

Pop Talk: How to Develop Story Ideas

Dream Up Story Ideas That Get You Noticed

Go beyond “who, what, when, where, why and how” and consider the following tips to make your story relevant to a variety of audiences.

1. **Tie into a trend.** Taylor Swift and her girl squad enjoy lots of media attention, so we recently pitched a story that starts with the concept of building a “girl squad” and broadens it to the history of women banding together for progress in the workplace. Look to Twitter for trending hashtags or search Pinterest to ID trends.
2. **Tie into an upcoming holiday or anniversary.** A woman-focused organization like Hera Labs can tell a story about women in the workplace at any time of the year, but the story becomes more time-sensitive and compelling if it’s pitched to fall on March 8, International Women’s Day.
3. **Pull in data.** If you can ground your story with a fact or (recent) data point, it will bring gravitas to your story. Often times, we’ll write a pitch and then look for research that supports our story. Other times, we’ll notice a relevant study and build a story around it.
4. **Pull in an expert or two.** Using the “girl squad” example above, we didn’t just use Hera Labs as the source for our story. We also spoke with a psychologist who could weigh in on the importance of community for women in business.
5. **Write a listicle.** A “listicle” is an article in list form. The headline is something along the lines of: “7 Tips For...”, “4 Lessons From,” “5 Things You May Not Know About...”, “10 Ways To...”, “The 3 Most Underused...”, “How to...”, etc.
6. **Educate the public.** Is there something you wish the public understood about your organization, the people it serves or the problem it solves? For example, we work with a non-profit working to improve a trail system. Educational bike and pedestrian tours inform the public.
7. **Research editorial calendars.** Magazines and other weekly or monthly publications create editorial calendars that map out the topics the publication will cover each month of the year. These can be extremely helpful in planning your pitches and generating story ideas. For example, San Diego Magazine is planning a “Made in San Diego, Baja” editorial focus in November, so this would be a good publication to pitch if your product is made in San Diego/Baja.

Also consider the power of these news values to turn your organization’s story from snooze-inducing to newsworthy: impact, weight, controversy, emotion, the unusual, prominence, proximity, timeliness, currency, usefulness, educational value. Block out 1.5 hours on your calendar, fasten your thinking cap, and conjure up a few ideas under each category above. You’ll be surprised how quickly you can create a whole year’s worth of story ideas! If you’d like WordPop to facilitate a brainstorm, call us to book a 90-minute session!