



Your questions answered

How does Case Study Link work?

Every day, on national newspapers, magazines and in television production companies, you have reporters, commissioning editors and researchers wanting and searching for stories.

And, in the outside world, there are thousands of freelance journalists and agencies, wanting to sell stories they've got, or at least know if publications are looking for anything specific so they can pitch accordingly.

Case Study Link allows those 'in house' (who are prepared to spend money to secure the stories they want) to tap into the databases of hundreds of freelance journalists and press agencies by informing them what they are looking for.

As a subscriber of Case Study Link, you'll receive alerts, or leads, direct from commissioning editors. It's up to you to turn this lead into work, money and bylines. You can either sell in a story you've worked on previously that fits the bill today, or you can find what a commissioning editor is looking for and earn yourself a commission

How do the alerts work?

Commissioning editors on the hunt for stories visit www.casestudylink.co.uk, fill out the form and press the send button. That then gets emailed directly to all our subscribers at the same time.

Which publications use Case Study Link

The service is used regularly by national newspapers and magazines to find the stories they're looking for, including Daily Mail, Sunday Mirror, Bella, Marie Claire, Cosmopolitan to name a few.

What are the added benefits of Case Study Link?

Not only are you getting leads you can make money from at that very moment, but you are also getting the names of commissioning editors and a growing insight into their minds and what stories they want. Remember, getting commissioned is all about networking and building relationships with people. Commissioning editors are more likely to commission those who they hear from, who regularly and enthusiastically send them ideas. So you can use this information to send them other ideas and build your relationship with them.

From Case Study Link, you'll also learn commissioning trends, which will help you hone your ideas and pitch appropriately. For instance, one day, there will be a

survey in the news about a rise in teens with anorexia. That day, you'll find you're getting three or four alerts saying *'We're looking for a story of a teen with anorexia.'* Case Study Link is also reassuring. All freelance writers and even agencies know the feeling of sitting there thinking *'I'm ready to work but I've got nothing to do.'* Through Case Study Link, you'll be tapped into a constant source of hot leads and opportunities to earn money. Start responding to the story requests and your income is bound to increase.

What sort of stories are commissioning editors looking for?

The details of the alerts range from commissioning editors just saying *'looking for something strong for Sunday's paper'* to women's magazines asking specifically for weight loss stories. The first – we want a story, any story – is a brilliant opportunity. Pitch anything you've got as they might just go for it and at least you know that now is the moment they are considering ideas and have money ready to spend. The second is more specific, but it allows you think *'Have I ever done anything like that? Have I ever interviewed anyone in that situation?'* If so, now's the time to go back to them and say another publication might potentially be interested in their story if they're up for it.

How much will I get paid for my story?

This depends on whether you're taking a tip fee for an individual's phone number (between £50 and £150) or filing copy as well (which will depend on the average rates that the particular publication tends to pay for copy). If you've got a story someone really wants, don't be afraid to negotiate to push the price up. You can also insist you write the copy yourself (they may or may not agree) and so command a full story rate instead of a tip fee. We leave the negotiation up to you.

How should a story pitch be written?

Writing a rambling paragraph to a commissioning editor along the lines of *'Hello, I've got a story about a woman and she says X, Y and Z'* will ensure your story doesn't stand out. Some commissioning editors get 50 or more story pitches a day and you need to ensure yours makes their life easy. They need to look at your pitch and think *'This story is presented clearly and concisely, everything I need to know is right here, this story looks great, I'm going to buy it.'* We suggest using a bullet point synopsis.

The following is an extract on writing story synopsis' from Natasha Courtenay-Smith's book, *'I had one twin, Mum had the other: success in real life journalism'* which is available from www.journalist-training.co.uk

Writing a synopsis

As the synopsis is presenting your merchandise to the buyer, anything that might grab the editor's attention should be prominent and near the top. And to help create a high-impact synopsis, there are three devices to consider – outlines, hooks and tempters.

- i) Outlines** You're presenting a skeleton story, something that's both easy and quick to read. This is why bullet lists are a great idea, more of

which below. Now, assuming you're a good writer, the challenge is to condense your story into tiny 'sound-bites'. You must include essential context, characters and their relation to each other, and the key turning points or catalysts in your story. But no waffle.

