



Q2 2024 Propel Media Barometer

The framework
of a perfect pitch



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Thank you!

Overview

Every quarter Propel does a study on nearly a half million pitches sent to journalists, sharing its findings in its Media Barometer report. These reports highlight overarching trends and changes occurring in the PR industry so every organization can get earned coverage they need to succeed in a difficult media landscape.

It's not surprising that securing high-quality press coverage keeps getting more difficult, especially given that Q1 of 2024 was one of the [worst quarters](#) for journalist layoffs since the 2008 financial crisis. This report will enable you to understand how best to reach out to the journalists and people in media who are still hanging on, and help you fine-tune the tactics you should use to ensure your organizations continue to get the coverage they deserve. The report is based on the performance of over 405,000 pitches sent during Q1 of 2024.

Here are a few key findings from our email PR pitching study:

- The average response rate to pitches was **3.43%**, an **8.89%** increase from the previous quarter, and the highest rate Propel has ever recorded.
- Open rates stayed constant at **46%**.
- Subject lengths of **1-5** words were responded to most (**4.73%**) but subject lengths of **10-15** words were sent the most (**36.54%** of all pitches).
- Pitches with body lengths of **51-150** words were responded to the most (**7.51%**).
- Podcasters responded to pitches **23.35% less** than in Q4 2023, while influencers **increased** their responsiveness by **34.19%**.
- Of the over **4,300** pitches sent mentioning the Super Bowl, only **0.58%** were responded to.

Journalist engagement



Q1 2024 open & response rates: Q/Q comparisons

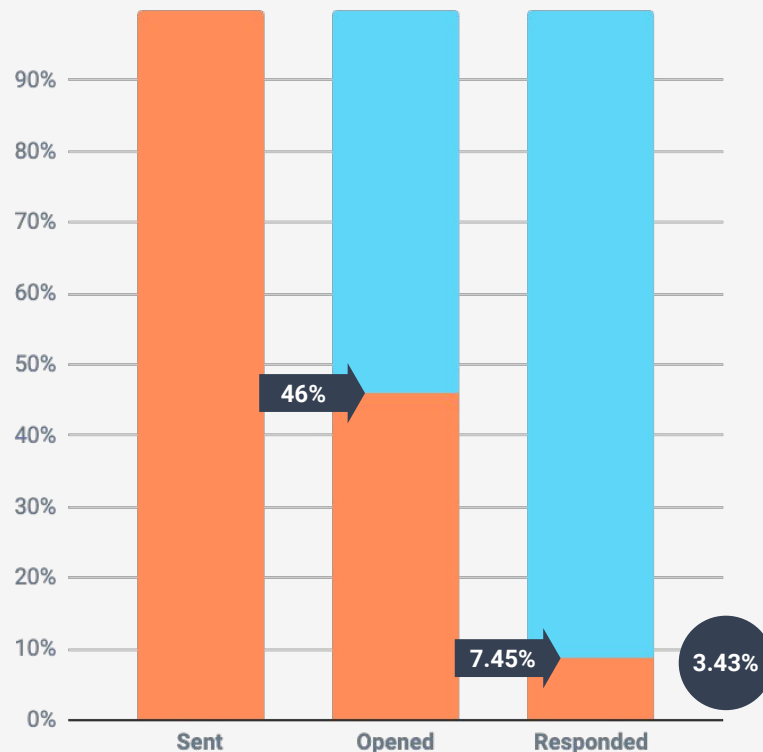
Journalists opened an average of **46%** of the pitches they received.

- This is approximately the same open rate as in the previous quarter.

Journalists responded to an average of **3.43%** of the pitches they received. A response can include anything from “no thank you” to “I’ll take the story.”

- This represents an **8.89%** increase from the previous quarter.
- Moreover, this is the highest response rate Propel has seen since it began coming out with its Media Barometer reports.
- The increased response rate, despite PR professionals sending fewer pitches overall, indicates they’re shifting tactics to more focused and personalized pitches to get better results.

