How to respond to a callout/query

JournoRequests

Research the media outlet (quickly)

HARO and SourceBottle both have an option for the journalist and media outlet to remain anonymous and you only find out the name of the outlet if and when you get a response

If the name of the media outlet is included, do a quick bit of research to ascertain if it’s a good fit for you

You need to decide how valuable a particular media outlet is to you and if it’s worth your time and energy to respond to a callout

Don’t spend ages checking out the media outlet because you also need to:

Respond FAST
(while still being accurate)

The quicker you are to respond to a journalist’s query on SourceBottle or HARO, the more likely you are to get their attention. Because they receive so many queries, they often run out of energy after combing through the first 20 or so. If they’re on a super tight deadline, they won’t even read that many.

Be succinct (but don’t cut corners)

Don’t send long, rambling responses. Keep your response succinct, but not too short. Use full sentences rather than three-word answers to queries, so the journalist can quote you without needing to contact you.

Bullet points can be a good idea, especially if the journalist is requesting tips. It depends on the nature of the query, which brings us to the next point...

Respond precisely (follow the brief)

Make sure you read the callout and determine exactly what the journalist is after. Don’t just scan it, see a particular keyword and then fire off a one-size-fits-all response that doesn’t address the specific requirements of the query.

If the callout asks for 5 short tips on the latest trends in healthy eating, include those 5 tips in your response.

1. First tip
2. Second tip
3. Third tip
4. Fourth tip
5. Fifth tip

If the query is looking for organic brands and yours is not, don’t waste the journalist’s (or your) time by responding. Only respond to callouts that are a match to what the journalist is looking for.

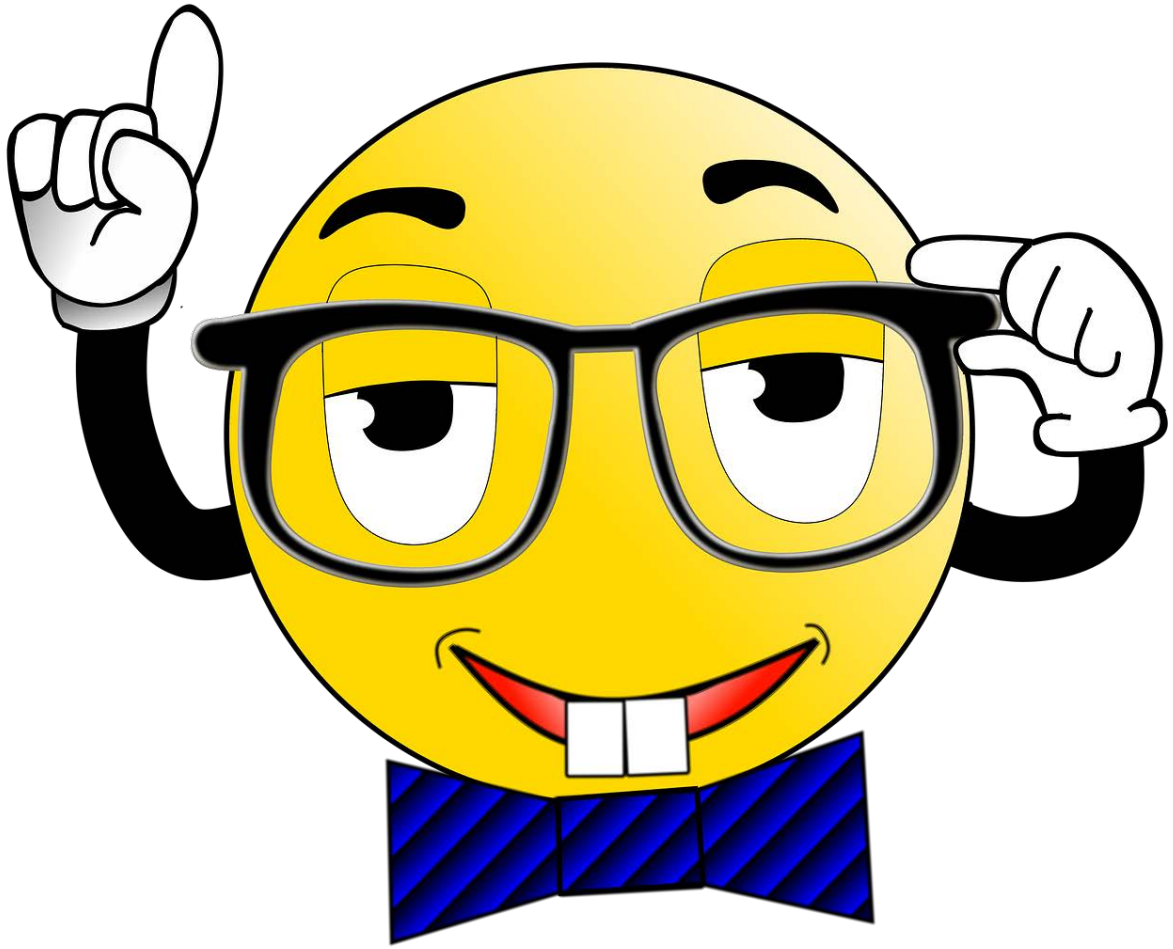
Do NOT pitch other ideas to the journalist. This is against the terms of service for these platforms and it’s bad practice. If you’re tempted to say ‘I know you’re looking for X. But how about Y instead?’, don’t do it.

Demonstrate your (relevant) expertise

If you have several areas of expertise, focus on what's required for the query. Eg if you're a marketer and the query is in regards to social media, show your expertise in social media marketing when responding

If you've won an award that's relevant to the subject of the callout, include that. If you've authored a book on the topic, mention it. This is not the time to be modest

Only respond to queries where you DO have the expertise required



Think outside the box

Journalists are often looking for new, different and quirky responses. If you stand out, the more likely you are to be featured.

Make it easy for journalists to contact you

Include your full signature at the end of your query: **name, title, email address, phone number, website URL, location**. If you're chosen to be featured, the journalist needs this information to hand, especially if they've got the quotes they need from your response and don't need to interview you

Check your response before sending

The cleaner your copy, the easier the journalist's job, which puts you ahead of other people whose responses contain errors. Also gives you more credibility

Don’t give up
(keep responding)

Generally you'll only get a reply if you're being considered for an interview or your quotes to be used. Keep responding. Not only is it good practice and you'll get faster and better with experience, but it can also result in other editorial opportunities down the track.

As Nicole Fallon, assistant editor at Business News Daily, says in her LinkedIn article:

“Due to space and time constraints, I’m simply not able to feature every source who answers my query, even if they fit all the criteria I look for. But sometimes I will add a particularly good HARO respondent to my source list and make a note to reach out in the future if I’m writing about that topic again.”

Questions?