

# THE PITCH REPORT

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## What It Actually Takes to Earn Tech Media Coverage in 2026

MAY 2026

**Kickstand**



# What's Inside

**01** The Inbox Problem Is Bigger Than Anyone Is Admitting

**02** A Journalist's World Is Changing

**03** What Actually Gets a Journalist to Open and Reply

**04** The Beat Breakdown

**05** The Mechanics of a Pitch That Works

**06** AI in the Inbox

**07** The PR Professionals Who Break Through

**08** The Two Hardest Pitches in Tech PR

**09** What Comes Next

## **About this research**

350 technology journalists across the United States and United Kingdom participated in this survey. Respondents represent a range of beats including cybersecurity, B2B SaaS, fintech, HR/workforce tech, AI/machine learning, marketing technology, and general business technology.



INSIDE THE TECH NEWSROOM

## PR has long occupied an uneasy place in journalism culture.

In many newsrooms, taking a pitch has traditionally been viewed as the easy route — a shortcut a “real” reporter shouldn’t need. That perception has always been unfair, but it has shaped the dynamic between the two sides in ways that still surface today. At the same time, the practical reality is shifting. As editorial teams shrink, news cycles accelerate, and beats widen, reporters need reliable sources, original data, and expert access more than ever. The PR–journalism relationship isn’t going away; it’s becoming more crucial whether the industry wants to admit it or not.

At its best, that relationship is a symbiotic partnership, and for most PR professionals who invest in it, the day-to-day reality bears that out. But it is evolving, and not always in ways that make collaboration easier. **One in five tech journalists** say the quality of PR outreach they receive has gotten worse over the past three years, even as their capacity to absorb noise has decreased.

What follows is what 350 tech journalists told us: candid, specific, and intended to help PR teams close the gap between what they’re sending and what works.



# The Inbox Problem Is Bigger Than Anyone Is Admitting

For many tech journalists, managing PR outreach is itself a big part of the job — a time sink that competes with reporting, writing, and source development. **Eighty percent** spend three or more hours per week just managing PR-related email, and **72%** say a meaningful share of that time is spent on pitches with no realistic chance of coverage.

## 80%

of tech journalists spend 3+ hours per week managing PR-related email

## 72%

say a meaningful share of that time is spent on pitches with no realistic chance of coverage

The volume problem is compounding. Nearly two-thirds of journalists (**65%**) say the number of pitches they receive has increased compared to two years ago. Among the highest-volume recipients (51+ pitches in 30 days), that figure rises to **72%**. **64%** attribute the rise to AI-assisted outreach, **50%** point to more PR teams pitching their beat, and **34%** cite reduced editorial headcount.

## AI/ML Beat



Journalists covering AI and machine learning are **17% more likely** than the overall sample to attribute pitch volume increases to AI-assisted outreach — **75% vs. 64%**. The irony isn't lost on them.

Whatever the cause, the cumulative effect is the same: when the inbox becomes a filtering exercise rather than a reading one, even strong pitches get buried. Over two-thirds (**67%**) say they have "almost certainly" missed a story they would have been interested in because it arrived in an already overwhelmed inbox.

# 67%

of journalists have “almost certainly” missed a story because it got lost in pitch volume

# 65%

say the number of pitches they receive has increased vs. two years ago

When asked to select their top three pitch irritants, journalists most frequently cite pitches that are obviously mass-distributed with no personalization (**46%**), that misrepresent what the story would be (**44%**), that are clearly not written for their beat (**39%**), and excessive follow-up after no response (**38%**).

### Top Pitch Frustrations



The frustrations vary by beat. B2B SaaS/enterprise software journalists are **39% more likely** than average to cite pitches with no clear news angle as a top frustration. High-volume recipients are **25% more likely** to flag mass-distributed, impersonal pitches as their primary grievance. Gen X journalists are **26% more likely** than average to cite excessive follow-up, a finding that carries weight given how closely this group tracks the reputation of individual PR contacts over time.

# A Journalist's World Is Changing — and PR Pros Need to Understand That

The volume problem doesn't exist in a vacuum. Journalists are being asked to absorb more pitches at the exact moment they have less capacity. **72%** say they are currently being asked to do more with less, and **83%** expect that pressure to increase further. **31%** say their publication has gone through a consolidation in the past three years, **35%** say editorial direction has shifted, and **34%** cite layoffs.