Average open & response rates

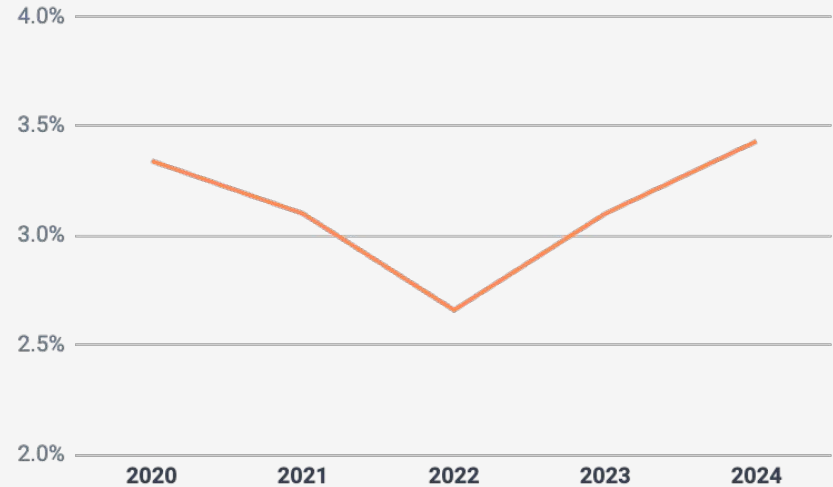


Journalist engagement explored: Y/Y comparisons

This continued upwards trend in response rates coincides with the rise of genAI and its large-scale incorporation into PR workflows.

It appears that genAI is able to assist both PR professionals as well as journalists in mitigating the effects of media layoffs. Communicators are able to write more clearly, concisely, and directly to the overworked editorial staff members who remain at, publications, which in turn shortens the amount of time a journalist needs to spend reading and understanding a pitch, and determine whether the story is relevant for them quicker.

Q4 Average Journalist Response Rate (%)



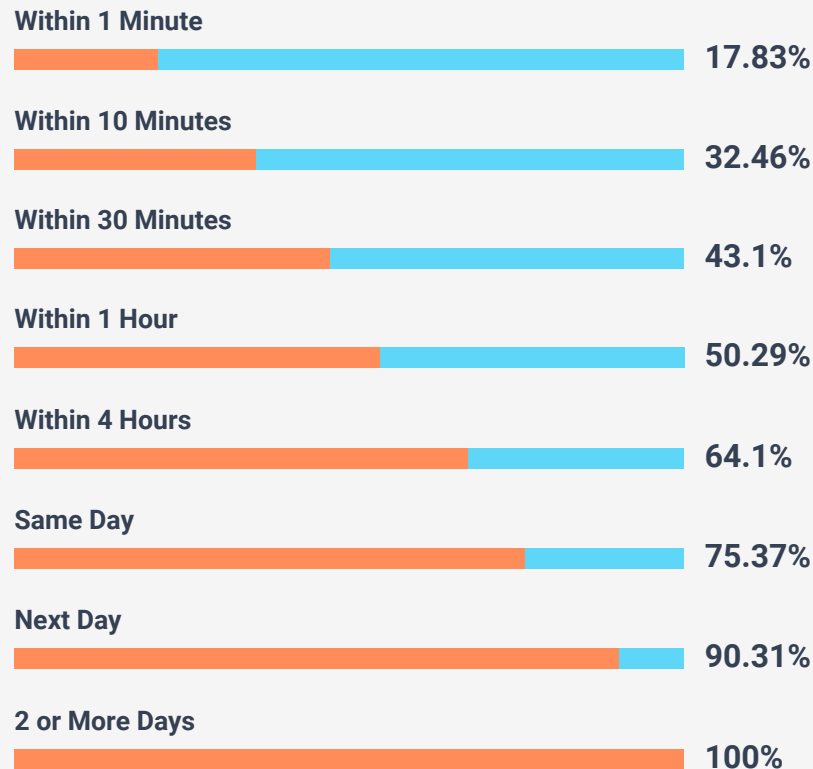
Timing



Average time to open a pitch

There was a slight increase in the number of pitches being opened in the first hour compared to previous quarters, with **50.29%** of pitches being responded to in this timeframe.

