

# 5 Media Mistakes That Make You Look Dumb

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by Janet Thomson on April 27, 2012

Connecting with the media can be somewhat intimidating. However, if you speak their language and follow instructions, you are half-way there. This is particularly important when sending out review copies to book editors or book bloggers.

Let's imagine that your book arrives and lands on Maggie the Book Sorter's desk. As customary, Maggie sorts books in three categories – “not a prayer,” “at a glance looks interesting,” and “must read now.” Trust me you want to be in the third pile.

However, landing in the **must read now** pile doesn't guarantee you'll survive the screening process, which is why it's imperative that certain media materials accompany your book, giving you an edge over the competition.

Your media materials help the reviewer (or editor) hone in on the relevance of your book, and whether it will resonate with their audience.

One of the biggest problems editors have with authors, and publicists for that matter, is being pitched books or ideas that have nothing to do with their target audience.

Here are five media mistakes to avoid, and prevent your book from ending up in the dump pile.

## **Mistake #1 Not including your press release**

In a previous post, I discussed the importance of this media workhorse, so I won't go into much detail here. What's important to remember is that book editors are busy and you have a small window of time to catch their attention.

So you better have a strong **headline** and **sub-headline**, because, if not, you might end up in the “not a prayer” pile.

## **Mistake #2 Not providing Q&As (questions and answers)**

Q&As work best with radio and TV producers, but sending it to book reviewers might give you an edge if the questions are well thought out, and nails important and relevant information.

I'll give you some advice that my political science professor gave me, and that is you must anticipate the other side's argument and be prepared to counter.

This is extremely important if you have a very controversial topic. The media love drama (sort of) and, if you can give them a great segment (or material) they'll keep coming back for more.

## **Mistake #3 Not providing a compelling author bio**

Bios can be tricky because they are very subjective, in my opinion. I have seen some very unconventional bios that worked well for some individuals. Don't be too clever though because the editor might not get you.

However, if you focus on painting a portrait of yourself through your accomplishments, you should be fine.

Remember, this is your opportunity to tell the media who you are, what you've done, and how you accomplished it.



If you hit those three key factors, it shouldn't matter if your bio is a little unconventional.

#### **Mistake #4 Not including a professional photograph**

A professional photo allows the media to see the human side of you, and how you will come across to their audience.

I'm not a professional photographer, but there are two things I can share – take professional quality images and make sure that they are 5" x 7".

Black and white photos are adequate, and not to mention cost effective when sending out review copies. And, of course, color images are doable as well, just factor the cost.

#### **Mistake #5 Not including sample chapters or excerpt**

You might be surprised to know that many authors think that book reviewers should foot the bill to review their manuscripts. As an occasional book reviewer myself, I have experience this.

Not only does this make you look dumb, but unprofessional as well. Some reviewers will accept galleys or pdf versions of your book, because they understand the cost factor.

On the other hand, if you are approaching a book blogger, they usually want a copy of the finished book, because many of them are not being paid, and simply review books out of the sheer love of reading.

So, the next time you approach a book editor, make sure that you include these items in your media package.

Do you need help creating your online media kit? Leave a message in the comment below.