**83%**

expect pressure on journalists to increase further

**65%**

are seeking or already have supplemental income

**57%**

say compensation is not equitable for the work they do

**Sixty-three percent** of tech journalists say their beat has widened to the point where it's hard to maintain deep expertise across everything they're expected to cover. Nearly the same number (**61%**) say the quality of their reporting is not always where they'd want it. **46%** have been expected to produce a higher volume of stories in the past three years.

## Gen X Journalists

Among the most experienced in this study, Gen X feels this acutely: **92%** expect pressure to increase, **80%** are seeking supplemental income, and **65%** say compensation isn't equitable. These are journalists with deep institutional knowledge and likely strong beat relationships.

When asked which PR actions would make their jobs meaningfully easier, journalists most frequently cite a better understanding of how long it takes to research and write a story (**41%**), of how quickly coverage windows close (**37%**), and of the editorial approval process (**36%**). On the practical side, **36%** want pitches to be shorter and more focused, **34%** want fast responses once an interview is agreed to, and **31%** cite following up only with genuinely new information.

### What Would Make Journalists' Jobs Meaningfully Easier



Lead time is a source of consistent friction. Most journalists prefer 1–5 days between a pitch and the news going live, with **39%** preferring 1–2 days and **38%** preferring 3–5. The **9%** who say same-day is fine have almost *certainly* earned that speed; among journalists with less than two years covering tech, not a single respondent said same-day was acceptable.

### Trade and Vertical Publication Journalists

Trade and vertical journalists are **33% more likely** than average to cite more lead time as a top ask — possibly because their editorial calendars are structured and approval processes layered.

# What Actually Gets a Journalist to Open and Reply

Despite the noise, journalists aren't unreachable. **81%** always or usually open pitches from PR contacts they have an established relationship with. Even from a completely cold sender, **33%** still always or usually open the pitch. The challenge: most pitches never clear that first bar.

When deciding whether to open a pitch from an unfamiliar sender, the single biggest factor for **32%** is whether they recognize the topic as relevant to their beat. Subject line and sender identity follow at **21%** and **20%** respectively.

## 32%

say beat relevance is the single biggest factor in whether they open a cold pitch

## 81%

always or usually open pitches from PR contacts with an established relationship

### What Makes a Pitch Worth Reading



A standout data point: **77%** of tech journalists say a pitch backed by original research or proprietary data is more likely to earn a response than a pitch for a product announcement with equivalent news value — **38%** say *significantly* more likely. The gap holds across beat and publication type, suggesting the appetite for research-backed storytelling is broadly shared.

# 77%

**of journalists are more likely to respond to a research-backed pitch than a product announcement with equivalent news value.**

**91%** of journalists say they can usually tell within the first sentence whether a pitch was written specifically for them or repurposed. **83%** say personalization referencing their recent work makes them meaningfully more likely to respond, and **78%** say familiarity with their beat is more valuable than a big brand name. The common theme here is attention — whether someone read the journalist's work *before* writing to them.

“*The best pitches I receive make it obvious that someone has actually read my recent coverage.*”

Eighty-five percent of journalists agree. Personalization, in practice, isn't a mail merge field or a name in a subject line. It's evidence that someone read the work before they wrote to the person who produced it.

# Not All Journalists Are Frustrated the Same Way

While frustration with pitch quality is nearly universal, the specific pain points and preferences shift meaningfully depending on what someone covers. Understanding those differences is the difference between a pitch that signals real familiarity with a journalist's world and one that signals exactly the opposite.

## CYBERSECURITY

Among the most credibility-driven in the sample, and among the most demanding on speed. **44%** say a better understanding of how quickly coverage windows close would make their jobs meaningfully easier — the highest of any vertical. **33%** cite original data or proprietary research as a key factor in whether a pitch is worth reading — **22%** above the overall average. Credibility is the threshold variable; phone contact is acceptable to **41%** when an established relationship exists.

### Credibility is currency on the cyber beat

These journalists are **22% more likely** than the average tech journalist to name original research as a top-three pitch requirement. The cyber beat doesn't take your word for it.

### AI / MACHINE LEARNING

AI/ML journalists are experiencing a different kind of fatigue. The sheer volume of pitches claiming AI relevance has made it harder to identify newsworthy developments. **75%** attribute pitch-volume increases to AI-assisted outreach, the highest of any vertical. "AI" has joined the list of terms that trigger immediate skepticism in a subject line without substantiation behind it.