However, there was a **4.33%** increase in the amount of pitches opened within 30 minutes, the highest increase in any of the tranches of pitch opens.



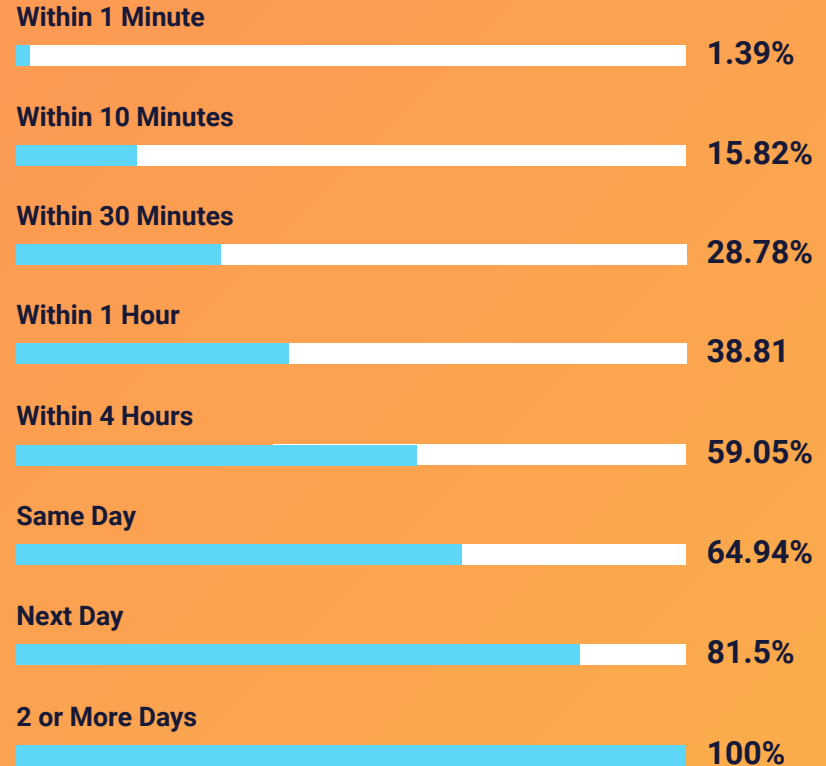
Average time to respond to a pitch

59.05% of all pitch responses occurred within four hours of the pitch being received.

It is also important to note that nearly **65%** of pitches are responded to the same day it's sent (if it is going to be responded to at all). This is a **2.39%** decrease from the previous quarter. However, there was a **7.1%** decrease in the number of responses coming within 30 minutes.

This further underscores how important it is to be respectful when pitching journalists, particularly when it comes to time-sensitive content. Propel recommends PR professionals follow up after a day or two if they still haven't heard back from a journalist.

However, when working to place evergreen pieces, Propel recommends patience with their media contacts to preserve their relationships.



