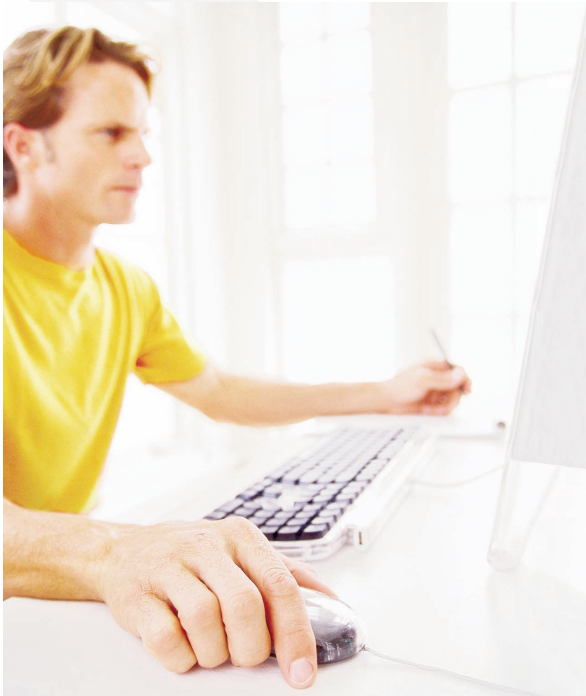




What is Response Source?



Journalists use Response Source to request all kinds of help with news, features or other editorial projects. Examples include asking for company or product news, products to review, case studies (both corporate and personal), interviews, comment, background, and statistics or contact details.

By helping journalists with their enquiries you can gain valuable media coverage and build relationships with journalists relevant to your sector.

Even if you don't reply to any enquiries, Response Source is a useful way of monitoring press interests and attitudes. A bit like a press cuttings service but informing you about articles before they are even written!

Each journalist enquiry is sent by email to hundreds of subscribing PRs so you don't have to take the time to reply when you can't help. But when you do have something to offer, it's important that you send the best response you can. This guide aims to help you do that.

The first part of this guide is a short checklist for every reply you make to a Response Source enquiry. The second part helps you make the most of the information you'll find in each enquiry, and the third section is a collection of more detailed tips gathered from our journalist users on how you can make your reply stand out from the rest. Finally, there are some suggestions on making more out of the opportunities you get from your Response Source subscription.

Index

A checklist for replying to Response Source enquiries successfully	Page 2
Using the information provided in the Response Source enquiry	Page 3
Tips for getting your reply read by the journalist	Page 5
Some suggestions for making more out of your Response Source subscription	Page 6
Be inspired!	Page 7



A checklist for replying to Response Source enquiries successfully:



- 1 **DO** read the enquiry thoroughly before replying.
- 2 **DO** note the deadline and make sure you respond in time.
- 3 **DO** follow any instructions given by the journalist.
- 4 **DON'T** phone the journalist if they've asked you to reply by email or vice versa.
- 5 **DON'T** send large attachments or pictures unless specifically requested to do so.
- 6 **DON'T** confuse the journalist with an unclear subject line. A popular format for replying is: ***"XYZ subject Response Source reply"***.
- 7 **DON'T** send press releases that aren't directly related to the enquiry.
- 8 **DO** make sure you include contact details where you or your client can be easily reached.
- 9 **DO** make sure you paste the journalist's email address into any reply by email, or your reply may be delayed.
- 10 **DON'T** dismiss enquiries asking for case studies or asking ***"who does the PR for XYZ?"***. There may be hidden feature opportunities in this type of request.



Using the information provided in the Response Source enquiry



You will almost always find that the journalist gives you all the information you need to answer a Response Source enquiry satisfactorily, as far as the journalist is concerned. So the most important thing is to read the Response Source enquiry carefully and before you send your reply make sure you have covered all the journalist's questions, requests or specifications. Below is an explanation of the information provided in a Response Source enquiry, and how you can make the best use of it.

✦ Publication: Helpful because you can immediately pick out enquiries from your target press. If you don't recognise the publication, make sure you read the **Publication Description** section of the enquiry. You could also try searching the Response Source archive for other enquiries from the same magazine. Subscribers to FeaturesExec's magazine database will be able to find extensive information on most business and technology publications and some from other sectors. Take a look at the A-Z index on the main menu at featuresexec.com. To subscribe to FeaturesExec email sales@dwpub.com or call 0870 774 0777.

journalists on FeaturesExec's journalist directory (a subscription service). Also, if the journalist is a freelancer this can help you further target the information you provide. A freelancer may have fewer information resources to hand than a staff journalist, so offering background information and further contacts could be helpful. If they work from home they may have a slower internet connection (so the rules about unsolicited attachments apply more than ever). Because freelancers work for many different publications you will have to be clearer than ever about the subject and publication you are providing information for.


