

Here are some do's and don'ts

- * Identify yourself - Give the reporter your first name, surname and the name of the agency you work for. And speak into the mouthpiece of the phone. Always ask if the reporter has time to talk to you.

- * Know the paper- PR people should know about the newspaper before phoning the journalist. This includes the target market, the area it covers and the deadlines. Too often PR people phone at the wrong time, if they knew or bothered to find out what our deadlines were they would know when to phone. Often they get short shrift because PR s just don ' t understand that journalists can't discuss story ideas at length when they're on a deadline.

- * Follow up phone calls - When one person from a PR agency sends an email, someone else from that same agency will make a follow - up call. The person who sent the email should make the call and don't make 10 follow-up calls in one day. If a reporter says they will call you, they will. Don't leave numerous voice messages about the same thing as you take up space on my voicemail.

- * Don't befriend the reporter - PR people have the tendency to refer to reporters as babes, sweetie and honey by email and in person. Don't do this. Reporters have names, use them, and then surnames. Keep it professional. Journalists are not your friends, they don't socialise with you and being sycophantic will not increase your chances of your story idea making it into the paper. Journalists do not decide what story is used in a newspaper. It is the news editor's decision. So don't suck up and just be professional.

- * Give the correction information - If you pitch a story idea to a reporter make sure you know the facts; don't exaggerate to make it sound better than it is. You will soon be caught out. If you set up the interview for the reporter, be sure you tell the subject about it and what to expect.

- * Pictures - Don't send oversized jpegs. If you send more than three images send them in low-res and the reporter will choose those she wants to be sent in hi-res. One reporter received four emails about the same story including 12 images. Each image on average was between 4 and 6 megs. The sizes at Cape Community Newspapers is min 850kb and 2MB max, and do not send more than three on a file.

- * Know the reporter - Get to know the reporter you are dealing with. Not to become best buddies but so that you can both put a face to the voice.

- * Don't ask when your piece will be published - You are assuming that it will be. It's not your decision.

- * Don't nag - It won't do you any good.

