

DON'T PEDDLE CANNED GOODS.

In days of yore, publicists used video news releases (VNRs) to drum up journalistic interest. Essentially a packaged news segment all ready to air, these microwaveable niblets of journalism served two needs: those of publicists who didn't care how blatantly fake their story placements looked when they hit the screen, and those of journalists who had better things to do than, well, journalism.

As those halcyon days fade into obscurity, VNRs are met with increasing resistance from members of the media as audiences flee the dial in droves for content they actually trust. Yes, I mean the Internet, but nobody said there was any logic to this business.

Today, journalists and publicists alike must sing a lovelier song for their supper. Don't insult journalists' sense of professional dignity by assuming they're too lazy to cobble together their own segments. This is not to say that your bounty of excellent B-roll will go unappreciated. Quite the contrary, the more heavy lifting you can contribute to the story in the form of research, background, and actual edit-ready material like

formatted visuals and exclusive quotes, the more effective you'll be. Just don't expect a lot of say in what runs and what doesn't.

In a modern market that's increasingly niched, it's also the journalist's job to know the audience. To understand what's on the horizon that will interest *their* demographic and produce stories that speak to those people in an engaging manner. After all, there are over 100 million cable subscribers in the US alone.

Moreover, the consumer audience is far savvier than ever before. This is not the 50's, when cigarettes could be sold as good for you: "*If you really like to smoke a lot, why not make the change to Kent, today? Why not start with a carton?*" Today, any hint of prefab bullshit has them reaching for the remote or turning the page.

You may get some off-peak filler slots for entire stories in the can, but helping journalists tailor their own will get you much farther.