

# Former cnn anchor ali velshi: 2 keys to make your pitch stand out to journalists

[Media](#)



Some of the best business content on the Web today is provided by entrepreneurs. These people aren't journalists but they are often experts in their respective fields. This means that they can speak to the issues facing small business owners, employees and HR departments across the globe. Editors at top sites want this content because of its insight. Entrepreneurs want to spread their stories because it expands their reach and establishes themselves as thought leaders within their industries.

How do you pitch? Longtime TV anchor and global affairs correspondent knows. He's vetted thousands of pitches from companies and content marketers over the years at CNN and Al Jazeera America. He says it comes down to stories that engage audiences. If you have it, editors will want it. I recently interviewed Velshi at the in Montreal where he talked about market research and how it ups your odds for creating stories that will make journalists bite.

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### **Why thorough research works.**

Before pitching any publication, Velshi recommends first conducting extensive market research into the type of information consumers want to read. Brands spend a great deal of time refining their products and learning how to sell them to customers. But when they begin pitching content to publishers, they don't put the same amount of work in. Journalists can see this from a mile off because they're more closely in tune with the preferences of their audience. Does your content match up with that?

“ You've got to find some relationship between what you believe and what you're passionate about, the quality of your product or service, and what the market's needs are,” Velshi says. “ Market research is just not something that people understand well enough. That's one of the things that people don't understand.”

### **Know your customers.**

Velshi says he's found that everything comes from . For brands that already have a built-in customer base, it's important to get to know them well. What do they want? What products would they buy? For many businesses, a small percentage of their customers provide the majority of revenue, so it's imperative to get to know that small percentage well and create content that connects with them.

“ It's not all about what you want, it's as much about what they want,” Velshi says.

The idea is, as you get better at creating content that customers appreciate, you may find that journalists are more receptive to your pitches. This is because you've probably zeroed in on statistics, trends and advice that will bring page views.

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### **Find your " lens."**

In a crowded content landscape, it can be difficult for an entrepreneur to stand out. Often the key is to write posts that top publications may find attractive. Whether you have your sights set on a high-profile news outlet

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(like this one) or a niche business platform, it can be tough to break in, especially if you haven't had your content published on a platform at that level before.

Velshi has found that success relies on a content creator's "lens." His lens, for instance, is economic content, so his take on the news often tends toward a financially-focused perspective. One key factor that sets each piece of content apart from all other content is the lens through which the author sees the world.

All too often, Velshi says he finds that mainstream media tends to book guests who are free rather than going for more interesting interviewees. They quote free guests in their newspaper and magazine articles. As a result, mainstream news outlets miss opportunities to present "a fresh take."

"I need the idea that on a regular basis, you are looking at the same house that everybody is looking at through a different window," Velshi says. "I'm always looking through the economic lens. I want to know what your lens is and how your take is different."

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To be successful at marketing your product or business you not only have to work to get your content shared across the Internet, but you also have to reach out to journalists who can write about you or even publish your work.

Velshi's insights here can help you get the results you want. If you know more about your customers as well as find your "lens," you'll be able to attract the publications, journalists and customers who can help you spread

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the word about your business. You'll also be able to create better products and services that ensure long-term loyalty from anyone who learns about your brand.