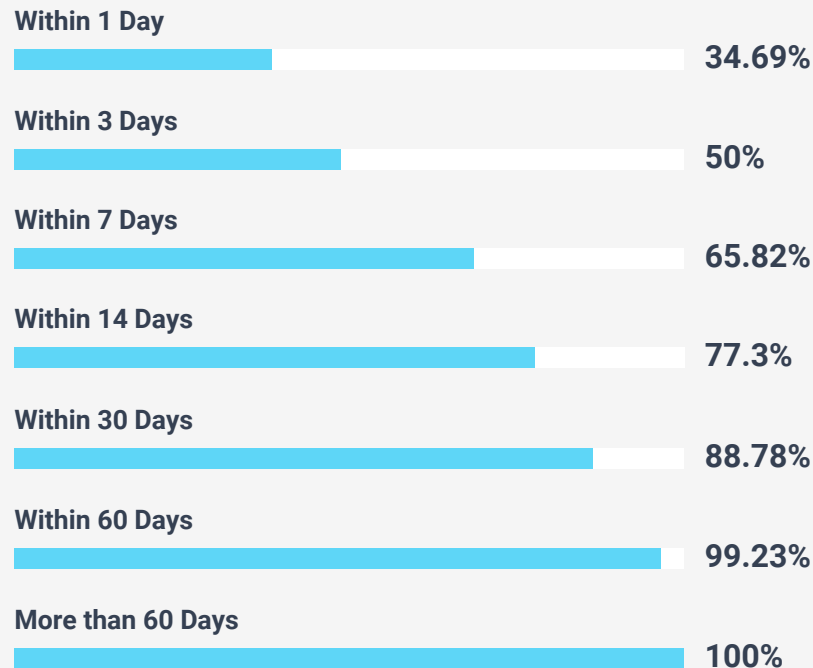
Average time to publish a story

In the past quarter, we saw a downturn in how quickly journalists were publishing stories.

For example, while **50%** of stories were still being published within 3 days, this is a **23%** decrease in the number of stories getting published in the same amount of time compared to the previous quarter. In Q4 of 2023, **75%** of stories were published within 3 days, while in Q1 of 2024, **65%** of stories were only published within a week of being pitched.

This appears to show the impacts of the continuing media room layoffs, which only increased over the course of Q1, and saw several publications, including Sports Illustrated and The Intercept, close down. In fact, the previous quarter saw the highest number of newsroom layoffs since the 2008 financial crisis.

Publications are trying to do more with much less, and therefore require communicators to be understanding and flexible with their situation.



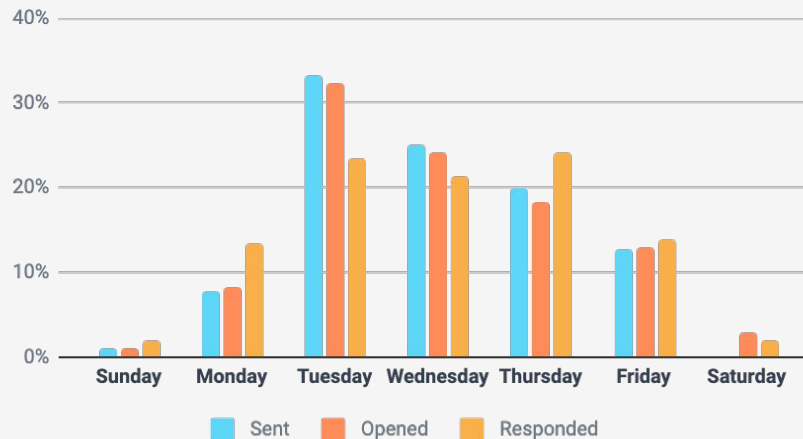
Please note that the figures only include publish times for pitches that were turned into articles and aren't accounting for pitches that don't lead to publication.

Send vs. open vs. response times

Tuesday is surprisingly the most popular day for sending out pitches, and the most popular day for journalists to open pitches is also Tuesday. However, the most popular day for journalist engagement was actually Thursday.

- In Q1 of 2024, PR pros sent out **33.22%** of all pitches on Tuesdays
- Journalists also opened the most PR pitches on Tuesdays, with **32.21%** of all pitch opens occurring on this day.
- Interestingly, the majority of journalist responses occurred on Thursdays, with **24.17%** of all pitches being replied to on that day.

