (B). Wrong. That means that most people who see a reporter's query, either through a leads service such as ProfNet or PR Leads or on a discussion list, may miss their chance for 15 minutes of fame.

A reporter's notice might look like this:

For an article for a national business magazine, I am seeking businesses that have turned less than a thousand dollars in initial investment into more than a million dollars in annual sales in less than 10 years. Respond by this Friday to areporter@reporters.net.

My quiz respondents think the thing to do is to reply simply, "I fit your criteria. Here's how to reach me..." The correct answer, though, is (C), replying with the complete story. Why?

Assume that the reporter receives a flood of replies, as usually happens. Most likely, enough of those have supplied a full, enticing and relevant story for the reporter to complete his or her research without contacting you.

Factor in the deadline, too, and you'll understand you can lose your chance for the spotlight because of the delay created by making the reporter write back, "Tell me more" and wait for your reply.

In addition, to some reporters, the reply "I fit the bill. Here's how to reach me..." shows a self-centered lack of common sense and courtesy. You set up a hurdle for them to cross rather than making it easy for them to perform their job.

In recommending that you reply to a reporter's appeal with your complete story, I don't mean that you have to spend an hour typing detail after detail. Rather, provide the basic facts that demonstrate that you are what they're looking for, along with the fundamental who, what, when, where and why or how of your situation. For instance:

My name is Kathy Kaminar, and I own a cotton candy company in Missoula, Montana, with \$1.5 million in annual sales. I launched the company in 1993, when I was 17 years old, at the Missoula State Fair, with an investment of \$200 for supplies. I now have 27 employees, mostly part-time. Although all my sales are offline, I do have a Web site: <http://www.kathys.biz> . Here's how to reach me...

The Web link provided there is excellent, because it enables the reporter to obtain further information about your organization and a general impression before interviewing you. Don't send any attached files, much less a gargantuan history of your firm, previous press clips, photos and so on unless and until the reporter requests them.

You might still strike out following these suggestions, but you would have upped the odds of success as high as possible.

Marcia Yudkin [marcia@yudkin.com](mailto:marcia@yudkin.com) is the author of the classic guide to comprehensive PR, "6 Steps to Free Publicity," now for sale in an updated edition at Amazon.com and in bookstores everywhere. She also spills the secrets on advanced tactics for today's publicity seekers in "Powerful, Painless Online Publicity," available from [www.yudkin.com/powerpr.htm](http://www.yudkin.com/powerpr.htm) .

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