

Bulldog Reporter/TEKgroup International, Inc.

2007 Journalist Survey on Media Relations Practices: Executive Summary



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Survey conducted October 4 – 10, 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A broad survey of working journalists across all media was conducted using SurveyMonkey as the data collector, generated valid responses from 2046 journalists, of which approximately 47% were editors or editorial staff and 35% were reporters or writers. The objective was to establish benchmarks for journalists who use the Internet to research, follow and report news and features material.

1. Respondents reported that the single greatest change in journalism practices due to new Internet technology is that they can now research corporate and other news online 24 hours a day as well as access media contact phone numbers and email addresses.
2. Nearly *half* of all journalists report visiting a corporate website or online newsroom at least once a week, and more than 85% report visiting a corporate website or online newsroom at least once a month. Ironically, despite this new capability, a majority of journalists complain that when they visit organizations' websites, it's often difficult to find the organizations' media representatives and contact information.
3. Journalists also report a significant usage of blogs, social media and RSS feeds to stay on top of the news. While almost a third of journalists have not yet turned to blogs as a resource, more than a quarter report regularly reading five or more blogs to keep up with the subject matter they cover. Nearly 70% say they follow at least one blog regularly. More than 28% of journalists say they visit a social media site at least once a week as part of their reporting, while more than 44% say they visit a social media site at least once a month. Nearly 16% of journalists report that they receive *five or more* RSS feeds of news services, blogs, podcasts or videocasts every week, and about 37% receive at least one regular RSS feed.
4. While more than half (51.5%) of journalists report that they *never* seek audio or video material from corporate websites, nearly 20% say they seek such material at least once a month. Among journalists working in national television, that number jumps to 25% (with fully two-thirds seeking such material at least once every three months), and among journalists working in national radio some 30% seek audio or video from corporate websites at least once a month.
5. While a large majority (76.9%) of journalists report that they use their local newspapers to follow the news (followed by The New York Times at nearly 63%), some 64% of journalists report that they use either Google or Yahoo! online news services to follow the news.

DETAILED SUMMARY OF RESULTS

QUESTION #1: What is your title?

The overwhelming majority of respondents to this survey were frontline working journalists—more than 87% reported titles of reporter/writer, correspondent/columnist or editor/editorial staff. Less than 1% reported a non-editorial title.

Reporter/Writer	35.4%
Correspondent/Columnist	5.2%
Editor/Editorial Staff	46.7%
Producer	2.3%
Booker	0.2%
On-Air Talent	3.5%
Media Outlet Manager (Non-Editorial)	0.0%
Other	6.3%

QUESTION #2: For which type of medium do you work?

Nearly 45% of respondents work at newspapers, about 20% work at trade publications, and almost 15% work at consumer magazines. Almost 13.4% work at TV or radio outlets, providing a reasonable representation of the journalist profession.

Weekly newspaper	5.5%
Daily newspaper	39.4%
Consumer magazine	14.4%
Trade magazine or newspaper	20.5%
Local television	9.5%
National television	0.7%
Local radio	2.7%
National radio	0.5%
Wire service/News syndicate	2.0%
Online service	4.9%

QUESTION #3: Which beat do you primarily cover?

Respondents cover a wide range of beats, with the greatest number—13%—covering city/metro, followed by government/politics (8.7%), sports/recreation (7.3%) and general business (7.2%). Nearly 11% of respondents represent the combined beat category of entertainment/arts/culture, while nearly 8% cover the combined category of technology, business and consumer.

Accounting	0.2%	Food/Beverage/Restaurants	3.4%
Advertising/Marketing	0.6%	Government/Politics	8.8%
Agriculture/Farming	1.1%	Healthcare/Hospitals/Medicine	5.9%
Architecture/Design	0.9%	Home/Garden	2.2%
Arts/Culture	4.4%	International News	0.8%
Automotive	1.4%	Law	2.8%

Banking	0.4%	Personal Finance	1.4%
Beauty	0.6%	Professional Services	0.2%
Biotechnology	0.4%	Pharmaceuticals	0.4%
Books	0.3%	Publishing/Media	1.2%
Business, General	7.2%	Real Estate/Housing	2.2%
City/Metro	13.5%	Retail	1.2%
Education	3.3%	Science	1.6%
Electronics, industrial	1.1%	Social Policy	1.2%
Energy/utilities	0.5%	Sports/Recreation	7.2%
Entertainment	6.3%	Technology (business)	5.0%
Environment	1.7%	Technology (consumer)	2.8%
Family/Parenting	1.3%	Travel/Hospitality	2.3%
Fashion/Apparel	1.0%	Transportation	1.5%
Financial Services	1.4%		

QUESTION #4: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following frustrations sometimes expressed by working journalists about public relations professionals?

Respondents rated their agreement on a one-through-five scale, with “one” indicating lack of agreement and “five” indicating full agreement. For purposes of this report, we have combined scores of one and two to indicate general disagreement and scores of four and five to indicate general agreement.

