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The right pitch can help get coverage for the smaller tech companies.

While it can be harder for smaller consumer tech companies to net influential coverage, it is certainly possible. As with any company, it requires a combination of research, perseverance, and a unique story angle.

Though it may be wise to focus on national titles, it's important not to forget the hometown paper. That's the guidance Chicago-based GolinHarris gave Cobra Electronics, a client also based in the Windy City, when it launched its wireless remote controlled radar/laser detector at the 2007 International Consumer Electronics Show (CES).

"Working with a consumer electronics company in the Chicago market, we follow our local tech reporters," says Jenny Braga, VP at Golin.

Part of the strategy was to offer an exclusive to *Chicago Sun-Times* veteran tech reporter Howard Wolinsky, with the option to run his story January 4, days before the CES kickoff January 8.

"[Golin] has been working with Wolinsky for years," Braga says. "We've tried to maintain that relationship [with] periodic briefings and sharing updates on new products."

"Cobra is scrappy, publicly traded, and offers interesting products," Wolinsky tells *PRWeek*. "But it's because they are from Chicago that [it is] of most interest to me."

After all, the Second City is in the midst of adding hundreds of red-light cameras, and Cobra has the first commercial product to detect such devices.

"We are a hometown paper and they are a hometown company, so never underestimate the local angle," Wolinsky adds. "If it was based in some other city, I would probably pay less attention; maybe no attention."

Aida Causevic, SAE at Lewis PR, says that when pitching a relatively unknown product, aligning the client's solution with a timely, big-name product launch can be the key to getting coverage.

Lewis client Iogear provides PC and Mac peripherals and Bluetooth devices and networking solutions, including KVM switches (for controlling multiple computers from a single keyboard, video, and mouse).

"We reintroduced the company's KVM switch to consumers by tying it to Apple's Mac Mini product launch, highlighting the switch's compatibility with it," she says. "The [media] response was very positive and this relatively unknown product became tightly associated with the Mac Mini."

Lewis also developed a Valentine's Day Iogear pitch, polling Web site visitors on what products they prefer from sweethearts.

"We received the coverage not because of our name, but because we gave a quirky, different story, which appeals to editors and their readers," she explains.

When promoting upstart brands, it's good to be aggressive, but not too aggressive.

"Don't over-hype or over-pitch," suggests Phil Missimore, VP at Waggener Edstrom Worldwide, warning that premature drum-banging alienates reporters.

He advocates patient, consistent messaging effectively delivered over time to breed familiarity with reporters.

In the interim, Missimore tracks trends in his clients' industries to inject them into larger stories - as long as that client can assume a legitimate role.

Airfoil PR recently found success for Profil.es, a new social networking tool from ProfileBuilder, by orchestrating a soft launch at the TechCrunch conference in July.

"The soft launch provided a unique sandbox/preview feel for the tech reporters and analysts to see the technology in its earliest phases," says Tracey Parry, SVP at Airfoil.

While this strategy can be risky, it paid off as the site was introduced, tested, and reported by top names in tech - including Tech Crunch's Michael Arrington, Dean Takahashi from the *San Jose Mercury News*, and Chris Nuttall from the *Financial Times*.

"Don't brag right away," advises Chris Kooluris, senior media specialist, Ketchum. "You must gain admission to the dance before you show your moves. Think, 'What is the first thing I want them to know about my product or service that will turn them on?'"

"Also, do your homework," he advises. "Claiming to be the first or only can get you into trouble. [If you] think you know it all, believe me, the media know more."