BLOGGINGPRO

THE ANATOMY OF A
WINNING PITCH

Building Personalized Outreach That Editors Can't Ignore

"Why do I need template pitches when I can just go to ChatGPT and ask it to write me the 'perfect' pitch?"

Sure, go ahead and do that. Shoot your one shot with a publication you'd really want to write for with an AI pitch. See how it goes.

First off, according to latest studies, people can easily spot AI texts (per SearchEngineJournal).

Key findings include:

- **82.1%** of respondents can spot AI-written content at least some of the time.
- Among those aged 22–34, the rate rises to **88.4%**.
- Only **11.6%** of young people said they never notice AI content.

Christopher Walsh Sinka, CEO of Hookline&, stated:

> "Writers and brands aren't sneaking AI-generated content past readers."

Second, you're actually losing your competitive edge if you do this.

The reason why is because **everyone does this** now.

What you can actually do is this:

1. Go to ChatGPT and ask to write you a pitch.
2. Read through that pitch.
3. Great – now you know what not to do!

Everyone can get a pitch just like that in seconds – and most people do. Chances are that whoever you're messaging has seen tens of such pitches already...and they can spot the next one a mile away.

I'm going to save you the time; here's an example pitch like that:

From now on, **this is your anti-template**. Don't use it. In fact, do everything you can to distance yourself from this structure.

The templates I'm going to show you will potentially help you achieve that.

I'm going to divide this in three steps – just so I can talk about the key aspects of a good pitch individually.

Step 1: Don't lose the game before it starts

Just read the guidelines of the site you're pitching to so that you don't kill your pitch right from the get-go.

Look out for any specific elements that are required.

Various publications will ask you to send your pitch in a specific way. This is more common for publications that generally publish a lot of content – often coming from external writers such as yourself.

If there are such requirements, you absolutely must adhere if you want for your pitch to even be read in the first place.

You'll find those on the site's "write for us" page or a similar page like that.

Some common practices by publications:

Safe words

"Remember to use the word 'bicycle' somewhere in your message."

You might find something like the above in the middle of a site's outreach/pitch guidelines. That sentence will be non-bolded, non-italicized, basically made to blend in as much as possible.

The goal is for you to prove that you've read the guidelines. Simply: if you've read the guidelines entirely then you've noticed the safe word, and you'll likely use it in your pitch.

The editor will then just "ctrl+f" your email and look for the safe word. If it's not there, the email goes to trash. At least that's how I always did it.

Specific formatting

Just for organization purposes, some publications will ask to use specific formatting like using an exact email subject, listing your past work as a bullet list at the start of your email, or sending a sample as an email attachment in Markdown format.

These are just some examples. No matter what it might be, you best not ignore them. Do as the editor asks...most of the time.

Writing Samples

Some publications ask for (usually) 1-3 links to published work.

They may specify preferred formats here too. Things like no attachments, only live links, etc.

Generally, I'd advise you to follow this advice, but maybe except in one scenario:

If you're going to be sending samples, and your best work has been published on *no-name* sites, you're still better off sending them as a Google doc – even if the editor asks for a live link.

"Which of our recent posts you liked and why?"

I've stumbled upon this request a handful of times. Though it happens way less now than before, it still does.

The idea is that the editor wants to make sure if you've even read any of their posts and why you enjoyed them.

Of course, do respond. But make it a bit more original. A nice hack is to focus on a single section of a post in your response vs commenting on the whole thing.

Step 2: Things not to do

It's really easy to mess up your pitch in the first two lines. In line one, even.

Here are the most common mistakes and what to do instead:

Don't send to "whomever it may concern"

Always get the name of the person you're sending the message to. If needed, spend most of your time preparing the pitch on just getting this one detail if it's not commonly known.

You really don't want to start your email with, "Hi guys" or the dreaded, "To whomever it may concern."

Go to the site's team/about page. Look for who's responsible for content. Address your pitch to them.

Nothing on the about page? Go to social media. Look there.

