PITCHING STORIES

Phone calls are good, but emails are easiest.

Email

subject line: no more than five words, show the local angle, i.e., Ventura couple marries on moon.

Body:

Who, what, when, where, why. DO NOT tell the whole story here. Just a few sentences that encapsulates your pitch. Include contact info: Name, organization, email, phone number, website. If you have pictures, send no more than 3. And make sure they aren’t blurry or dark.

IF you are applying for a freelancer position, DO INCLUDE samples of your work. DO NOT INCLUDE more than four. Best just to choose a couple that really shine.

IMPORTANT:

Know your publication. Is it a newsy pub or style and trends? Glamor? Sports? Community? At least read what is on the front page of the website. That will give you a good idea. VCReporter is an alt-weekly, Ventura County centric. There must be a local tie.

Internet search for content matter that your publication may have already covered. (VCReporter + married couple moon, name of organization, etc.) Editors don’t like dealing with writers that pitch stories that have just been done — sometimes the stories are in the current edition. No reason to waste time.

Know who is who at the publication. If you want to pitch arts, then pitch it to the arts editor, etc. Look at the masthead for position titles or go to the staff link on the website. When all else fails, just call the managing editor or editor in chief. ALSO, good to know the difference between people with similar names. (For instance, I am Michael Sullivan, a woman, managing editor. Michel Miller, a woman, arts and culture. Most think we are men, given the spelling of ours names, and many also mix us up.)

Be persistent. If you don’t get an email response, then call. Twice at most. If it’s urgent, trying calling another staff member in editorial. Also, accept rejection kindly. You may have a great story idea right around the corner and don’t want to burn bridges.

Be sure to give the editors plenty of time to consider a story. An event happening the same week the pub goes to print is not enough time. At the very least a full week in advance, the most a month. The VCReporter goes to print Wednesday mornings. You will not get a story if you send us something on Monday and especially not Wednesday morning, unless it’s breaking news, if it’s happening that same week. Most editors have their stories assigned well out in advance but not too far so they can be malleable.

Do not write in all caps unless you want an editor to throw away your pitch. ALL CAPS IS HARD TO READ AND IMPLIES ANGER OR AN OUTBURST. Italicize or bold is OK.