



2009 NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK TIPS FOR PITCHING TO LOCAL MEDIA

KNOW WHEN TO CALL

- Avoid calling TV or radio reporters or producers in the hour leading up to a newscast, this is when they're especially busy preparing for their show to go on air. Also, most television producers and essential personnel are in meetings from 9:00-10:00am to prepare for afternoon newscasts, and again from 2:30-3:30pm to prepare for evening shows. This is when they decide what should be covered. For coverage on morning shows, it's best to pitch the day or night before.
- It's best to call print reporters or editors in the morning. They are busy during the afternoon "putting the paper to bed" for the next day.

KNOW WHO TO CALL

- Always know what show and which person you want to pitch. Often times, the first person to pick up the phone is not the best person. Do research ahead of time and know who you're pitching and when that person is most likely to be available.

BE QUICK AND CONCISE

- Television and radio reporters, producers and assignment editors have just a few minutes to spend on the phone listening to a pitch. Make sure you have all the facts ready to go from the second they answer. Your pitch should include the 5 W's: who, what, where, when and – most importantly – why the event is happening and why it matters. In other words, be prepared to clarify *why* the station should cover this story and explain the news value of what you're pitching.

ALWAYS BE COURTEOUS

- Media relations are about relationship building. Just like professionals in all other industries, media outlets are often short-staffed and their personnel are often over-worked and busy.
- If you are transferred to voice mail, also keep it quick and concise but don't include all details of the story. Make sure you do what they do – tease the idea, and leave

your name and number. That will whet their appetite for a good story, and they're more inclined to call you back than if they already have all the info in hand.

YOU ARE ALWAYS “ON THE RECORD”

- Rule number one – there is no such thing as “off the record” when talking to a reporter. Whatever you say can be used, whether you authorize it or not, so stick to your prepared messages. Many good reporters will make sure your private comments remain private. However, some may take advantage of information they get from any source. If you feel like you're being asked questions you are not prepared to answer, simply tell them you have to call them back later.
- The conversation you have with a member of the media can and should be friendly, but it's not a conversation with a friend. It's simply about conveying information about your organization while putting your organization in a positive light.
- Be aware that print articles or broadcast pieces are routinely posted online to the media outlet's website.

BE PREPARED

- Know your key messages. This include points about National Travel and Tourism Week, the 2008 Statewide Economic Impact Research, details about your organization, tourism in your area and how all of this fits into National Travel and Tourism Week.
- Always include your web address and make sure they write it down and include it in their report.
- Offer visuals such as hi-resolution, digital images that can be e-mailed. High quality video is welcomed if it can be provided in a format acceptable to the station. File formats should be for a PC and limited to Windows Media Player, RealPlayer and/or Quicktime.
- Offer to coordinate an interview with your executive director, your organization's president, local business people or members of your organization. Also offer to have that person come to the studio for an in-person interview. Stations are more inclined to do interviews if they don't have to drive very far.

THE PITCH

Start with the basics:

- “Hello, this is NAME with ORGANIZATION. Who can I pitch a story to regarding (National Travel and Tourism Week, economic impact of tourism study)?” or “Thank for taking my call. I know you're busy so I'll keep it brief...”

The Pitch:

- Then make the 30-second pitch about your event or the tourism economic impact research.
- “The Department of Tourism just released its annual Economic Impact of Traveler Spending research study for 2008. The report shows how our county benefited from traveler spending last year. We are pleased to report that traveler spending was up by X%.”
- “On May 12, members of the tourism industry will hold a rally/breakfast/event to showcase the importance of travel to our community. Last year, travel spending generated XX full-time equivalent jobs and taxes for our community.”

Finish with:

- “Is this something you would be interested in covering?”
- If *no*, pitch one more angle or idea regarding the specific issue you called about. If it’s still “no,” thank them for their time.
- If *yes*, provide more detailed information. Ask for their direct email address to provide additional information, research, visuals and more.

THE INTERVIEW

- The more prepared you are, the better you will feel about your interviews. Many of these tips could also be helpful when speaking with your own city or county officials.

Speak in “sound bites:”

- You have probably heard that it’s best to speak in “sound bites,” particularly for TV and radio interviews. What this means is to keep your response or answer short, concise and to the point. Make it interesting wherever possible. Give them a reason to use that statement in a sound byte.”

Know Your Key Messages:

- Familiarize yourself with the key messages in the “National Tourism Week Talking Points Q&A” document to ensure your key points will make its way in the final TV, radio or newspaper report. Similarly, pay attention to semantics so you leave an accurate impression with viewers and readers.
- For example, depending on the expenditures for your area, if you are at the same level as the year prior, communicate that you’ve effectively “maintained” or “protected” your share of visitor revenue. Avoid words that would leave anyone to question the value of tourism to your community.
- If you are up, point to new efforts you believe are paying off, or areas you see as holding potential for further growth.

- If you are down for 2008, offer a multi-year retrospective, as one year does not necessarily mean a trend.

TIPS FOR USING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT RESEARCH

Each year, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism tracks travel trends and visitor patterns through a wide-ranging research study. The key findings of the 2008 report are outlined in the “National Travel and Tourism Week Talking Points Q&A” attachment, but we thought you’d appreciate some tips on how to use this information as it was intended:

- This report is a valuable tool for gauging the impact of travel spending on Wisconsin’s economy over seasons and years, and for evaluating trends that, in turn, will help us in our work.
- In simple terms, this study is an estimate. Conversely, what it is not is a report card or a financial statement reflecting cash register receipts.
- There’s value in looking beyond the numbers. In other words, dollars and percentages are just one part of the report. There is rich data that you may use to support the value of tourism as a whole, whether related to lodging choices, spending habits, seasonal decisions or the like.
- It’s important to put the research in perspective. By that we mean, there are many factors, not the least of which are weather, economy and gas prices, which we don’t control and yet directly influence the results.
- On the other hand, those things that we can influence, such as product development and marketing, we’re continuing to work at with great energy and optimism. For example,
 - There are big things on the horizon for the entire industry, thanks to the Wisconsin branding effort led by the Department of Tourism. Built around “original people, places and possibilities,” our marketing will be even more relevant and differentiating.
 - There is also bright promise in the meetings and conventions market and the sports events area. This kind of diversity is good for the industry.

WHO CAN YOU CONTACT FOR HELP

Should you have any questions on the research study, please contact David Scheler at dscheler@travelwisconsin.com or 608-261-8187. If you would just like a little more coaching in advance of releasing the results, please don’t hesitate to contact Lisa Marshall at lmmarshall@travelwisconsin.com or 608-267-3773.

We thank you in advance for spreading the good word about tourism in Wisconsin.