"I really loved your RANDOM_ARTICLE_1"

Don't just mention any random article from the site and start your email saying that you really loved it.

I blame the gurus for this one. Here's what I mean:

So back in the day – circa 2012 – it was considered a "life hack" to mention someone's recent post in your email to make it seem like you're familiar with the publication. It worked when it was first invented, but now, more than a decade later, it's just laughable.

Some people even went as far as copy-pasting the exact headline. So you'd see something like:

"Hey, I really enjoyed your article I Set Out to Explore AI Use by Upwork Freelancers – Then Uncovered Something Much Bigger."

I mean, they didn't even humanize it, by at least saying something like, *"Hey, I really enjoyed your recent post on those shady Upwork practices."*

So much better. Either way, yeah, don't do that.

Don't use ChatGPT to write your entire pitch

Did I mention using ChatGPT already?

Oh, yes I did, right at the start of this.

Just making sure!

…

Don't!

Don't give the editor too much choice

This goes back to the idea of sending your samples or past work.

You really don't need more than 1-3.

I know you probably have more, but just don't send them.

If the editor requires samples, they will be able to make their decision based on just 1-3 indeed.

They will actually probably make up their mind just looking at the first two paragraphs of the first sample, but that's another story.

So yeah, don't contribute to the decision paralysis.

Don't send random samples – tailor them!

Staying on the topic of samples, don't attach the same three samples to your every pitch.

If you can, tailor them to that specific publication that you're pitching to.

In other words, if you're pitching to a health and wellness website, send samples related to that topic. Don't include your stock market commentary, or your business advice posts.

Don't make your email a "me-mail"

The editor doesn't care about you.

Sorry.

They care only about what you can do for them – their site.

Don't spend 80% of your pitch telling your life story, how you've starter writing, how you're going to do great things for the editor, how you've read their site for ages, etc.

No one cares.

The pitch has to be essentially about them and their site.

Step 3: Pitch!

Now we're onto the good stuff.

Sorry it took me this long, but I just needed to show you the key ideas behind what I'm about to share. The explanations above will just make it a lot clearer why some specific pitch elements are here plus why some other elements might not be here.

The pitches I'm going to share are actually **modular**. 📦

What does this mean?

Well, there isn't "one pitch to rule them all," but you can very effectively **put together a pitch from a selection of elements**. This is what I've always done.

So based on what's required by the site and what your gut is telling you, you'd pick specific elements to put together the pitch.

Generally speaking, though, I like to build my pitches based on this framework:

👇👇👇

```
Hi [Name]*

[Rapport statement]

[Why you're sending this]*

[The give]*

[The proof]

[Tailoring]

[The ask]*

[Signature and social proof]*
```

👆👆👆

* Required, generally.

Let's tackle them one by one as we put together your pitch:

Hi [Name]*

As I said before, you absolutely do need the name of the person you're sending the pitch too.

Well, okay, let me give you a pass in one case. If you've spent two hours searching the web already – Google, social media, using tools like Hunter, and you still cannot find a name, then okay. This is when you can simply say "Hi guys."

[Rapport statement]

This is where you get to either establish a connection with the person you're messaging or remind them that you two actually already have some connection.

"I'm a regular" – casual version

Here, you just want to convey in a friendly way that you're in fact familiar with the site you're pitching to and that you've been a regular reader.

Example:

```
Karol here - your loyal reader. I've only just noticed that
you're looking for writers to come on board. I was thrilled to
see that, to be honest.

I'd love for you to consider me.
```

Given that the connecting sentence is this short – just "Karol here – your loyal reader" – this section also integrates the "why you're sending this" element right in one place (more on this in a sec).

We're not saying a lot here. We're not trying to quote some random post that we supposedly liked. Keep things simple and clear.

"I was referred by your contact"

Here's what this can look like:

```
John Doe recommended I reach out to you. My name is Karol. I'm
a writer.
```

This is a hyper-powerful statement. If you happen to know a person from the editor's network and you've actually connected with them before(!) then referencing that in your initial line is an instant attention grabber.