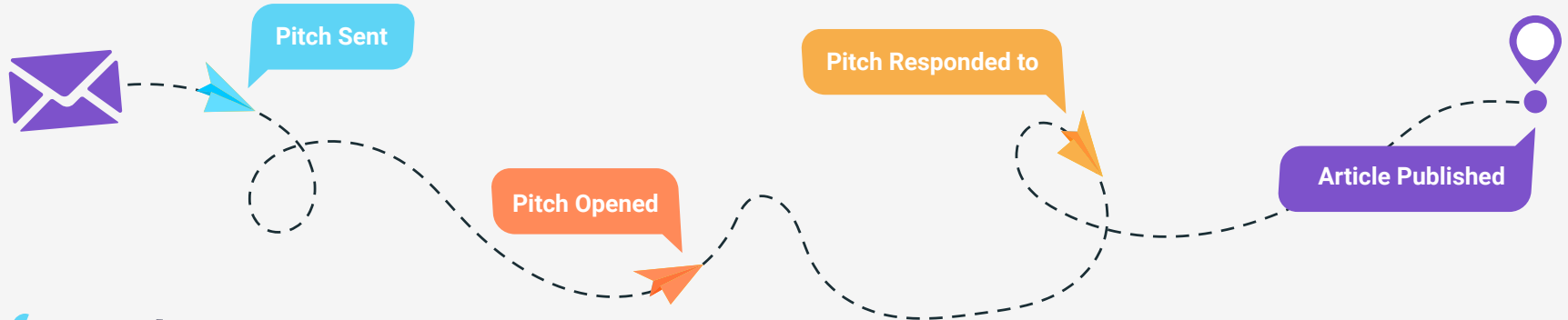
Pitches Sent vs. Opened vs. Responded



From pitch to placement – understanding the media relations timeline

For this study on "pitching cycle" duration, we determined the amount of time it takes for the majority of pitches to move throughout the pitching cycle, from the initial pitch sent, all the way to an article being published. See a breakdown of the pitching cycle stages showing the time it takes for the majority of PR pitches to be opened, responded to, and published:

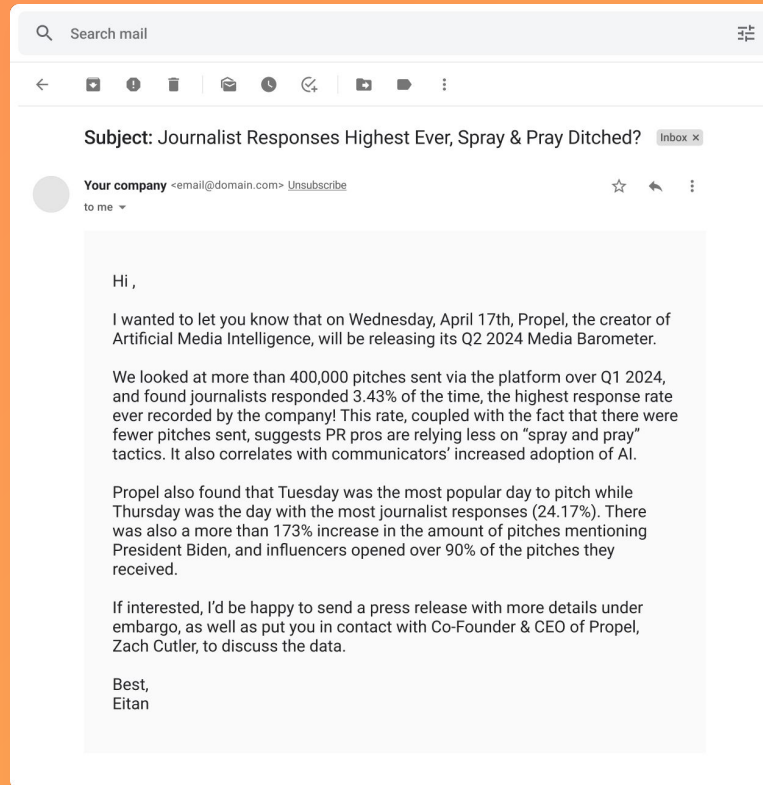
- The majority of pitch opens happen within **1 hour** of a journalist receiving the pitch (**50.29%** of all opens).
- The majority of pitch responses happen within **4 hours** of a journalist receiving the pitch (**59.05%** of all responses).
- The majority of news placements are published within **3 days** of the initial pitch being sent (**50%** of articles published).



The framework of a perfect pitch



The perfect pitch structure of Q1 2023



Trending news topics at the pitching level



Tech

When it comes to tech there's really one acronym that everyone is pitching about: AI. From genAI to autonomous cars, this was the most pitched about topic in Q1 of 2024 with over 4,800 pitches. In fact, it was pitched **42.76%** more than the previous quarter.

