



SPOTLIGHT ON SECURITY TECHNOLOGY: GETTING THE MEDIA'S ATTENTION

How to Become a Go-To Source for Security Journalists

Data breaches, DDoS attacks, ransomware, malware, botnets, and more – it seems like not a day goes by without one of these cyber security threats splashed across the front page of the news. This isn't surprising. Today, cyber security is one of the top priorities at almost every company. Organizations from [LinkedIn](#) to [Home Depot](#), [Wendy's](#) to the [Democratic National Committee](#) (DNC) have all fallen victim to hackers. As a result, the security and technology media landscape has become one of the most competitive out there, with reporters battling to be the first to break the news of the latest attack and industry leaders vying for an opportunity to provide color commentary.

In a crowded environment, with everyone from the C-suite to consultants, practitioners, vendors and government agencies competing for media attention, how can you help your company stand out against competitors and become the go-to source for reporters? The key to breaking through is a keen understanding of what reporters need and want when working under tight deadlines.

Over the years, Affect has worked to secure media placements for both public and private companies in the security and technology fields, developing longstanding relationships with key media contacts. To give you a first-hand account of what it takes to penetrate the noise and become number one on a reporter's speed dial, we recently tapped our extensive network for their insights. Here is what they had to say:

Question 1: What new trends are you planning to cover in the next few months? Are there any stories that you're dying to cover but haven't been able to get the information you need?

“ I've been trying for months to uncover more about a particular cybercrime – I'd like to know about the prevalence of hackers illegally breaking into corporate leaders' computer and mobile devices to obtain M&A secrets. I'd like an indication of how much of a threat this is specifically for CEOs, CFOs and board members of publicly traded companies. I would also need to know specific corporate cases, even if it's on background. ”

– Tony Chapelle, Senior Enterprise Risk Management Reporter,
Financial Times' Agenda

“ Artificial intelligence, privacy, behavioral analytics, virtual reality, [and] ransomware. However, with the threat landscape changing so fast, this list might be completely different in just a month. Also, the stories that I'll be truly paying the most attention to are those that I haven't seen yet. You can only write so much about data breaches before the reader just ignores the story. The problem with infosec is saturation since the same thing happens over and over again. ”

– Mirko Zorz, Editor in Chief,
Help Net Security



“ I’m personally very passionate about women in technology, or organizations that are on the mission to try to get women, girls, and minorities into coding.....I’m paying a lot of attention to mobile, specifically mobile testing, or challenges of developers who are creating apps for different platforms. I’m also always keeping an eye on artificial intelligence, virtual reality, autonomous vehicles, and the Internet of Things. These topics are really big right now, and companies have been releasing a lot of new tools or products. These topics are still so new that there is a lot of room for feature stories. ”

– Madison Moore, Online Editor,
SD Times

Question 2: You probably receive hundreds of pitches per day – how do you decide which sources you want to work with? What makes them stand out from the pack?

“ Credibility. Has this person worked for intelligence agencies? What kind of data does this source gather? Does this person or company look at the deep web? Or is he/she a faux expert who just decided that cyber is interesting and now talks about the importance of good security? ”

– Priya Anand, former Cybersecurity Reporter,
MarketWatch

“ I look for experts – people who are actually doing the thing, as opposed those who hear or know about it. I always want people who are involved in what I’m writing about – who are performing the action and driving the trend. Data providers help, but I need analysis – someone who can explain not just what is happening, but why it is happening. ”

– Tatyana Shumsky, CFO Journal Reporter,
The Wall Street Journal

“ Does this company fit our niche and are they relevant to our audience? We vet out some of the newer companies and individuals that come our way, usually because they misuse general terms to try and hit a key market/demographic – cloud, application, management, virtual etc. – when these words may not even truly apply to the companies or products they’re being used to describe. ”

– Jesse Weisberg, Managing Editor,
Virtual Strategy Magazine

“The source must be a practitioner, not usually a spokesperson”

– Tony Chapelle,
Senior Enterprise
Risk Management Reporter,
Financial Times' Agenda



Question 3: What should sources know about developing a relationship with you? What can they bring to the table to make your job easier and increase their chances for inclusion in a story?

