

PITCHING A STORY

Training Module For Health
Journalists

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What Is a Pitch?

- A pitch is a writer's description of a potential story (and why it matters) to an editor
- . A pitch can be delivered verbally — if you're on staff pitching to your [editor](#) —or sent via email.
- A pitch essentially makes the case for doing a certain story at a certain point in time.
- You have to market your story idea to the right editor in the best way possible.

WRITE A CATCH PHRASE

- Just like you give a story a catchword or slug, give your pitch a catch phrase.
- This is like a working title for your proposed story. It should be one line only.
- [This is to catch the attention of the Editor to easily remember your story idea]
- Remember editors are very busy people

WHAT is the story about?

- What's the key issue? [A few sentences]
- Editors are very busy. So get to the point.
He/She will immediately know whether your pitch sounds new.
- Reporters often send stories that are really not new. So the editor will easily know whether your story is worth the bother

What has CHANGED?

- What's NEW and/or SURPRISING about this story?
- Why is it worth covering NOW as opposed to last month, last year, or two years from now, and what, if anything, would your reader/viewer/audience be surprised to learn in this story? [Be sure to back up claims about change with evidence, however preliminary it may be]
- [Journalism is about new perspectives. Here the editor is looking for newness, new angles, something interesting, intriguing]

WHO CARES?

- What's the SIGNIFICANCE of the story? Why does it MATTER?
- [The story must have significance. It must matter to people, to the Editor's audience. Do not waste time with story ideas that will not impact on audiences]
- The editor is asking: Will it deliver sales for the newspaper, or audience for broadcast?

What does your PRELIMINARY RESEARCH about the issue show?

- Kiki kyolinawo, kiki kyokimanyiko ?
- You could include some brief background here, where appropriate. You could also mention if you have engaged with the issue/subject of investigation previously.
- Do background research before you face the editor. It is a sign of seriousness, professionalism and passion. Do not appear unprepared or feeble-minded when pitching to the Editor. He/She may dismiss you for good.

Questions

- What QUESTIONS will you attempt to answer in order deliver depth?
- [e.g. What are the causes of this? How does this work? What's the impact of this? Who benefits? Who loses? What are the (hidden) interests behind this? Where is this coming from? How has this been handled elsewhere?
- The questions help you explore different angles, different perspectives to the story. They also test your capacity to probe, to interrogate issues

What's the SCOPE of the story?

- How widespread is the development? Is it local, regional, national? How many people are affected?
- This give the Editor an idea about the impact the story will have, the extent. It gives an idea of how much the story can sell. It helps the Editor plan where to place the story in the newspaper or broadcast program

What type of story?

- What TYPE of story will you be doing?
- a special or investigative report, a series, a TV or radio documentary, a radio package, a multimedia report; a combination of reports including Q & A interviews, talk shows, etc?
- Yes, you should know which type so that you deal with the right editor. Different media platforms bring out different impacts of the story

What SOURCES/RESOURCES ?

- What SOURCES/RESOURCES do you plan to use to prepare this story?
- List a few DATA sources you plan to draw on, showing how and/or what you will use them (for).
- Each source should add value to your story. Pointless to use different people saying the same thing. Each source, whether person or document should provide new insights into the story you are working on. [See next slide]

Sources/Resources 2

- E.G. Interviews/Sources:
- Person A: how they relate to the story and provide colour
- Person B: what perspective they add to the story that is different to Person A
- Person C/Documents: what they add to the authority of the story.

How long?

- How LONG will it take you to deliver the story?
- Provide a reasonable timeline or date by which you will have completed the story.
- Read your pitch again, refine it, be sure you have completed each of the steps listed above, and then face or send to the editor.