✦ Publication Description: Not all journalists provide this, but where they do the information is often the best description you can get. It will help you tailor the information you provide to the publication's style and to the readership. It can also help you decide if an unfamiliar publication is relevant – there is often a description of content, circulation, readership and style. If you want to reply to an enquiry that doesn't have this filled in, it's worth checking the Response Source archive for past enquiries that may provide more details. Go to responsesource.com/rsindex/ - you'll need your username and password.

✦ Deadline: One of our journalist users' most frequent complaints is that PRs' replies too frequently arrive after the deadline. Please take note of the deadline immediately you get the enquiry. It is the journalist who selects the deadline according to what they have to do so it is extremely important to take notice of it. If the deadline is short, get in touch as quickly as possible with the information you can provide at the time, and invite the journalist to let you know if more information will be useful to them when you can get it – it's no good sending a perfect reply when it's too late for the journalist to use. If the deadline is short, it's not the journalist's fault – sometimes something crops up at the last minute or an interviewee/product drops out and they need an answer then and there. It's a great opportunity if you are ready to follow it up. For this reason, make sure there is always someone to check Response Source enquiries – all full-time employees based at your office




Using the information provided in the Response Source enquiry Continued

are eligible to receive enquiries so contact admin@dwpub.com if you would like a colleague to receive the enquiries as well.

 **Query:** The most frequent complaint we get from journalists is that some replies don't answer all of their question or worse, are irrelevant. This wastes the journalist's time and it doesn't help your future relations with the journalist. If it's a perfect publication for your client or product to appear in but the enquiry really isn't relevant, restrain yourself – if the journalist gets a good response he or she will very likely use Response Source again and your chance will come!

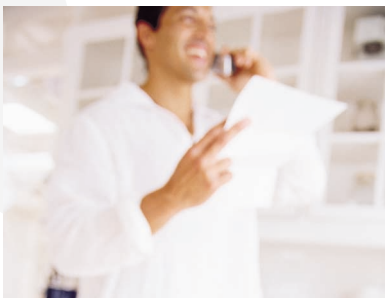
However, many journalists use Response Source for very wide ranging requests for news, products et cetera - *"It's great for any kind of round-up feature where a mass of up-to-date product or event information is needed"*. Take advantage of these but make sure you follow any provisions set by the journalist about how to send information or only providing new information.

Some journalists use this section to request that you reply in a certain way. For example *"Please put 'XYZ subject/publication Response Source reply' in your subject line"*. Or they might request that you answer a specific set of questions for a Q&A column or to help them decide which people they need to interview. Some may invite you to send photography but to send it to a particular contact at their publication or by post. Check for these directions - every enquiry is different and there are new journalists using Response Source every week so you can't predict what will be in an enquiry.

 **How to reply:** The journalist has a choice of any or all of email, phone or fax, so if they choose not to provide any of these it's certain that they don't want to you get in touch that way. Most journalists choose email so they have written information that's easy to search. *"If the request specifies email replies only, please stick to this as it usually means that we're busy on the phone with interviews/waiting for phone interviews and an email is the best way to get our attention"*. Occasionally the journalist will want products or photography sent by post, and in this case they will give their address in the main **Query** section.



Tips for getting your reply read by the journalist

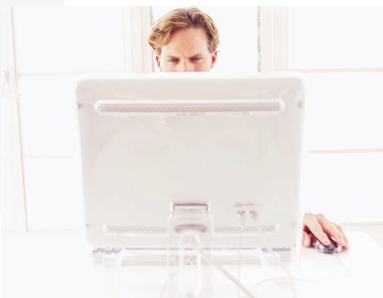


As already mentioned, some journalists will give you particular guidelines on how to reply, what to send, et cetera. In the absence of these, following some basic rules for every reply to a Response Source enquiry will make your reply easier for the journalist to deal with and therefore improve your chances of getting coverage.

