



## Direct Email Protocols and Prohibitions

**If you reach out directly to the media, be selective and comply with anti-spam regulations.**

No one likes getting unsolicited emails – or “spam.” Journalists’ biggest complaint is being spammed with irrelevant, unwanted story ideas from people seeking news coverage. Yet many journalists cite email as a very important channel for getting ideas.

So when you “do your own” PR and want to distribute news about your business via email, how do you effectively use this channel, secure media coverage, and begin productive relationships with journalists? Here are two **musts**:

### **1. Be selective.**

Do some research before you distribute your release. Find out what outlet and what person will cover your business. It could be someone who covers a particular industry (like banking, for example) or someone (like a business editor or general assignment reporter) who covers your city or region. You can do simple research just by looking at the blogs, print and online media that YOU follow when you’re trying to find out what’s going on in your business or city. Or you can select industry-specific distribution lists in tools such as CisionWire that disseminate your news to media who cover your business.

### **2. Comply with the law.**

In 2003, the U.S. Congress passed what is colloquially called the CAN-SPAM Act, establishing legal standards for the sending of commercial email. The [Federal Trade Commission](#) defines a commercial message as any electronic mail message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service.

Thus emailed press releases promoting your business must comply with the act. However, the FTC has set seven helpful guidelines for businesses sending commercial messages. We’ve **bolded** three protocols that apply especially to press releases:

1. Don’t use false or misleading header information.
2. Don’t use deceptive subject lines.
- 3. Identify the email message as a press release, press advisory, or PR-related communication. You must disclose this clearly and conspicuously in the subject line.**
4. Tell recipients where you’re located by including a valid postal address.
- 5. Tell recipients how to “opt out” of receiving future email from you. Your message must include a clear and conspicuous explanation of how to opt out of future emails you may send. CisionWire automatically includes an “opt-out” or “un-subscribe” link on every media email that it sends.**
- 6. Honor opt-out requests promptly. You must process opt-out requests for at least 30 days after you send your email, you must honor an opt-out request within ten business days, and you must honor all requests unconditionally.**
7. Monitor what others (including direct marketing agencies and PR firms) are doing on your behalf.

Remember, though, that using a tool like CisionWire will help you reach the right editors, get your news out, and comply with the CAN-SPAM Act.