However, it also received one of the lowest response rates at **1.43%**, representing a **62.07%** decrease. AI is still a hot topic being covered in the media, but it appears that if you aren't one of the owners of a tech behemoth, journalists are less interested. If a communicator wants to talk about AI, it better be groundbreaking to break through the noise. Meanwhile, given the astronomical rise of Bitcoin to its highest levels ever, crypto and Bitcoin saw pitch volumes increase by **20%** each. However, these pitches were responded to **38.37%** and **17.72%** less respectively.



Tech funding

Q1 2024 saw a massive decrease in the volume of tech funding pitches being sent, with all rounds seeing decreases across the board. Interestingly, there were no Seed Round pitches sent at all via the Propel platform. In fact, the number of pitches mentioning “investment” went down by **49.72%**, those mentioning Series A’s went down **29.85%**, Series B’s saw a **36.5%** decrease, and Series C’s saw a **19.18%** decrease.

However, it appears that given the dearth of funding round pitches being sent, journalists who cover funding rounds responded extremely well, with every type of Series pitch seeing an increased response rate. Series A pitches were responded to **12.42%** of the time (a 14% increase), Series B pitches **17%** of the time (a 311% increase), and Series C pitches a whopping **21.72%** of the time (a 43.84% increase).



Tech funding 2

There was a 1,760% increase in the number of pitches about mergers and acquisitions, pointing to a growing trend of larger companies acquiring smaller ones and integrating them into their existing organizations.

These numbers seemed incredible, so Propel reached out to journalists who cover funding rounds to understand what was happening. The company found these journalists were indeed receiving significantly fewer pitches for funding rounds and more about M&A's. They also mentioned that the funding pitches they were receiving were announcing smaller rounds than in previous quarters.



Climate and Energy

As the earth continues to go haywire, climate continues to be a popular pitching subject. In fact, there was a **162%** increase in the amount of pitches mentioning climate in Q1 2024. However, given this inundation ,along with so much else going on in the news cycle, journalists were less interested in this subject, responding to these pitches only **1.1%** of the time. This is a **62%** decrease from the previous quarter.

Meanwhile, in terms of sustainable energy, PR pros pitched about solar energy **192%** more than in the previous quarter, while no one pitched about wind at all. For comparison, last quarter saw almost equal volumes of pitches for each subject. Journalists are still quite excited about solar energy, responding to these pitches **6.67%** of the time.



Social Media

As social media continues to cause disruptions to the way news is reported, especially in light of elections and worldwide conflicts, it was interesting to delve into how these platforms were pitched.

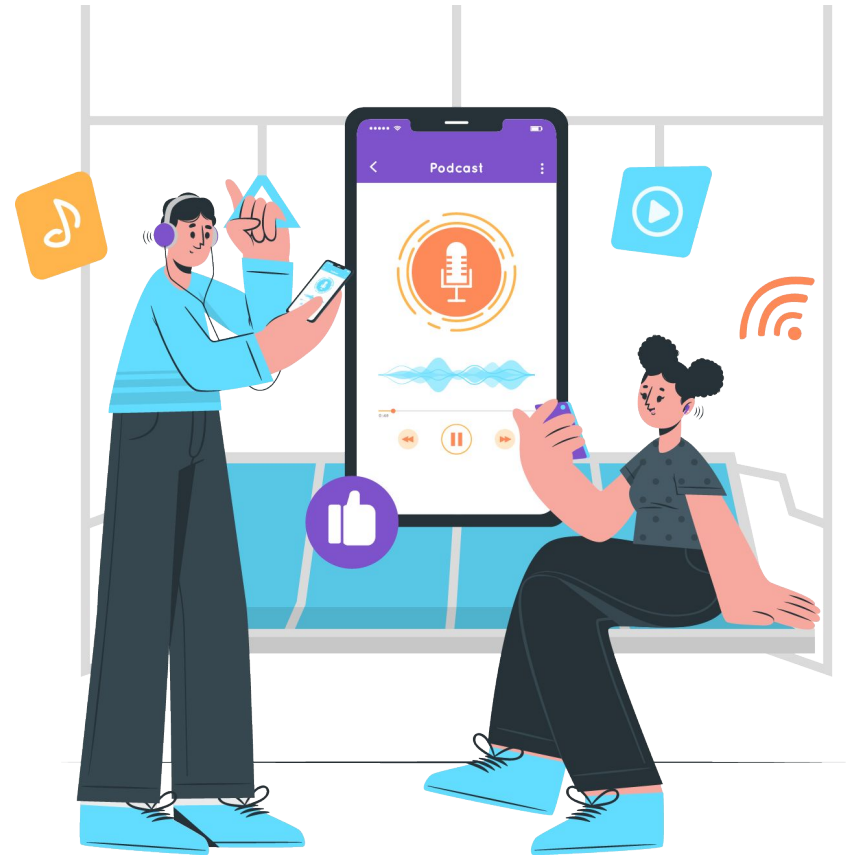
For instance, Twitter/X saw a **72%** decrease in the amount of pitches about them, with journalists responding **38%** less as well at **2.62%**. Meta, which wasn't pitched about at all in Q4 2023, saw over 500 pitches be sent out about them, receiving a **3.89%** response rate. There were no pitches about TikTok or ByteDance