"Deep connection"

This one is a bit more heavy on the "connection" aspect of it, but if it's actually something true in your case, then you can by all means use it.

It goes something like this:

```
Karol here. Believe it or not, but I've been a fan of yours
since [2016] or so. You published a post about [SOMETHING]
around that time I think, and I remember how [SOMETHING
SPECIFIC, ORIGINAL ABOUT IT].
```

Most of us look fondly at the past. If you can reference a project of the editor's from back in the day, it can be a great connection.

"Foot in the door"

This is a nice trick if you're pitching to a site that has some products on offer other than the free articles.

The trick is to simply buy the thing and then mention that.

For example:

```
Karol here. Love your stuff. Here's a picture of me with your
book actually.
```

[Why you're sending this]*

It's not always obvious why someone's sending a pitch in your direction – as an editor.

Some people will want to get hired, others just shill guest posts, others ask for links, others want to out right sell you something, and so on. But oftentimes all those people will start their message the same way…"Hi guy, I really like your stuff. I was wondering if…"

Ugh.

This is why you need to be direct and specific about why you're sending the pitch:

The super-basic

You really don't have to be clever here. This is enough:

```
I've noticed you're looking for writers to come on board. I'd
love for you to consider me.
```

You don't need to quote the site's about page or "write for us" page. Just a simple statement to make things clear.

The brash and furious

If the site is likely getting a lot of pitches, you can try to be more brash.

Here are three pitches…each one further on the "brash scale."

1:

```
I saw you're looking for writers, so here's me, throwing my hat
in the ring.
```

2:

```
Word on the street is you're looking for writers. Maybe I'm the
guy for the job?
```

3:

```
You're on the hunt for writers. Lucky for both of us, I'm
exactly what you're looking for.
```

Use at your own risk.

[The give]*

You should offer the editor something in return for the time they've spent reading your pitch so far. This is the moment to do that.

I was always a bit direct when it came to this part, so the thing I usually offered right out the gate was a ready-written article.

Yes, you're reading this right; I'd write a completely custom article and send it in my pitch without knowing if it's going to hit or not.

I did this because, back in the pre-AI day, how many people actually would?

But you don't have to be like me, so I'll give you two options, starting with the "whole article" one:

The "I did the work for you" pitch

In this one, I'm sending an entire article attached to my pitch. Some options for how to structure a message like this:

```
I wrote a fresh article already to prove I'm business. I think
it should work on [SITE]. It's titled [TITLE] and it's [X]
words long. It explains [angle of the post in one sentence].

I'm attaching the article to this message.
```

Or:

```
I don't want to waste your time, so I actually wrote an article
just for you already. No strings attached. Just let me know
what you think about it. It's titled [TITLE]. It explains
[angle of the post in one sentence].

Attaching it here.
```

Or shorter:

```
I wrote an article, and I think it could work on your site
because [REASONS]. It's titled [TITLE]. Attached here.
```

The reason why this approach works so well is because it's really – really – hard to resist getting a quality article that's ready to be published just put on your desk – as an editor.

And I've been there. I know how hard it can be to roll something out some weeks when just nothing seems to be going your way (again, as an editor). So if some writer just sends their pitch at the right moment, it's an instant win.

However! This all depends on you actually being able to write a quality article that's tailor-made to that specific site. Unfortunately, you can't skip that part.

The "I ALMOST did the work for you" pitch

This one's a bit softer. You haven't written the article yet, but you have a specific idea and you won't hesitate to use it.

Here's what that can look like:

```
I'm working on an article that I think you might be interested
in. It's titled [TITLE] and talks about [IDEA]. I'm getting my
data together and have the main outline mostly ready. Let me
know if you'd like to have a glance at it. No strings attached.
```

The idea here is that I'm not pitching some random ideas out of the blue, but making it clear that this is something I've already pre-researched and started working on. It's also much easier for the editor to respond positively – with a "Sure, let me know." I mean, it doesn't seem like a big ask to do it, especially when the editor sees the "no strings attached" reassurance.

