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# NAVIGATING THE NEWSROOM: A REPORT ON ENHANCING PR-JOURNALIST COLLABORATION

OnePoll

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a rapidly evolving media landscape, journalists face increasing challenges that impact their ability to produce high-quality content. To gain deeper insights into these challenges and the dynamics between journalists and PR professionals, 72Point leveraged its own market research arm, OnePoll, to survey UK national journalists.

At 72Point, our teams sit at the heart of the SWNS newsroom, benefiting from daily editorial insights. However, we sought to extend our understanding further, aiming to explore the specific obstacles and opportunities that exist for PRs and journalists to collaborate effectively—especially at a time when media professionals are increasingly time-poor and PRs are constantly challenged to find stories that cut through and create real impact.

The survey revealed critical insights into the pressures journalists face, including resource constraints, shrinking editorial teams, and the stress of meeting audience targets. These challenges are compounded by the rise of AI and the need to adapt to new technologies. On the other hand, PR professionals are under pressure to deliver content that resonates and is relevant in this fast-paced environment.

This whitepaper delves into these findings, offering actionable recommendations to foster better collaboration between PRs and journalists. By addressing these challenges and leveraging opportunities, both industries can work together more effectively to support the journalism industry amidst declining audiences and an evolving digital landscape.

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# CHALLENGES IN JOURNALISM

**Journalists today are grappling with a complex set of challenges that hinder their ability to produce high-quality content and maintain their audiences:**



## Lack of Resources (49%)

A significant portion of respondents identified resource scarcity as a primary hurdle. This challenge is compounded by shrinking editorial teams, with an average reduction of 23.6% over the past two years. The result is increased pressure on remaining staff, who must do more with less, exacerbating stress and reducing the time available for in-depth reporting.



## Declining Audience (46%)

Journalists face mounting pressure to attract and retain audiences in an increasingly fragmented media landscape. Difficulty in identifying and quantifying their audience adds to this challenge, making it harder to tailor content that resonates with readers. The stress of meeting page view targets only heightens this issue, creating a cycle of pressure that can undermine the quality of journalism.



## Budget Constraints

Alongside shrinking editorial teams, journalists are also contending with clients' shrinking budgets. This financial strain not only affects the resources available for investigative journalism but also limits opportunities for innovative storytelling and in-depth reporting.



## Competition and Time Pressure

The race to "beat the other agencies to the scoop" is an ongoing challenge, particularly in a fast-paced news cycle. Journalists must work quickly to publish stories, often under intense time pressures, which can compromise the depth and accuracy of their reporting. This competitive environment, combined with the stress of constant deadlines, contributes to high levels of work-related stress.



## Sustainable Commercial Model

The industry's struggle to find a sustainable commercial model in the face of declining advertising revenues and shifts in consumer behaviour is another significant challenge. Journalists are caught between the need to generate revenue and the imperative to maintain editorial integrity, a balancing act that is becoming increasingly difficult to manage.



## Work-Related Stress

Reflecting these compounded challenges, 43% of journalists rate their current stress levels as high, with 14% describing them as very high. High workloads (94%) and lack of resources or support (50%) are major contributors to this stress, which is further exacerbated by the constant pressure to meet targets and deliver on audience expectations.

Despite these challenges, 73% of journalists reported that their workplace offers some form of mental health support. However, 16% neither have nor believe these resources are necessary, indicating a potential disconnect between the available support and its perceived value. Addressing these challenges requires not only additional resources but also a cultural shift in how mental health and work-related stress are managed within the industry.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that leverages technology, data, and training:

- **Access to Data and Sources:** Over half (51%) of respondents believe that better access to data and sources would enhance their work. This indicates a strong need for PR professionals to provide relevant, well-researched data to support journalistic endeavours.
- **Training and Professional Development:** 46% of journalists expressed a desire for more training opportunities. Repeating successful training sessions, such as those conducted for journalists affected by job cuts, could be beneficial. Additionally, equipping journalists with AI skills could further reduce stress by automating routine tasks, a potential relief identified by 70% of respondents.

