

TV reporter shares how to get your story in the news.



† DO YOU HAVE A GREAT IDEA FOR A story, but no clue how to get it in the news? Are you tired of pitching press releases the news media simply ignores?

After 20 years of beating the street as a TV reporter, I have a scoop for you: The media needs good stories. But most stories are pitched so poorly, they are lost in the blizzard of faxes that blanket every newsroom.

So, here are five steps to increase your story's chances of getting covered that even some PR pros don't know:

**1 Be Unusual.** The old adage about "Man bites dog" still holds true. The news doesn't cover what's normal. We cover the abnormal.

**"TV reporters tell stories with pictures. If the pictures aren't there, chances are the reporters won't be either."**

PR whiz Carolyn Alvey knew this when she was trying to raise money for a charity several years ago. Instead of holding a garage sale, she sent out a press release announcing a "Celebrity

## Want to Be on TV?

By Jeff Crilley

Garage Sale." Everything from Bob Hope's old golf clubs to Roger Staubach's long-neglected neckties were for sale. By making an ordinary garage sale extraordinary, the media was instantly sold on the story.

**2 Be Visual.** TV reporters tell stories with pictures. If the pictures aren't there, chances are the reporters won't be either.

Even the most non-visual story can be made visual if you're creative. A dog biscuit business? Boring. A dog birthday party complete with doggie guests and party hats? Now you're barking up the right tree.

That's what Michelle Lamont did to boost her dog biscuit bakery. She began baking huge dog biscuit birthday cakes and inviting the media to cover the parties. She's had reporters hounding her for stories ever since.

**3 Choose the Right Reporter.** Perhaps the most common mistake even some PR pros make is trying to sell a good story to the wrong person. Most reporters have a specialty, like "crime" or "business."

So seek out the reporter who will have the most to benefit from your

story. Start studying the news. Before you call a TV station or try and pitch the paper, become familiar with a reporter's work. Don't try and sell an investigative story to a reporter who covers entertainment.

**4 Write Like a Reporter.** If I were going to send a press release to a reporter, I'd write the kind of headline that a newspaper would run. And I'd make the rest of the release so conversational that a TV anchor could read it right on the air.

Why is this so important? A major market newsroom gets hundreds of press releases every day. Often the decision on whether to cover your story is made in a matter of seconds. Many times that well-crafted sentence in the third paragraph of your press release is never read.

**5 Wait For a Slow News Day.** The holidays are the slowest "news times" of the year. When government offices are closed, so are most of our sources. Take advantage of it.

In fact, take out your calendar and begin circling government holidays. If the government isn't making news, we reporters are scrambling to find something to cover. Pitch even an average story on a day when the media is starving for news, and you're much more likely to get coverage.

There you go. Now you're armed with knowledge that even some well-paid public relations professions don't practice. If your idea is unique, visual, and pitched to the right person when the supply of news is running thin, you're in! ■

**Jeff Crilley** is an Emmy Award-winning reporter and author of *Free Publicity—A TV Reporter Shares the Secrets for Getting Covered on the News*. It's available at bookstores everywhere or online at [www.jeffcrilley.com](http://www.jeffcrilley.com).

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Photo Available Upon Request

## **DALLAS RESIDENT IS FIRST WOMAN IN MORE THAN 20 YEARS TO WIN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OF PUBLIC SPEAKING!**

**RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, CALIF. (August 16, 2008)** – It was the World Series of public speaking, the Olympics of oratory, the final bout for the heavyweight title of “World Champion of Public Speaking.” Who would win? Recently, a crowd of nearly 2,000 Toastmasters from dozens of countries gathered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, to cheer for their favorite speaker at the Toastmasters International Speech Contest.

LaShunda Rundles, a Toastmaster and motivational speaker from Dallas, Texas, emerged victorious and claimed the title of 2008 World Champion of Public Speaking. Her speech, “Speak!” encouraged people to use their voices to change the world. Rundles is the first African-American woman – and only the fourth woman ever – to win this prestigious competition. She hopes to leverage her new championship title to become the national spokesperson for the Lupus Foundation of America. As a lupus survivor, she says she feels particularly qualified to speak on behalf of other patients.

Her winning speech in the World Championship competition discussed her childhood as a prodigy, where she was at risk from misbehavior due to boredom, and being saved by her mother’s guidance into the public speaking arena.

The speech contest culminated Toastmasters International’s four-day annual convention, held August 13 – 16, 2008, at Calgary’s TELUS Convention Centre. A panel of 20 Toastmasters judges evaluated 10 contestants from different parts of the world, all of whom had advanced to the finals following a year-long process of elimination, using club, area, district and regional speech competitions. Criteria used in judging included speech content, organization, voice quality and gestures.

Second- and third-place winners in the World Championship of Public Speaking were Loghandran Krishnasamy of Puchong, Malaysia, with his speech “Finding the Rhythm” and Katherine Morrison of West Roxbury, Massachusetts, with her speech “Baby, Don’t Believe Them.”

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. The organization currently has 230,000 members in 11,700 clubs in 92 countries. Since its founding 84 years ago in October 1924, the organization has helped more than four million men and women give presentations with poise and confidence. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).