Advocating LibreOffice: talking to the press

- Mike Saunders

- Marketing & PR, TDF (since February)

- Long-time FOSS journalist and author
So who am I anyway?

- Working as an IT journalist for 18+ years
- Used to feel like a "real" job early on
- Actually spent a lot of time on the phone and meeting people
- Used to get freebies sent! Even whiskey...
Talking to the press
Specialise in GNU/Linux and FOSS

- Installed Red Hat 5.1 from magazine coverdisc
- Had to recompile my kernel to get sound working
- Awesome community though: openness, sharing, collaboration, freedom
- Started using StarOffice and then OpenOffice.org
Talking to the press

https://www.suse.com/de-de/community/museum/media-box.html

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Hat_Linux
On the receiving end of pitches from PR people

- Mostly entirely inappropriate for a Linux magazine
- Usually for Windows or Mac OS software
- Or hardware that doesn't work with Linux!

- Press releases either incredibly boring or totally overloaded with hype and buzzwords – ugh!
But then the tide turned...
Started working for TDF in February 2016

- Helping out with marketing and public relations
- Made new feature videos for LibreOffice 5.1 & 5.2
- But more relevantly here, pitching journalists
- For LO 5.2 Italo and I contacted 15 journalists, with customised pitches and invitations to calls
So why should we talk to journalists?
Hugely important for LibreOffice

- We need to raise awareness of the project – explain what we do, talk about new features

- Many journalists don't know we exist – or think we're some obscure OpenOffice.org fork

- If a journalist writes a positive story about LO, it legitimises us and brings in new users
So you've found a journalist who may be interested in LibreOffice? Great, but...
Plan ahead before talking!
4 super mega vital crucial rules
1: Read up on their work first

- Get to know their tone, their style, their audience – business or consumer?

- Have they covered LibreOffice before? Or OOo? Or Linux, or FOSS, or anything related?

- Do they tend to write positive or negative stories?

- Do they write for one site, or many?
2: Keep your pitch short and sweet

- Introduce yourself briefly, but get onto the subject matter quickly

- Don't write more than 200 words

- Give them a real story – something to write about. A new major release? Team member? Supporter?

- Indeed, try to do their work for them!
3: Think about your language

- Avoid jargon – journalist may know it, but he/she will then have to translate for the readers

- Stress benefits – a new LO release is great, but who does it help and how?

- Super ultra mega over 9000 important: avoid hype and buzzwords...
Do people want to be "amazed" by an office suite?
Words to avoid – and alternatives

amazing          impressive
incredible       remarkable
revolutionary    market-leading
powerful         feature-rich
4: Follow up with your pitch

- After you've sent your email, wait a few days for a response

- If nothing, politely ask (once!) if they got your mail

- Keep monitoring their site(s) to see if they write something about LibreOffice

- If they make a mistake, calmly correct them
So what now?
Let's spread the word!

- Look for journalists who may be interested in writing about LibreOffice

- This is especially important in non-English market!

- Join our marketing mailing list, and let us know who you plan to talk to, so we can share ideas

- Good luck :-(
The end

- Mail me: mike.saunders@documentfoundation.org
- I can send you example pitches and ideas