Journalists most fully agreed with the proposition that PR professionals often try to shade or “spin” a story to their advantage, with 64.4% in general agreement. While perhaps PR professionals cannot be blamed for attempting to positively represent their clients’ cases, they might take more seriously the complaint that PR professionals interrupt them and waste their time, a proposition with which more than half of journalists generally agreed.

Likewise, PR professionals may do well to recognize that almost half of journalists generally believe PR people don’t understand a) their media or b) the subjects they cover, bespeaking a greater need for media research before pitching or distributing press materials. Indeed, 45% of journalists generally believe that PR professionals are not sufficiently familiar with their media outlets, and 48.8% generally believe that PR pros do not “understand the subjects I cover.”

Given these complaints, it is small wonder that 48.8% of journalist respondents generally agree that phone calls from PR professionals waste their time. Nor is it surprising that some 38.9% of journalists report general agreement with the statement that “I cannot easily find information I need on corporate websites” (with only 5.6% strongly disagreeing).

On the positive side, journalists *disagreed* strongly with the notion that PR professionals “do not respond quickly enough when I call them,” with 54.4% indicating general disagreement and only 5.3% agreeing whole heartedly. Another relative positive was the fact that journalists generally disagree that PR professionals often do not tell the truth, with 52.6% disagreeing with that statement generally, and only 5.7% agreeing fully.

	DO NOT AGREE			FULLY AGREE	
	1	2	3	4	5
Material sent by PR is usually not relevant to my work	5.5%	15.5%	36.1%	28%	14.9%
PR professionals do not respond quickly enough when I call them	20.3%	34.1%	27.3%	12.8%	5.5%
I cannot easily find information I need on corporate websites	5.6%	23.5%	31.9%	26.5%	12.5%
PR professionals do not understand which subjects I cover	6.5%	18.4%	26.3%	30.1%	18.7%
Phone calls from PR professionals interrupt me and waste my time	8.0%	18.8%	22.6%	24.4%	26.1%
PR professionals often do not tell the truth	18.7%	34.0%	30.3%	11.4%	5.7%
PR professionals often try to shade or “spin” a story to their advantage	3.8%	12.0%	19.8%	35.4%	28.9%
PR professionals often do not provide access to corporate executives when I need it	13.3%	24%	28.6%	22.8%	11.4%
PR professionals are not familiar enough with my media outlet	10.2%	19.1%	25.7%	24.9%	20.2%

QUESTION #5: How do you prefer to receive information about corporate, not-for-profit or government news?

An overwhelming majority of journalists—78.0%—prefer to receive information about corporate, not-for-profit and government news by email. If you account for the fact that official alerts from corporate online newsrooms are also distributed via email, this figure increases to 82.5%. Commercial newswires were a distant second choice, with only 7.6% of respondents indicating that preference. Only 6.7% of respondents indicated that they didn’t want to receive corporate communications from any source.

Via commercial newswires (such as PR Newswire or BusinessWire)	7.6%
Via press releases sent to me through the U.S. Postal Service	1.9%
Via press releases sent to me by email	77.9%
Via official alerts sent to me from a corporate online newsroom	4.5%
Via press releases sent to me by fax	0.8%
Via press releases sent to me by express delivery (such as FedEx or UPS)	0.6%
I do <u>not</u> wish to receive such information from any source	6.7%

QUESTION #6: How many blogs do you read regularly in order to keep up with the subject matter you cover as a journalist? (Please check one best answer.)

While nearly 31% of journalists say they do not regularly read blogs to keep up with their beats, almost 70% say they read one or more blogs regularly, indicating that blogs have become a popular source of information for the traditional press. Indeed, a surprising 25.9% of all journalists say they follow *five or more blogs*. However, some industries show an even larger reliance on blogs: Among business and consumer technology journalists combined, nearly 45% follow five or more blogs, and nearly 42% of journalists covering government and politics report following five or more blogs (only about 5% of political journalists ignore blogs completely).

None	31%
1 blog	9.8%
2 blogs	16.2%
3 blogs	12.5%
4 blogs	4.7%
5 or more blogs	25.9%

QUESTION #7: How often do you visit a “social media” website (such as YouTube, FaceBook or MySpace) to research subject matter you cover as a journalist?

Social media sites have also become an important research and updating tool for journalists. About one third of respondents say they don’t use these sites, and just over 28% say they visit them once a week or more. However, among journalists covering the entertainment beat, only about 14% report that they *never* visit social media sites, and more than 61% say they visit such sites once a week or more frequently.

Never	32.6%
About once a year	8.0%
About once every six months	7.9%
About once every three months	7.6%
About once a month	15.8%
About once a week	13.3%
More often than once a week	14.9%

QUESTION #8. How many blogs, podcasts, videocasts or other news services do you regularly receive via an RSS feed?

While RSS feeds are not as universally employed as other technologies covered in this survey, still more than 37% of journalists report using them to receive blogs, podcasts, videocasts and other news services, and nearly 16% report receiving five or more such feeds. Of course, among consumer electronics journalists, *fully half* say they receive five or more such feeds.