The "pick your favorite" pitch

Here, you're simply giving the editor a couple of options to pick from. Some publications – per their guidelines – might not accept complete articles out of the blue. In those cases, sending a couple of choices can be better.

Some options:

```
I've looked through your [X] recent posts to see what's gotten
the most response, and I have a couple of ideas that I think
could work. Let me run these by you quickly:

- [IDEA 1] - [one sentence explanation]
- [IDEA 2] - [one sentence explanation]
- [IDEA 3] - [one sentence explanation]
```

This one is a bit more further down the road in terms of completion (similar to another pitch from above):

```
Are you open to any of the following ideas? I've already
started working on them, preparing the outlines and getting my
data together. I think they could fit well on your site.

- [IDEA 1] - [one sentence explanation]
- [IDEA 2] - [one sentence explanation]
- [IDEA 3] - [one sentence explanation]
```

[The proof]

Here, you're proving that you're a capable writer.

How to do that? Simple, samples!

You really don't need to be clever in how you position them:

```
By the way, you can see my other writing here:

- [link 1]
- [link 2]
- [link 3]
```

Or:

```
Also, here are some samples of my writing on other industry
sites:

- [link 1]
- [link 2]
- [link 3]
```

Remember, don't send more than three.

[Tailoring]

Remember how in the very first step in this resource I mentioned how you must read the guidelines on the site and do what they're asking for?

Yep, this is it in action.

So if they want something specific, include it:

```
Here's the info you asked for:

- whatever
- it
- might
- be
```

If there was a safe word, just use it directly:

```
Bicycle!
```

[The ask]*

This is your call to action...more or less.

Some options:

```
Let me know if you're interested.
```

```
Do you think the ideas I shared might be interesting to your
audience?
```

```
If you're interested, just let me know and I'll be happy to get
started promptly.
```

Or even:

```
I'm looking forward to hearing from you.
```

[Signature and social proof]*

This is a two-parter. First, just sign off with a friendly message:

```
Thanks for your time and have a great day!
```

```
Have a great day!
```

Then, just include links to your site and socials in your signature. Things like LinkedIn or Twitter/X links really are enough. You don't necessarily need to say "check out my LinkedIn" or anything. The link alone is enough.

Now it's your turn to pitch!

That's it! We've gone through lots of specific pitch-parts.

What you can do is just pick the elements you need and put together a pitch that's been tailor-made for the site you're sending it to.

For example, you could do:

```
Hi Mark

Karol here - your loyal reader. I've only just noticed that
you're looking for writers to come on board. I was thrilled to
see that, to be honest.

I'd love for you to consider me.

I wrote a fresh article already to prove I'm business. I think
it should work on CoffeeWorld. It's titled "Why Tea Is Terrible
for You" and it's 1200 words long. It explains how tea has been
the root of all evil throughout history.

I'm attaching the article to this message.

By the way, you can see my other writing here:

- coffeesite1
- coffeesite2

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Have a great day!
```

Or:

```
Hi Mark

Karol here. Love your stuff. Here's a picture of me with a bag
of your coffee actually: image_link

I saw you're looking for writers, so here's me, throwing my hat
in the ring.
```

```
I've looked through your 20 recent posts to see what's gotten
the most response, and I have a couple of ideas that I think
could work. Let me run these by you quickly:

- "Why Tea Is Terrible for You" - It explains how tea has been
the root of all evil throughout history
- [IDEA 2] - [one sentence explanation]
- [IDEA 3] - [one sentence explanation]

Do you think any of these might be interesting to your
audience?

Thanks for your time and have a great day!
```

I hope you've found this resource useful! Feel free to reach out if you'd like to learn more about these concepts – on pitching and getting hired for a writing job.
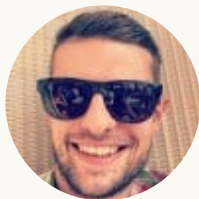
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Karol Król is a blogger, freelance writer, and team member at BloggingPro.

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