### B2B SAAS / ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE

Significantly more likely than average to flag pitches with no clear news angle as a top frustration — **39%** vs. **28%** overall. A pitch that doesn't articulate a clear, defensible reason this story matters now will not earn a response. This cohort also prefers longer pitches: **35%** prefer 7–10 sentences vs. **25%** overall.

### HR / WORKFORCE TECHNOLOGY

HR tech journalists report the highest time burden of any vertical — **89%** spend three or more hours per week managing PR outreach, vs. **80%** overall. **81%** say they're being asked to do more with less. They are more likely to flag mass-distributed pitches as a primary frustration.

# The Mechanics of a Pitch That Works

Understanding what journalists want goes beyond tone or intent; the structure and content of the pitch itself matter just as much.

## Channel

Email remains the clear channel of choice: **62%** name it as their strongly preferred method of receiving pitches. LinkedIn and X trail at **10%** and **8%**. Phone sits at **8%** overall — and the conditions under which it's even acceptable are narrow.

### Preferred Pitch Channel



## Length

There is a clear sweet spot: **38%** prefer 4–6 sentences; **25%** prefer 7–10. Combined, **63%** want something in that range. Only **6%** prefer 1–3 sentences.

### B2B SaaS and Enterprise Software Journalists Skew Longer

**35%** prefer 7–10 sentences vs. **25%** overall. This beat is willing to read more, but only if the content earns it.

## Content

Clear beat relevance tops the list of what makes a pitch worth reading (**33%**), followed by a well-defined news angle (**33%**) and access to an on-the-record source (**32%**). A fresh angle on a topic already being covered (**30%**), exclusivity or first access (**29%**), and concise format (**28%**) round out the top tier.

## Timing and Embargoes

Embargo expectations area persistent friction point. **77%** of journalists regularly receive pitches with embargo timelines that don't fit their publication schedule. **70%** have had to pass on a story they were genuinely interested in because embargo terms were too restrictive. **75%** say PR teams generally underestimate how quickly the coverage window closes after an announcement.

**70%**

of journalists have passed on a story they wanted to cover because embargo terms were too restrictive

**75%**

say PR team underestimate how quickly the coverage window closes after an announcement

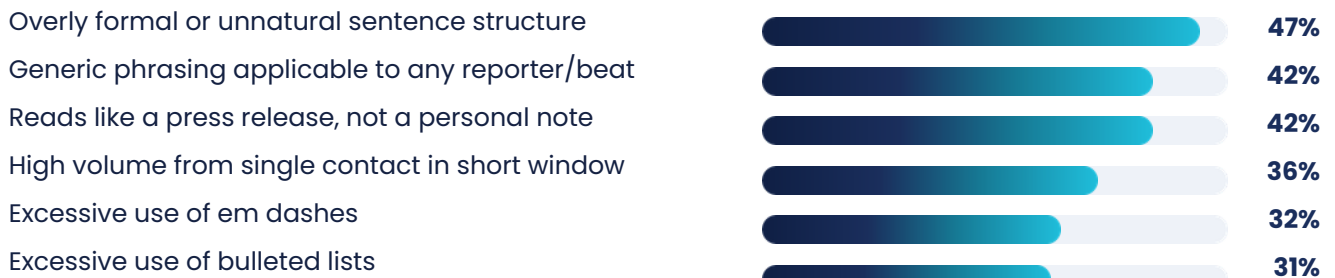
### GenX Journalists Feel Embargo Friction Most Sharply

**84%** say they've passed on a story due to restrictive embargo terms, compared to **70%** overall. These are journalists with the most editorial discretion and the leverage to simply move on when terms don't work.

# AI in the Inbox: What Journalists Perceive

Journalists have noticed AI in their inboxes — or at least, they think they have. **83%** say they can usually tell when a pitch has been AI-generated or heavily AI-assisted. Whether that instinct is always accurate matters less than the fact that the perception *exists*, and is already shaping how they engage.

## How Journalists Identify AI-Generated Pitches



# 72%

less likely to respond to a pitch they believe was AI-generated — even if relevant

# 83%

say they can usually tell when a pitch has been AI-generated or heavily AI assisted

## A Sharp Generational Divide

### Gen Z is the most hostile to AI-generated pitches

**82%** say they're less likely to respond — ten percentage points above the overall figure. They are also **26% less likely** than the overall sample to find AI-assisted pitches acceptable even when they demonstrate genuine personalization (**50%** vs. **67%**). The most digitally native generation in journalism has the least tolerance for what they perceive as automated outreach.

