

Press Release Writing Tips

An engaging press release with an interesting ‘hook’ or angle is an excellent way to gain exposure for your product or service and can lead to media interviews with appearances on television and radio stations, and in newspapers or magazines. The objective of a release is to capture the attention of your audience, whether this is your home town, state, province, country or international market, and educate them about your product or service.

We cannot stress enough the importance of a well-written press release. We constantly come across inaccurate, poorly- written or unedited press releases that simply will not be read. They become a waste of time to journalists who are already bogged down with information overload. And some releases are just not publishable.

So our advice? Write a strong, well-written press release and edit before submitting it.

The following sections will help you with writing your press release:

Section 1: Press Release Format

Section 2: Newsworthiness: What May Seem Like News...

Section 3: Target the Media

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Section 5: Language & Wording: Do Not Embellish or Exaggerate

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Section 1 – Press Release Format

There is a general format for writing all press releases. To format a release correctly and effectively, you will need to include the following:

Contact information

Make it easy for the media to contact you about your story by including as much information as possible. It is important to include a phone number, and email. Failing to leave this information suggests that your press release is either amateurish or illegitimate. Media contacts will ask: “Why don’t they want to be contacted? What do they have to hide?”

Headline

Your headline must ‘hook’ the reader into wanting to read your full release. You may have a fantastic press release. However, failing to write a strong headline will jeopardize your entire release. It will be overlooked and passed by in favor of a release with a more interesting or exciting or controversial headline. So make your headline an attention grabber, without being too sales-focused.

Sell the benefits of your product or service within your headline:

- Losing Weight Is Easy If You Follow These Simple Rules

Or ask a question:

- Want to Lose Weight the Easy Way?

These headlines draw a reader into the story, simply because they want to know how to solve a particular problem or they want to know the answer to the question.

Subhead

This is a sentence or short paragraph that follows your headline. Here is where you continue to draw the media into your story by summarizing the information in your press release with a strong statement or two to keep the reader interested. But don’t give them everything. You still want them to read the entire release.

Body

This is the main area of your press release. Keep it simple, to the point and brief, 175-300 words. Use bulleted lists (indent them using ‘-’ as our system does not support bullet points) when appropriate, and clear, crisp paragraphs for easy reading. Your press release is meant to entice the media to contact you for further information, so encourage the reader to contact you and visit your website.

Boilerplate/About Your Company

Not everyone uses this section. However, this is the perfect place to add some brief information about your company. (i.e., “XYZ Company is a leading distributor of widgets and has been in the business of building widgets since 1900.”)

Section 2 – Newsworthiness: What May Seem Like News...

Do you really have a newsworthy story to tell, or are you writing your press release just to throw your name out into the masses, in hopes that someone will read your pointless information? If so, then stop. Do not send a release out for the sake of just sending one. If you submit a press release with information that is not of interest to the public—and worse yet, continue to do this—you will eventually alienate your media contacts. When your company’s name or your name is seen, it will be ignored. Make sure your press releases contain valuable information. Make every word count!

Do you have a compelling, important story to tell? Write about a new service you are offering that is unique from your competition. Or use a personal human interest angle and show how your product is helping others. Write about a new company manager that is now on board with you. Or write about the benefits of your service.

Write a press release that is newsworthy. Can you time your press release with a current event, time of year or holiday? If so, then your story will have a hook for journalists. Use it.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Who benefits from my product or service?
- What new or unique bit of information can I hook readers with?
- When is the best time to release this information?
- Why should a reader care about my product, service or information?
- How can I hook them?

What may seem like news to you may not be of any interest to the general public, or the media. Ensure that when you write your press release that you have something to write about. Look for a way to make your release unique. A release is a story, so tell it wisely and grab the attention of the general public.

Section 3 – Target the Media

Who is your audience? Who needs to hear your story, your news? In a perfect world, everyone would read your press release. To accomplish this, you must achieve ‘second-level exposure’.