## PR AND JOURNALIST COLLABORATION

The relationship between journalists and PR professionals is generally positive, with 59% of journalists describing their interactions with PRs as favourable. However, there are several areas where collaboration could be significantly improved to better meet the needs of journalists and enhance the quality of content produced:

- **Relevance and Specificity in Pitches:**

Journalists are inundated with pitches, many of which are irrelevant to their specific publication or audience. This scattergun approach not only wastes time but also dilutes the effectiveness of PR efforts. Journalists have emphasised the need for PR professionals to send targeted pitches to specific journalists rather than using a blanket approach.

One effective strategy we use at 72Point is to create page-ready news copy that is highly relevant to the publication, which is sent out on the SWNS newswire. This approach not only saves journalists time and effort in editing and selecting content but also increases the likelihood of the story being picked up. By delivering content that is already tailored to the publication's style and audience, we make it easier for journalists to incorporate the material into their work seamlessly.

Additionally, it's crucial to include relevant, personalised information at the top of the email, such as location and dates, and to be mindful of timing—avoiding end-of-day releases or sending information that will soon be outdated. PRs should also respect the journalist's workload and deadlines, keeping



emails brief, to the point, and ensuring that they confirm receipt to minimise unnecessary follow-ups.

- **Quality and Handling of Visual Content:**

There is a strong demand for PRs to improve the quality and handling of visual content. Journalists have expressed frustration with receiving photographs that lack detailed captions and metadata, leading to wasted time as they manually enter this information. PR professionals should ensure that all images, especially those that are expensively produced, come with relevant and detailed captions embedded in the metadata of every single JPEG. Additionally, case studies and good images that fit the story, as well as authentic celebrity endorsements, are valued—PRs should avoid using celebrities unless their quotes are relevant and genuinely enhance the story's angle.

- **Understanding and Respecting Journalists' Time:**

PR professionals should be mindful of the heavy workload journalists face. Younger PR professionals, in particular, have been noted for constant chasing, late-night calls, and irrelevant pitches that add to journalists' stress. Understanding the audience and sectors covered by the journalist's publication is crucial. Non-specific, non-targeted press releases that have nothing to do with the journalist's work are particularly frustrating, especially when PRs expect personalised responses. PRs should research the journalist's previous work and current focus areas to



ensure their pitch is relevant and likely to be of interest.

- **Building Strong Relationships:** Journalists appreciate PR professionals who take the time to understand their audience and craft pitches with the right angle in mind. Building relationships over time, focusing on storytelling rather than sales, and offering exclusivity can make a significant difference in the PR-journalist dynamic. It's also important for PRs to be respectful of deadlines and not to pester journalists for PDFs or clippings afterwards—using a media intelligence agency is a more professional approach.
- **Tailoring Content to the News Cycle:** In today's fast-paced media environment, pitches need to be hooked onto something trending to catch a journalist's attention. Headlines must be clickable and relevant; otherwise, they risk being overlooked. PRs should place key details or the story hook in the first line of their pitch to grab attention immediately.

- **Respect for Journalistic Integrity:** Journalists have highlighted the importance of receiving thorough and meaningful responses to their questions. If a journalist asks specific questions, PRs should avoid sending bland statements with no substantial answers. Also, PRs should research the outlet they are pitching to, ensuring the content fits within the publication's guidelines and editorial tone. Over-promotional or product-related releases that don't align with the publication's standards or broadcast guidelines are unlikely to be used.

By addressing these issues, PR professionals can better support journalists in their work, leading to more productive collaborations and higher-quality media coverage. Tailoring content to the specific needs of journalists and their audiences, respecting the practical aspects of media production, and focusing on real storytelling are all critical steps in strengthening this vital relationship.

## THE ROLE OF AI IN JOURNALISM

AI is becoming an increasingly important tool in journalism, though its adoption remains cautious among media professionals. According to the survey, 24% of journalists use AI or machine learning for content creation, while 22% utilise it for research and data analysis. However, a significant portion (43%) are not using AI at all, and only 27% view AI as having a positive impact on the future of journalism.