“Fast and efficient communication. My deadlines move all the time so I need someone who can deliver quickly. Also, give me access – access to executives, access to operations, access to data and information. The best stories hang on details and color, and to get that, I need access.”

– Tatyana Shumsky, CFO Journal Reporter,
The Wall Street Journal

“Talk to me! Data, case studies and experiences all help inform whether I decide to work with someone. Documents, real-life examples and customers that are willing to talk about their experiences always help.”

– Priya Anand, former Cybersecurity Reporter,
MarketWatch

“Provide everything up front. You'd be surprised how many people contact us with very little information and then we have to spend 2x or 3x the time and effort to get the information squared away to see if working together is even beneficial to both parties.”

– Jesse Weisberg, Managing Editor,
Virtual Strategy Magazine

“I cover two areas: survey findings regarding security and news regarding data breaches/hacks so the two things I'm looking for in terms of information are usable quotes regarding data breaches or security trends in the news, and survey findings including quotable data points regarding enterprise security.”

– Jeff Goldman, Contributor,
eSecurityPlanet

“Be on point, offer me clear value and I'll give you exposure. Offer relevant information at the right time, preferably under embargo and with exclusivity. For vendors, offer relevant, real-world commentary. Most comments are overly general empty words that look like they are taken from a database and sent over for any story on a certain subject. Let's also meet in person – I've been traveling the world meeting vendors for the past 16 years and I usually get great stories when I meet the team behind the product.”

– Mirko Zorz, Editor in Chief,
Help Net Security

“Profile, expertise, relevance, time of the pitch, availability. Expertise and exclusivity are key!”

– Mirko Zorz, Editor in Chief,
Help Net Security



TAKEAWAYS: How to be a valuable resource for journalists:



1. Do your homework: Become familiar with the reporter and their areas of focus. You can learn a lot by knowing which topics they have covered in the past and who they have spoken with. By doing some minimal research, you will know what each reporter looks for when conducting an interview and be able to deliver the goods.



2. Foster relationships: The best way to get your company in a story is by getting to know the people writing them. Don't wait for them to come calling - reach out ahead of time to hear what they are working on and how you can help. Better yet, meet them for a coffee to chat. Let them know that you are willing to talk on background to explain a complex topic, go on the record with quotes or provide them access to clients and people you know in the industry. By staying in front of them, when a breaking news story happens, your name will already be top of mind.



3. Take a unique stance: In the battle for info security commentary, companies run the risk of blending in with the crowd. To ensure you catch the media's attention, developing a unique perspective is critical. Say something new that no one else is saying, contradict the generally accepted perception or offer proprietary information that only you can bring to the table.



4. Make yourself available and relevant: Respond to reporters promptly as they are often on deadline - but only if you have a product, service or perspective that is aligned with their needs.



5. Understand their needs: Provide information that is accurate, concise and timely. Make sure to confirm their deadline and ask what the angle of their story is and how you can best help them - get all the information you need for an unfiltered conversation.



6. Follow up: Reporters love one-stop-shopping so if you have additional materials - case studies, data/stats, relevant reports etc. - make sure to have those on hand and provide them well ahead of the reporter's deadline.



7. Don't be a talking advertisement: Avoid using buzz words and industry jargon to highlight your product or services. Reporters often prefer to focus on the bigger picture vs. promoting specific companies so keep it conversational and speak to the reporter in a language that they can understand.



8. Explore sponsorships/advertisements: Although most organizations keep a clear separation of church vs. state (i.e. editorial vs. advertising), more and more, the lines are being blurred. Sponsored content, advertorials and brand integrations can offer great opportunities to guarantee featured coverage of your company. These types of placements can supplement your earned media results and get your brand placed in the publications that reach your target audience when you need it most.



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