- ★ Remember to paste in the journalist's email address if you are replying by email** – the reply-to address on Response Source enquiries comes through to staff at Response Source as part of a mechanism to prevent journalists receiving out-of-office replies. The journalist only receives enquiries meant for him/her, so there are fewer emails to sort through and more chance of reading – and using – yours. But if you forget to paste in the journalist's email address, your reply will be delayed.
- ★ Make the subject heading clear and helpful** – some journalists send a lot of enquiries at once so just sticking your client's name in the subject line or hitting reply might mean your message isn't read or interpreted as useful until it's too late. Following the most frequent request from our users is probably the best approach – *"XYZ subject/publication Response Source reply"*.
- ★ Never send a journalist an attachment**, whether it's an image or a Word or Excel document, unless they request it and are expecting it. Many freelancers and even staffers will be annoyed at the download time – most importantly, none will want the risk of virus infection that comes with an unsolicited attachment. If the journalist is requesting images then send them appropriate material, but check that they haven't asked for it to be sent to a colleague or by post. If you aren't certain that they want the attachment, then just let them know that the material is available and how they can get hold of it if they are interested.
- ★ Carefully follow any instructions that the journalist provides** – make sure you answer by the deadline, in the format that they request, using the specified method of reply.
- ★ Always keep your reply brief and to the point**, making the link between your client or product and the journalist's needs as clear and concise as possible. Suggesting alternative angles or "comparison" products and case studies is usually unpopular. And don't respond to an enquiry with an unrelated press release, especially as an attachment. It's unlikely to get you any coverage and you risk getting on the wrong side of the journalist.
- ★ Provide full contact details for follow-up**, so that the journalist can get more information in the quickest way possible, and so that you don't miss out on any opportunities through missed calls or unanswered emails. If you work for an agency, journalists would be happiest if you can provide contact details for your client as well. Try to give them every option – phone, email, fax and post.
- ★ Try to answer the enquiry fully in your reply** – if there really is something that you can't get within a reasonable time, let the journalist know you are working on it and that you will be able to provide further information if they need it.



Some suggestions for making more out of your Response Source subscription



We do as little vetting as possible of enquiries. Journalists trust Response Source as a quick and flexible tool for their research, especially when they are on a short deadline. This means they are more likely to continue to rely on the service and the responses you send. As a result of the flexibility of the service you might find that you get many enquiries that seem irrelevant at first glance. However, opportunities may exist in these enquiries and it's worth thinking twice before you move on.

- Use enquiries as a way of learning about your target press and journalists** – after a few enquiries from the same publication or journalist you will start to build up an idea of their attitudes and interests. When relevant enquiries come through you'll be able to bear this in mind as you structure your reply and therefore have a better chance of standing out from others. Most journalists use the service again and again and you will sometimes see comments like *"you know the sort of thing I need by now"* or *"the usual subjects"*. So if the enquiries you see are the right publication, the right journalists, but the wrong subjects, don't ignore them, but use them as a source of ideas and information.
- Personal case studies can still provide coverage for products and services** – journalists are always looking for case studies for consumer magazines. They may not seem immediately relevant to your client. For example an enquiry involving a photo shoot might allow a fashion label to help out with clothes or a venue to provide a location, or you may represent an expert who can provide comment. Also, most journalists understand the need for an interviewee to get something out of the feature. If the publication permits, the interviewee will often be able to mention their business or service - so it may be worth taking part even though it's not a product or service enquiry.

- "Who does the PR for company XYZ" enquiries can be a useful tool** – if a journalist wants to speak to your competitor it's quite possible that they would be interested in you or your client as well. Sometimes journalists on a very urgent deadline do send an enquiry saying *"I want to speak to this company and this company ONLY"*. Don't contact them offering your client as an alternative – but do use it as useful intelligence on your competitor's success, and on what subjects the journalist is interested in and how they work. Look out for their enquiries in future as an opportunity for you may arise.

Sometimes just helping out can help you build your relationship with a journalist or publication – if you can help the journalist track down some contacts or case studies, they might not provide you with instant coverage, but you might be making a contact that would be useful in the future.

- Consider filtering if you feel you are getting too many enquiries** – you can then be ready to respond to those enquiries you don't filter and check through the rest at your leisure. The enquiries are all structured the same way so that you can easily filter them to a separate email folder on most email software. You can choose to filter all enquiries, or try just filtering those from certain journalists or publications. But don't forget to check your filtered enquiries regularly or you may miss a deadline!



Be inspired!



Journalists really love Response Source and many rely on it for quick information and new contacts. Nine out of ten say they would use it again and most find the information useful, so replying to a Response Source enquiry will make your information stand out from any other PRs who are contacting the journalist.

Here are a few comments from recent journalist users:

- ✦ *“...the sheer weight of response I got meant that anything unrelated was just an inconvenience. But the massive response is also testament to how well the site works.”*
- ✦ *“I sourced a number of case studies and saved myself a lot of work!”*
- ✦ *“It looks like I may have got some good material for features as well as loading up our gadgets pages with cool stuff. Definitely makes my job, particularly at the start-up of a new mag, a lot easier.”*

Each effective reply you send is not just a chance for you to gain coverage and improve your relations with the journalist. Useful replies improve the journalist's experience of Response Source so they will come back again and again, to send more enquiries and offer you more opportunities. Just remember the tips in this guide and you'll stand a good chance of sending one of those replies that journalists are so enthusiastic about.

We're always here to help, so if you ever get stuck or have any kind of question give us a call on 0870 774 0777 or email us at admin@dwpub.com.