None	62.7%
1	5.8%
2	8.0%
3	5.7%
4	2.0%
5 or more	15.9%

QUESTION #9: How often do you visit a corporate website or online newsroom to research subject matter you cover as a journalist?

The corporate website and online newsroom have become a primary source of information for working journalists, with nearly 48.8% of respondents reporting visits *more frequently* than once a week and fully 73.2% reporting a visit *at least once a week*. Again, this habit must be juxtaposed with the fact that more than a half of all journalists report significant difficulties in getting specific information they seek from those sites (see question #10).

Never	2.1%
About once a year	1.3%
About once every six months	3.7%
About once every three months	4.9%
About once a month	14.7%
About once a week	24.4%
More often than once a week	48.9%

QUESTION #10: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following difficulties sometimes identified by working journalists when visiting a corporate website.

Answers to this question indicate that most corporate websites are far from media friendly. What kinds of difficulties do journalists have when they visit corporate websites seeking information? More than half of journalists generally agree that it's difficult to find a) press materials that address their interests, b) the identities of organizations' media contacts and c) contact information for those representatives. What's more, fully 47.3% of respondents generally agree that it's difficult to find organizations' online newsrooms. Given the fact that journalists so frequently use the corporate website to gain information about organizations and since organizing the corporate website for ease of use by journalists (and other publics) is relatively simple and inexpensive, this would seem to point to a major opportunity for media relations specialists.

	DO NOT AGREE				FULLY AGREE
	1	2	3	4	5
It's often difficult to navigate around organizations' websites	3.8%	14.2%	34.7%	31.3%	16.0%
It's often difficult to find organizations' online newsrooms	6.6%	20.3%	29.8%	31.2%	12.1%
It's often difficult to find organizations' media contacts	5.4%	16.5%	24.9%	31.9%	21.3%
It's often difficult to find contact information for organizations' media representatives	5.0%	16.2%	25.1%	31.5%	22.1%
It's often difficult to find press materials that specifically address my interests	3.7%	12.2%	27.5%	36.6%	20%
It's often difficult to find out who the organizations' top executives are	13.4%	26.8%	27.5%	20.3%	12%
It's often difficult to find background information about the organizations	11.8%	28.3%	32.8%	17.8%	9.4%

QUESTION #11: How often do you seek audio or video material from corporate websites for use in your reporting?

Almost half of journalists indicated that they use online audio or video from corporate websites in their reporting, a number that is probably on the rise given the reported increase of such materials across all traditional media. While only 8.4% of respondents report using such material once a week or more, that number jumps to about 25% for journalists working at national TV outlets.

Never	51.5%
About once a year	11.4%
About once every six months	9.9%
About once every three months	7.9%
About once a month	10.9%
About once a week	4.7%
More often than once a week	3.7%

QUESTION #12: Which general-interest media outlets do you use regularly to follow the news?

Journalists overwhelmingly use local newspapers to stay on top of the news—serving nearly 77% of respondents—and this number jumps to about 90% for local television and daily and weekly newspaper journalists. Surprisingly, perhaps, is that *The New York Times* is the second-most-used medium (and the most popular branded medium) by journalists to stay abreast of the news. But online news media—using Google News and Yahoo! News combined—serve some 63% of journalists (unduplicated). CNN and National Public Radio tie for third place, with about 47% of journalists relying on each of them. Fox News, while more popular among the general public, satisfies only about 16% of journalists’ appetites for news.

Local television	54.7%
Local radio	45.3%
Local newspaper	76.9%
New York Times	62.4%
USA Today	23.3%
Wall Street Journal	40.0%
National Public Radio	47.6%
ABC TV national news program(s)	21.6%
CBS TV national news program(s)	18.2%
NBC TV national news program(s)	24.7%
Fox News national news program(s)	16.4%
CNN national news program(s)	47.8%
MSNBC national news program(s)	25.9%
Google News	50.3%
Yahoo News	31.9%

QUESTION #13: What has been the greatest change in the way you practice journalism due to new Internet technology?

According to this survey, the single greatest impact the Internet has had on how journalists practice their craft is the ability to research news online 24/7, with nearly 79% indicating this change. Nearly 68% of journalists indicated that the ability to access media contact phone numbers and email addresses online was significant, despite the fact that this information was also deemed difficult to find on many corporate websites. Other advantages brought about by the Internet also pertained to corporate information, such as the ability to search corporate news archives, receive corporate news alerts targeted to their beats, and access electronic press kits online. Again, it would appear that the usability of institutional websites lags behind journalist demand for information about organizations.

I can now research corporate and other news online 24 hours a day	78.9%
I can now search corporate news archives online	42.9%
I can now receive corporate and other news via email alerts targeted specifically to my particular beat	40.2%
I can now receive blogs and corporate news via RSS	17.7%
I can now search for and download high-resolution photographs	41.0%
I can now access social media and corporate audio and video online	17.9%
I can now access electronic press kits online	46.1%
I can now access media contact phone numbers and email addresses online	68.1%