

- “You are cordially invited to the Dirtiest Event in Boulder.” (A story about staging a coal-dumping event to show people how much fossil fuel it takes to heat an average house. The slightly “smutty” approach worked; major dailies and television stations covered the coal dumping.)
- “For almost 25 years, Jack Osman has been drinking shots of oil. He also sings songs about such foot-tapping topics as breakfast and grease. And sometimes, just for fun, he cooks down ground beef to find out its fat percentage.” (Pitch about the availability of a nutrition professor to give media interviews on diet and health.)

As these examples show, a pitch should immediately raise curiosity or get to the point as soon as possible. Here is a letter written by Michael Klepper, owner of a New York public relations firm, that netted 8 minutes on NBC’s *Today* show.

#### Plastics!

How can we get rid of them? Some environmentalists say we can’t. Ralph Harding says we can. He is executive vice president of the Society of Plastics Industry. He has just returned from Europe where they easily dispose of plastics in modern incinerators.

I’ll call you in a week to see if the *Today* show would be interested in talking to him.

Klepper, who has written hundreds of pitch letters in his career, adds, “The pitch letter should be newsy, not groveling. It shouldn’t read ‘respectfully submitted’ or ‘I need this one’ or ‘my client is breathing heavy.’ You are never asking for a favor; you are submitting good, topical, newsworthy material that is directed to a decision maker.”

A good example of a succinct pitch is one written by Samantha Schoengold of Fineberg Publicity in New York on behalf of her client, Danskin Plus clothes. It was sent to the producer of the 5 P.M. news program on WCBS-TV in New York. The pitch, which resulted in a segment titled “The Forgotten Woman,” was summarized by *O’Dwyer’s Newsletter* as follows:

Did you know that most women in the United States are a size 14 or larger? These women are not necessarily overweight; they can be tall or just big boned, and they have long been forgotten and overlooked by most fashion manufacturers.

## tips FOR SUCCESS

### Writing the “Perfect” Pitch

Stephen Miller, assistant to the technology editor at *The New York Times*, offers these suggestions for making what he calls the “perfect pitch”:

- Find out what the reporter covers and tailor your pitch accordingly.
- Find out how the reporter prefers to be contacted—paper, fax, or e-mail.
- Make sure you’re pitching news or a new trend.
- Offer help on trend stories even if your client or employer isn’t the focus.
- Don’t call during deadline unless you’ve got breaking news.
- Don’t call to find out if the release has arrived.
- Don’t send clips of other stories about your client.
- Don’t call to find out when or if the story has run.
- Relationships are everything. If you get the trust of the reporter, don’t abuse it.
- Don’t lie. Advise your clients or employer not to either. ■