- First-level exposure - have someone else distribute the information for you through press release distribution, such as 24-7pressrelease.com.
- Second-level exposure - the media picks up your story, calls you, or simply modifies it for their own use. An exceptional press release will be picked up by journalists for publication on websites, in trade publications and on radio or television.

Although first-level exposure is always good, second-level exposure is where you will ultimately reap the benefits of obtaining customers or getting their attention. You will have a better chance of gaining second-level exposure if you write your press release while keeping the media in mind. These are the individuals that will publish your release elsewhere, if they like it.

Keeping your press release unique, to the point, professional, easy to read and grammatically correct will enhance your chances of someone from the media picking up your story.

Section 4 – Content is Key: Start Strong and Sell the Benefits

As mentioned in Section 1, your press release should have a strong, catchy headline and summary. Next, ensure that the first paragraph answers some of the important questions, such as Who, What, When, Where and Why. Use one or two statistics here, as long as you do not go overboard. Remember: these first elements must grab the reader and make them interested in learning more, or you will lose potential media support and that second-level exposure.

The point of a release is to entice the reader or journalist to contact you for further information. You do not need to reveal your company's entire history. A well-written press release does not need to be a novel. In fact, shorter press releases (usually between 175-300 words) tend to receive more exposure, if written well. Why? Because many trade publication journalists may be looking for a short informative piece of information to fill a spot within a magazine, newspaper or website. Have you ever seen short snip-its on one side of a magazine, or down the side of a web page? Guess where the information comes from?

We cannot stress enough the importance of a well-written press release. The content within your press release should be accurate, easy to read, to the point and interesting to your target audience. And a carefully written and informative press release will be sure to capture the eyes of journalists.

Section 5 – Language & Wording: Do Not Embellish or Exaggerate

An effective press release is one that anyone can understand.

Your goal is to communicate your news using everyday language, so avoid overusing technical jargon. Not everyone understands your industry terminology as well as you do. Excess jargon will confuse your reader and may be enough for a journalist to pass over your release for one that is easier to understand. Leave the technical details for the phone call or follow-up email. Once an editor contacts you, you might then give an interview or go into more depth on your particular topic. Chances are the editor will be more familiar with your industry, since he has taken the time to contact you.

Avoid flowery language, redundant expressions and unnecessary adjectives. These will detract from your story. And do not embellish or exaggerate your press release. If your release is written with embellishments, you will very quickly lose credibility. Keep in mind that this loss of credibility will carry over to future releases. Journalists will remember a source. They will remember a name. They will remember a web site. If you leave a bad taste in their mouth, they will remember the experience. This

means the next time you submit a press release, which may be accurate the second time around, it will not be looked at because the journalist will remember you as someone who embellishes your press releases.

Section 6 – Quote Permissions & Attributions

When writing your press release, you may want to quote something someone has said or something you have read. Having permission to use a quote is extremely important, especially if it is longer than one short sentence or if it could be taken in a negative way. If you want to quote something you have read (copyrighted information) within your press release and do not attain written permission to use this information, you may be held liable and a lawsuit may result, something no company wants. If you personally know the individual, verbal permission may be all that is required. If you are unsure, it is best to receive permission in writing. An attribution is simply the acknowledgement of or credit to your source of information or quote. Most well-written press releases use attributions. When quoting copyrighted material, be sure to state the source of the quote, including the date or a link. Be sure to include the full name of the individual who made the quote and their occupational title or company position.

If you are using facts and statistics to enhance your story, make sure that you provide source attributions. The reason for this is simple: it adds credibility. If you publish figures or information without a viable source reference, people might assume “it must be too good to be true”, even though your information may be accurate. Without proper source attributions, your information may appear to be stretching the truth, and this could lead to your press release being overlooked.

Bad example:

“XYZ is to raise rates” and XYZ Corporation will capitalize on this.

In the above example, there is no attribution. The example does not state who made the quote, or who is commenting on the quote or their position. This also lacks source and date information.

