

PCNY Luncheon  
The Advertising and Marketing Beat  
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**Theresa Howard, Ad/Marketing Reporter *USA Today***

Theresa Howard has served as a reporter for USA TODAY's Money section since October 2000. She covers consumer marketing and advertising for the paper and assists in retail coverage. Additionally, she writes about consumer trends across various industries.

Prior to joining USA TODAY, Howard served as a senior editor covering marketing news and strategy for Brandweek magazine. There she wrote about fast food, wines and spirits and carbonated soft drinks for the leading weekly trade publication.

Howard joined Brandweek following seven years with Nation's Restaurant News, where she covered the fast food industry for five years before becoming the marketing editor.

Howard holds an MBA in marketing from Baruch College. She graduated from the State University of New York College at Cortland where she studied English and Journalism.

**Opening Remarks**

Well, since I've been covering advertising/marketing for three years, I think hopefully most of you should know that at this point, I'll kind of pick up where Jonah left off on the unprepared note, but as far as my coverage goes I share coverage with Bruce Horovitz who covers consumer marketing out of Virginia, Lorrie Grant who writes about retailing first and foremost, that's her primary beat, I also help out on that, Mike McCarthy now covers media, which you guys may or may not have noticed that he shifted over to that beat. Sometimes you'll see my name with stories that run the gamut so sometimes I can understand if it's confusing, exactly what I write about, because I'm a very util-... util-... helpful person. I have a lot of utility around the company, and I'm one of those people who kind of get pulled into stories. It could be a one-shot hit on Martha Stewart and then I'm not on that. So don't be confused, the first thing I really cover is marketing and advertising. We are not on the inside business side of things, we're very different from the Journal and the Times on that front, we're really consumer oriented. If it's, to Jonah's point, about an executive change we're not interested, unfortunately. If it's somebody having the biggest campaign in their history and it's only five million dollars, we're not interested in it. If it's the most unique and biggest product launch in the company's history, it may be for that product but it's not of interest to us. If it's not in the dollars, it's not going to be seen by our two million readers. It's got to be out there and visible to people for us to write about it.

Now, having said that, one of my biggest pet peeves is unprepared PR people. I can't tell you, and I'm going to start with Stuart here, because I've actually forwarded him some emails that I have received addressed to him. One was blatantly just misaddressed, so that I can understand. One was a pitch to me and I was clearly the

second pitch on it which was fine, but for some reason I just scrolled down the email and I found the initial pitch to Stuart. Be prepared, know what you're sending out, know literally who you are pitching. Another email I got was really funny and I refrained from actually writing back to the person, it was a pitch from the PR person to the client with an overview on how to pitch all these people. And I was listed in there, "This is how she operates, this is..." And I just thought I really bit my tongue from not calling this person back and just saying, "You really should watch how you send things out." So those are my ugliest stories right there.

Know when to pitch to us. Everybody here is on deadline. I don't have Caller ID, I may pick up the phone when I'm on deadline, it's not my choice, it could be my editor, could be someone I'm working with on a story. If I had Caller ID I'd leave the phone alone. But don't call at 3:00 in the afternoon or 4:00 in the afternoon. Especially don't call at 3:00 or 4:00 on a Friday. Our page is locked up for Monday unless there's some big breaking news over the weekend. We publish Monday thru Friday and Monday's pretty much spoken for, we have departmental coverage in Monday's paper, AdTrack is a standing feature in Monday, so that's planned out well in advance. If people have questions on AdTrack later I'll be happy to answer them.

Pitch early, unless it's a big story with a lot of money and it's a big consumer brand -- THAT we'll take at 3:00 in the afternoon. Otherwise, give yourself a little time and if I'm like your second person don't expect us to jump on it, because you might have gone elsewhere and they didn't pick up on it. Kind of have low expectations, is the way I look at it. And if it gets picked up, it just gets better from there.

The other thing is, know what we cover. And I can't tell you how many people say, "Oh, I've read this, I've read this..." but it's clear they don't read the paper. Read the paper, throw us a bone, make us feel better. And I'm not feeling down that a lot of people go to the Journal and the Times because I know we're a unique animal, but read the paper. Know what I write about, know who covers what. I get so many calls and emails and pitches about something that not only would I not cover but our paper just would not cover. So just understand what the coverage is about. I know I sound really harsh here, I don't mean to but it's kind of the reality of it.

I think reading the paper, going back to knowing who you pitch it shows up with how you pitch us. If you understand that, we're more inclined to take a story. And I feel really bad when people call and they're really enthusiastic about it, they've got this great story and you're on deadline and you're trying to be nice and you just can't do anything with it. So I try and cut to the case, sometimes I say, "Send me an email" and you never know. Send an email, don't send a fax, don't send regular mail. I don't even look at my faxes anymore. Send me an email and if I don't get to it right away there might be an opportunity three weeks down the road where I'm doing a story on teen advertising or teen marketing kind of like Abercrombie and you're scrambling to find people. So it's good to send those things. Don't expect us to follow up the next day, but when the story is right I'll be happy to call and reach out if it's an appropriate source and I have the right information and the kind of studies that might support trends in something.

And I think that's kind of it.