

## Building Strong Relationships

Written by Center for Media Justice  
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For organizers, conducting communications work is not just about getting that one-time media hit to raise your organizational profile, it's about cultivating sustained relationships with journalists to shift public debate, influence decisionmakers and build power.

Building relationships with reporters requires strategy, systems and materials. Follow these steps to building the relationships you need to influence the public debate.

- **Identify key journalists.** Using your press list, identify specific reporters who are particularly influential, sympathetic to your viewpoint, or whose stories have generally been accurate and strong. This is your "A" list of journalists to stay in close contact with.
- **Access a system for tracking journalists and responding to coverage.** Use the Youth Media Council's online [Echo Press Database](#) to build your own press lists, enter new reporter contacts, and track reporter preferences and behavior. You can also send letters directly to journalists in response to particularly good or bad coverage.
- **Create a system for briefing journalists.** The best way to build relationships is to stay in touch with journalists even when you don't have news. Create a monthly newsletter, a weekly news tip email, or an opportunity-driven issue brief update to email directly to your target journalists.
- **Develop materials for journalists.** Create an online pressroom and an organizational press kit. You can update the pressroom and press kit quarterly, and announce these updates through email. See YMC's how-to on "Press Releases and Pitching" for more on what should go inside your press kit.
- **Create a plan for reaching journalists.** Identify conferences, public events and journalism mixers where you can introduce yourself to journalists and give them your press kit. Remember you're not pitching stories when you outreach, you're simply introducing yourself and your organization, and inviting the journalist to learn more about your issue through your materials. The idea is to leave the journalist with a positive impression so they believe you're a credible source and will call you the next time they write a story on your issue.

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