AI offers several promising applications that could alleviate some of the pressures faced by journalists:

- **Automating Routine Tasks:** AI can automate routine tasks such as suggesting 'tags' to categorise stories (e.g., recommending a "Russia" tag for stories about Putin), generating prompts for calls to action (like asking readers to comment or participate in polls), and even crafting headlines. This can save journalists valuable time and allow them to focus on more complex aspects of their reporting.
- **Content Creation Support:** Beyond categorisation, AI can assist in generating story ideas, transcribing interviews, and creating key takeaways from longer pieces of content. Some journalists have noted AI's ability to offer insights into what a typical person might look like or behave in certain scenarios, based on data analysis.
- **Enhanced Research Capabilities:** AI can also streamline research processes by suggesting relevant angles or key data points, ensuring journalists have quick access to the information they need.

Despite these benefits, there are significant concerns about AI's role in journalism. While 70% of respondents see AI as a tool that could support them by automating routine tasks, 76% are concerned that it could lead to a loss of the human touch in storytelling. Additionally, 70% believe there are ethical implications associated with AI, particularly in maintaining journalistic integrity and avoiding biases in AI-generated content.

Moreover, there is apprehension about AI's potential to contribute to inaccurate stories and the spread of misinformation. As AI systems generate content based on existing data and algorithms, the risk of perpetuating errors or producing misleading information is a serious

concern. Journalists fear that reliance on AI without proper oversight could compromise the accuracy and reliability of news, further eroding public trust in the media.

The cautious adoption of AI reflects a broader uncertainty about its impact on journalism. While AI offers opportunities to reduce workload-related stress and improve efficiency, the potential risks associated with its use must be carefully managed. Providing journalists with training and resources to use AI effectively, while ensuring it enhances rather than detracts from their work, will be key to integrating this technology into the newsroom responsibly. By doing so, the industry can harness AI's benefits while safeguarding the accuracy and integrity of journalism.

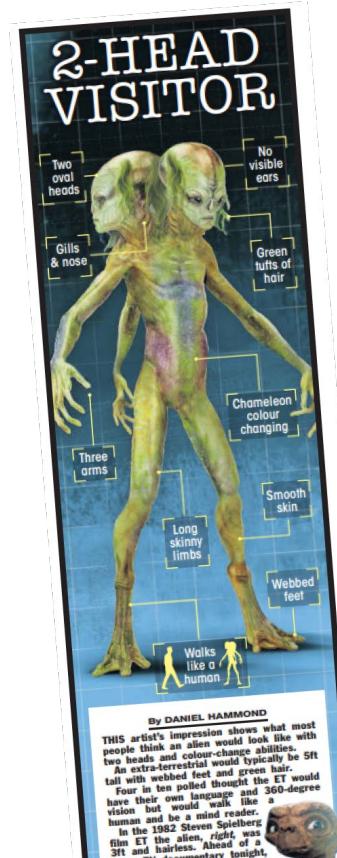
## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PR PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT JOURNALISTS



### Invest in Resources:

- **Content Support:** PR professionals can assist journalists by providing well-researched, high-quality content that is nearly ready for publication. This could include thorough press releases, fact-checked background information, and detailed case studies that reduce the time journalists need to spend on verification and editing. By offering polished content, PRs can help address the resource shortages within editorial teams.

- **Visual Assets:** Providing relevant and high-quality visual assets, such as images and infographics with proper metadata, can save journalists time and effort. Visual content that is tailored to the publication's audience and seamlessly integrates with the written content can also enhance the overall value of the story, making it more engaging and easier to publish.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** PR professionals should explore opportunities to collaborate with media organisations on special projects or content series. These partnerships can provide journalists with access to exclusive stories or data, enriching the content they can offer to their audiences and potentially drawing in additional resources for their editorial teams.