Good example:

“XYZ is to raise rates and this is something we will capitalize on,” stated John Doe, marketing manager of XYZ Corporation, in the February 1, 2004 edition of the Sun Newspaper.

In this example, the source, name and position of the person making the comment is clearly stated and does not leave the reader wondering about the credibility of the press release.

Section 7 – What NOT to Include in Your Press Release

- Don't make your story read like an advertisement.
- Do not include your entire company history.
- Do not submit your press release if it is geared toward e-cigarettes, online gaming, illegal activity, stock promotion, personal attacks, racism, discrimination or terrorism. We do not

accept releases of this nature and if they are submitted we have the right to cancel them without refund. More details on what we accept is available in our Submission Guidelines, which are available to read and must be agreed to before submitting every release.

- Do not continually submit the same press release or a slightly modified version of the original. If your press release was not picked up or you did not receive any enquiries the first time, find a fresh, new angle to write about. Google penalizes duplicate content because it sees it as spamming, and that can lead to your website potentially being banned from the search engine completely.

Section 8 – Images in Your Press Release

Imagine your local newspaper with no image on the front page, just straight text. Try to picture People magazine with no images of your favourite celebrities. How interested would you be in reading these?

Images get attention, and they are worth more than words. That is why magazines are so popular. Adding images within a press release increases the readability of your release. They are a great way to display your company's logo or your products. Think of it as a method of branding.

At 24-7 Press Release Newswire, we allow you to attach images to your press release (All paid packages). We are unable to distribute images but they will be displayed alongside your release on our site, which, due to our high search engine ranking, often gets the most visibility.

Section 9 – Edit Your Release Before Submitting It

A poorly written press release will be a very fast turn-off for any journalist or editor and will reflect negatively on a company or individual. Although some of the best writers will occasionally miss grammatical errors or typos, by making sure you read, edit and re-edit your press release, you drastically reduce the chance for error.

Here is a quick checklist for editing:

- Use a program like MS Word to write your press release so that you can spell check and grammar check automatically. But remember, these tools are not foolproof.
- Carefully edit your release, line by line.
- Read your release out loud and re-edit.
- Print your press release. By printing your press release and reading a paper copy, you are more likely to catch errors, especially in longer press releases.
- Have a coworker or friend review your press release. Sometimes another set of eyes will catch errors you've missed or inadvertently tuned out.
- Wait until the morning and re-read your press release. A night of sleep can make a big difference when you are writing.

If everything reads well and there are no errors, submit your press release for distribution.

Some editing is included in all our packages, with the amount of time spent editing your release increasing with the value of your package.

Section 10 – How Often Should You Submit Your Press Release?

The general ‘rule of thumb’ is once to twice a month. However, if you do not have any news worth mentioning, then once a month is acceptable. Most companies have something worth writing about each month. Companies often go through changes in management, products, services or other changes.

Are you hiring a new executive? Have you imported a new widget that no one else has? Do you have a new product that the public needs to know about? Do you have a hot new service? Or one you plan to offer in the future? These are just a few ideas to keep in mind.

As long as you have a story to tell that is interesting to the general public and to editors and journalists, a press release may also be viewed as a way of brand marketing. People will begin to recognize your company name in the news. And once you impress an editor or journalist, they will look for your releases.

Although a new company on a shoestring budget may find a press release expensive, in the grand scale of marketing, the investment in a well-distributed release can really pay off. This type of marketing may reach further than any other type of advertising.

Section 11 – Start Writing Your Release Now!

What are you waiting for? We recommend you write your press release using a program like Microsoft Word first. That way you can check spelling and grammar. Don’t forget to write a gripping headline and first paragraph. Then edit before submitting. Save your release to your computer for future reference. Once you’ve copied your release to our press release submission page, you can add links, italics and bold formatting to style your story.

Resources:

Press release distribution and further press release writing tips may be found at:

<http://www.24-7pressrelease.com>

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