- ii) Hooks** Some stories have hooks, others don't. They're simply links to something – anything – that adds extra interest and gets your synopsis noticed. This is chiefly what makes the story sellable, so there it is in the synopsis – up at the top, clear as day. You want it to hook the editor's attention. Likewise, if the story has appeared in a local newspaper, add in the link to it at the top. This makes it more topical.
- iii) Tempters** All our synopses are sent out in bullet list form. And while this looks dull, it is very easy to read and even easier to scan. Editors simply do not have the time to study your proposal in depth.

What about headlines? Don't waste your time trying to create an original, witty, eye-catching headline. You can leave all that to the paper or magazine. Instead, you just need to provide something short and snappy that sums up the story, even if it sounds a bit factual or dry. But remember, it's another opportunity to practise your condensing skills, capturing the essence of an entire story in half a dozen words.

What if I don't hear back? As a rule of thumb, if you haven't heard back after 24 hours, the commissioning editor probably don't want your story. However, due to the number of pitches, stories do get lost. It's always worth putting in a quick friendly call saying '*Just wanted to check did you get my idea*'. If nothing else, it will help you build your relationship with that commissioning editor.

What if I don't have the story they're looking for? If you're not busy and would like to earn additional income, you can always try to find the story and win yourself a commission in doing so. If you're busy, just hit delete and move on. Remember, with every alert, you're getting vital information about who is commissioning and on which publications. You're building a contacts list and you're learning about commissioning trends.

How can I make sure I get paid? Just as you would do if you had sent the idea out of the blue and got a commission, you raise an invoice. If payment delays occur, speak to the accounts department of the media outlet that bought the story from you. If this cannot be resolved, please contact us and we will endeavour to help.

Do I have to give Case Study Link a cut of what I earn? Absolutely not. You negotiate directly with the publication.

Can I sell a story I've already sold before? Yes, experienced freelancers will sell stories again and again over a period of years. However, you must let commissioning editors know where a story has been before, and you must tell them if it has appeared in one of their rival publications. You don't want to leave them looking like a fool because the story comes out and someone says '*Hey, I saw that*'

story in XXX three weeks ago. All commissioning editors like to feel stories are exclusive.

Can I promote CSL alerts on Twitter and Facebook? Yes, but publications live in fear of rivals getting hold of their ideas, so keep it vague. For instance, you must not put on Twitter '*Woman's Own magazine looking for XXXX*'. Instead, put '*Got a publication wanting to talk to someone who XXXX*'.

Commissioning editors have told us they'd prefer if it you didn't even say what sort of publication they are, so instead of saying '*Women's weekly magazine wants XXX*' say '*I'm looking to interview XXXX, contact me to find out more.*'

Any other questions? Please drop me a line direct on info@casestudylink.co.uk

Terms & Conditions of use

Case Study Link is a tool connecting commissioning editors and reporters on publication with freelance journalists and press agencies. The Case Study Link motto is 'Find any story quickly and easily' and our aim is to help commissioning editors find the stories, leads and information quickly and easily, whilst providing freelance journalists and agencies with leads that enable them to sell more stories, see their byline more often, raise their reputation and earn more money.

All subscribers must read and adhere to the terms and conditions below

1. Freelance journalists and agencies receiving the alerts must not filter information back to commissioning editors on what particular publications are looking for. This undermines the entire service for everyone and will result in commissioning editors no longer feeling able to use Case Study Link.
2. Freelance journalists and agencies will not forward on alerts on to commissioning editors and reporters on publications. Please note, the mailer system in place automatically notifies CSL of any forwards, providing information of who forwarded it and to what address it was forwarded.
3. On receiving an alert, freelance journalist and agencies will take a few seconds to consider if they have any stories that could possibly fit what publications are looking for, and if so, pitch them in accordingly. The more commissioning editors find what they are looking for via Case Study Link, the better the service becomes.
4. Individuals and agencies will make the very most of Case Study Link. Remember, each alert is a live opportunity to place a story, see your byline in print, build a relationship with a commissioning editor and make money!