## Enhance PR Training

- **Tailored Pitches:** PR professionals should undergo training to understand the specific needs and preferences of the journalists and publications they are pitching to. This includes developing an awareness of the publication's audience, tone, and content style. By crafting pitches that are highly relevant and aligned with the journalist's work, PRs can build stronger relationships and improve the chances of their stories being picked up.
- **Journalistic Standards:** Training should also focus on the ethical standards of journalism, including accuracy, impartiality, and respect for copyright. PRs must ensure that the content they provide adheres to these standards, which helps in building trust with journalists and reduces the risk of rejection or negative feedback.
- **Understanding Media Cycles:** PRs should be trained to understand the timing of media cycles and deadlines. Sending pitches at the right time and avoiding end-of-day or last-minute submissions can increase the likelihood of coverage. Additionally, training should cover how to respond to follow-ups efficiently and respect journalists' time by avoiding excessive or unnecessary follow-ups.



## Leverage AI Thoughtfully

- **Content Efficiency:** PR professionals can leverage AI tools to streamline content creation processes, such as generating story ideas, identifying trending topics, and crafting data-driven insights that journalists can use. By providing this AI-enhanced content, PRs can help journalists focus on more in-depth reporting and storytelling.
- **Customised Media Lists:** AI can be used to create more accurate and customised media lists, ensuring that pitches are sent to the most relevant journalists. This reduces the burden on journalists who often receive irrelevant pitches and improves the efficiency of PR outreach.
- **Ethical Considerations:** PR professionals should be aware of the ethical implications of AI in content creation. Training should include how to use AI responsibly, ensuring that any AI-generated content maintains the integrity and human touch that is essential in journalism. This approach will help in preserving the trust between journalists and their audiences.



## Promote Mental Health Support

- **Advocate for Mental Health Resources:** PR professionals can advocate for better mental health support within media organisations by encouraging open discussions and providing resources that help reduce stress. This could include partnering with mental health organisations to offer workshops, seminars, or online resources tailored to the needs of journalists.
- **Mindful Communication:** PRs should be mindful of the pressures journalists face and adjust their communication strategies accordingly. For instance, avoiding unnecessary late-night emails or last-minute requests can help reduce stress. Understanding the journalist's workload and showing empathy in communication can go a long way in building a respectful and supportive relationship.
- **Promote Work-Life Balance:** Encouraging a balanced approach to work and respecting journalists' personal time can help foster a healthier work environment. PRs should avoid excessive demands for immediate responses and be understanding if journalists are unable to engage outside of working hours.



By implementing these strategies, PR professionals can play a crucial role in supporting journalists, enhancing the quality of media content, and fostering a more collaborative and productive relationship between both industries. This proactive approach not only benefits journalists but also ensures that PR campaigns are more effective, impactful, and aligned with the needs of the modern media landscape.

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## CONCLUSION

The media landscape is in flux, with journalists facing significant challenges that impact their work and well-being. To effectively support journalists in this evolving environment, it's crucial to adapt your outreach strategy. At 72Point, we understand these pressures and have developed a news generation approach that delivers page-ready content directly to the wire. This not only saves journalists valuable time in editing and selecting content but also ensures that the stories are immediately ready for publication, meeting the high demands of today's fast-paced news cycle.

In the digital landscape, where capturing and retaining reader attention is more critical than ever, the focus on visual assets that make content come alive is essential. By providing high-quality, relevant images and engaging visual elements, PR professionals can enhance the appeal of their stories, leading to better ROI for journalists who need to keep readers on the page.

However, beyond just providing great content, the importance of strong relationships cannot be overstated. Our media relations expertise sets



us apart, as building meaningful connections with journalists is crucial. As some journalists have shared, "If I don't know you, I'm not opening your email." This underscores the value of trust and familiarity in media engagement.

By strategically collaborating with journalists, developing meaningful relationships, tailoring content to their specific needs, and incorporating innovative solutions like AI and rich visual assets, PR professionals and media organisations can play a vital role in overcoming the challenges of the modern media landscape. This approach not only ensures that the delivery of impactful stories continues to thrive but also solidifies the trust and connection essential for effective media relations.

If you'd like to book in a lunch and learn with 72Point where we can take you behind the newswire and delve further into the types of stories journalists are after, news cycles and tips on engagement, book in by emailing [hello@72Point.com](mailto:hello@72Point.com)



## About the research

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