New Media

Podcasts are well on their way to becoming a crucial part of the media landscape and a part of PR pros' pitching lists. In fact, the number of pitches to podcasts continued to grow, albeit only by **2.67%** to **4,344**. This is the largest number of pitches to podcasters that Propel has ever seen. However, podcasters appear to be getting overwhelmed by the number of pitches, with response rates falling by them falling to **10.31%**, a 23.35% decrease. However, podcasters do open **74%** of pitches meaning that the chance of your pitch getting read is quite high.

Influencers have continued to be a lot more responsive to pitches. With the rise of "jinfluencers," or journalist influencers, there is a debate within the PR industry as to how much to use them. But one thing is certain, they are extremely responsive. In fact, they are the most responsive form of media by far, opening about **92%** of the pitches they receive and responding to **37.72%** of them.



Big Names

It appears as if communicators are getting the message that using celebrities as hooks doesn't work. While there were some people who held out hope that using Taylor Swift would result in some coverage, it simply didn't. However, there was some interest in the US presidential election. Donald Trump saw the volume of pitches sent about him drop **73.59%**, while the response rates to his pitches actually improved over Q4 2023, from 0% to **0.36%**. Meanwhile, there was an increase of **173%** in the number of pitches sent mentioning Joe Biden. However, none of these pitches were responded to.

Perhaps most interesting about this is that in Q4 2023, both candidates each had approximately 1,000 pitches sent about them each. However, this past quarter saw Joe Biden's name appear in over 2,500 pitches, and Donald Trump's name appear in only 277 pitches.



Key Takeaways

We analyzed a sample of 405,964 pitches PR people sent via the Propel platform during Q1 of 2024 for this study to figure out what makes up the “perfect” pitch today.

Key findings include:

- Journalists opened an average of **46%** of the pitches they received.
- Journalists responded to an average of **3.43%** of the pitches they received. A response can include anything from “no thank you” to “I’ll take the story.”
- Approximately **65%** of all pitch responses happen within the same day the pitch is received.
- The time it takes for all stories to be published has **increased** in Q1 2024 with mass journalist layoffs and dwindling media resources.
- The majority of news placements are published **within 3 days** of the initial pitch being sent (68.31% of articles published).
- PR Pro pitched the most on **Tuesday**, but journalists responded the most on **Thursday**.
- Podcasters are responding to **10.31%** of pitches, but Influencers are responding to **37.72%** of the pitches they receive.

How will you use the Propel Media Barometer to change how you do media relations? To continue learning from our quarterly reports on the earned media landscape and its constant evolution, make sure to [keep up with Propel](#).



Thank You & Happy Pitching!

Still looking for the right PR tools to help you tell your story? Propel PRM is made to make your life easier as a comms pro, from researching the perfect media contacts to easily measuring results.

Most recently, we now offer AI-powered pitch & press release writer and media list builder that you can [try for free here](#).

Finally, you can [book a demo with our team](#) to learn more about Propel, the all-in-one PR tool suite you've been looking for.

[Learn About Propel](#)