Gen X, by contrast, is **18% more likely** than the overall sample to find AI-assisted pitches acceptable when the result shows real editorial judgment.

That said, journalists are not uniformly opposed to AI in PR workflows. **Sixty-eight percent** say they would not object to AI being used in the research or drafting process, as long as the final pitch demonstrated genuine personalization. Journalists aren't categorically opposed to AI in the drafting process; what they object to is AI that produces outreach that could have been sent to anyone — and the ease with which that kind of pitch is now possible to produce at scale.

# 82%

of Gen Z are less likely to respond to AI-generated pitches

# 68%

accept AI in drafting if the final pitch is genuinely personalized

# The PR Pros Who Break Through

For all the frustration, journalists are not cynical about PR as a whole. They are specific about what distinguishes the contacts they trust and return to from the ones they filter out — and the picture they paint is less about tactics than it is about professional culture.

**85%** of tech journalists say they have at least one PR contact they'd consider a trusted, go-to relationship. **49%** say proactive outreach to a PR contact is a regular part of their reporting process.

## 85%

of journalists say they have at least one PR contact they'd consider a trusted go-to relationship

## 49%

proactively reach out to a PR contact as a regular part of their reporting process

### What Makes Trusted PR Contacts Stand Out

Treat relationship as long-term, not transactional



62%

Follow through on promises



57%

Deep understanding of journalist's beat



48%

Don't pitch things journalist wouldn't cover



39%

## Who Should Be Sending the Pitch

**72%** of journalists say they are more likely to respond to a pitch sent directly from a company executive. At the same time, **82%** agree that the quality of the pitch matters more than who sent it. The sender creates an opening, but the pitch still has to perform.

### National Business Press

National business press journalists are slightly more likely than the overall sample to say the sender's name or organization is the single biggest factor in whether they open a cold pitch (**25%** vs. **20%**), and slightly more likely to prefer 7–10 sentence pitches (**31%** vs. **25%**).

## Reputation Travels

The journalism community is small, and what gets said about a PR contact moves through it. **81%** have actively recommended a PR professional based on a positive working experience. **69%** have warned a colleague away. **74%** say those warnings carry real weight.

**81%**

have recommended a PR contact based on positive experience

**69%**

have warned a colleague away from a PR contact because of repeated bad experiences

## The Follow-Up Problem

The single fastest way to destroy a PR relationship is also one of the most common behaviors in the industry: excessive follow-up. **65%** of journalists have added a PR contact to a blocked or filtered list because of repeated unsolicited follow-up. **63%** are done after two follow-ups or fewer.



### Follow-Up Tolerance Before Disengaging

Zero	8%
One	27%
Two	36%
Three+	16%
Depends on new info	13%

# 65%

have added a PR contact to a blocked or filtered list due to excessive follow-up

# 63%

will disengage after two follow-up emails or fewer

# What Journalists Actually Want: The Two Hardest Pitches

Two categories stand out as the most consistently pitched and the most consistently mishandled: **product launches** and **funding announcements**. **68%** of reporters say they receive product launch pitches "often" or "constantly," and only **30%** consistently cover them, a gap that reflects editorial constraints rather than indifference.

News Type	Receive "Often/Constantly"	Cover Consistently
<b>Product Launches</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Product Updates / Features</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Funding Announcements</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>27%</b>

**73%** of journalists say they have empathy for PR pros trying to earn product coverage; they acknowledge it's a truly difficult pitch to make work. The most common drivers of coverage: evidence of meaningful market differentiation (**49%**), a clear use case tied to a trend they're already covering (**43%**), exclusivity or early access for testing (**43%**), customer adoption or usage data (**38%**), and a named customer willing to speak on record (**35%**).

### Beat Matters for Product Coverage Drivers

B2B SaaS and enterprise software journalists are **32% more likely** than average to say customer adoption data would drive product coverage (**50% vs. 38%**), and **34% more likely** to cite analyst or influencer endorsement (**43% vs. 32%**). HR tech journalists are **28% more likely** to prioritize a clear use case tied to their beat (**55% vs. 43%**).

## Funding Announcements

Funding is one of the most pitched news types in tech — and one of the most formula-driven. **21%** say they receive funding pitches "constantly," and **58%** say they receive a high volume overall. **61%** say most funding pitches are indistinguishable from one another. The standard format has become so predictable that **81%** can determine within the first two sentences whether a funding pitch will result in coverage.

# 81%

can tell within the first two sentences whether a funding pitch will result in coverage

# 61%

say most funding pitches are indistinguishable from one another

### The Relationship Advantage

**44%** of journalists say an existing relationship with the PR contact pitching a funding story makes them more likely to engage. In a news category most PR teams treat as purely transactional, nearly half are still making decisions based on who's in their inbox.

# What Comes Next



Tech journalism is not getting easier. Publications are doing more with smaller editorial teams, the news cycle is accelerating, and the competition for journalist attention is intensifying from every direction. The PR teams that will earn consistent coverage are the ones that treat journalists as partners in story telling rather than targets in a distribution strategy.

These findings don't describe a broken relationship so much as an **underperforming one** under real strain from forces neither side fully controls. Journalists are stretched thin. Inboxes are overwhelming. Editorial expectations are rising while resources are shrinking.

**Eighty-nine percent** of journalists believe the quality of PR outreach could meaningfully improve with relatively small changes. The changes they're describing require the same discipline that earns any professional relationship: know who you're writing to, lead with what's relevant, and treat every interaction as though it compounds over time — because it does.

## 89%

of journalists believe PR outreach quality could improve with relatively small changes

## 350

tech journalists across the U.S. and U.K. participated in this study

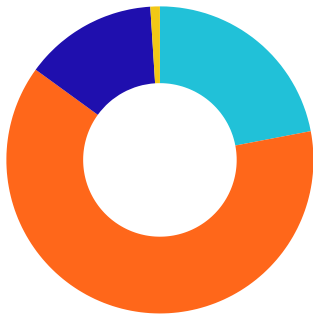
**The reporters who responded aren't asking for perfection. They're just asking to be read.**



# Respondent Profile

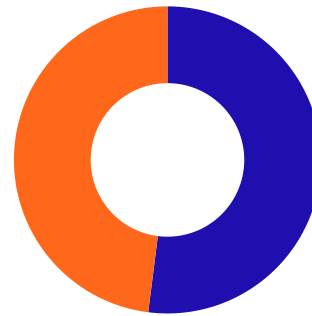
This study surveyed 350 technology journalists currently employed as staff reporters, editors, freelance contributors, or columnists across the United States and United Kingdom. The study was conducted at 95% confidence, +/- 5.2% margin of error. Data was collected in April 2026.

## Generational Cohorts



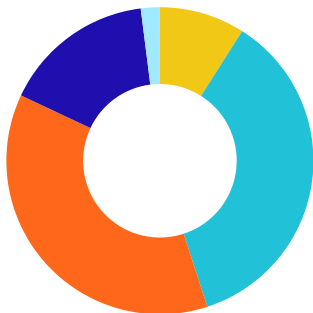
Gen Z	22%
Millennial	63%
Gen X	14%
Boomers	1%

## Country



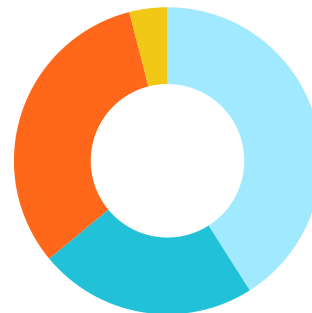
United States	52%
United Kingdom	48%

## Years Covering Tech



< 2 years	9%
2-5	36%
6-10	37%
11-20	16%
20+	2%

## Current Role



Staff journalist	41%
Editor	23%
Freelance	32%
Columnist	4%



### Beats Covered



### Outlet Types



### Pitches Received (Last 30 Days)



# About Kickstand

Kickstand is a PR and communications agency built for high-growth technology companies. Our in-house research team designs and executes original proprietary studies that power media relations, thought leadership, executive visibility, and content marketing programs across the fastest growing technology sectors in the world, including cybersecurity, B2B SaaS, fintech, HR tech, AI/ML, and marketing technology.

If your team is ready to build a research-backed PR program that earns the coverage your work deserves, we'd like to talk.

[meetkickstand.com](https://meetkickstand.com)