



## Press Releases that Grab Attention

Suppose that your business or organization has just purchased a new piece of equipment or has just launched a new service, and it's time to get the word out. A multi-faceted approach usually works best. This might include taking out ads in newspapers or trade journals, sending out a direct-mail package or postcard, or utilizing social media. But one of the most effective methods is sending out a news release. Traditional printed press releases remain one of the best ways to get the news to the right audience, at the right time, very inexpensively.

### When to Write a Press Release

Press releases are meant to help news services do their job... getting relevant news and information to their subscribers in a timely manner. Before sending a press release to a news outlet, determine whether or not the news is truly relevant to its recipients. And make sure the news is still current. If it took place quite a while ago, or will not be happening in the near future, the release will be ignored.

A press release is an effective way to communicate a wide range of topics, including:

- Launching a new product or service
- Recognizing key employee achievements
- Announcing the attainment of a goal
- Redesigning a website
- Creating a new app
- Participating in an event
- Establishing a new partnership
- Sharing results of research
- Receiving an award

A press release can also be used to generate a feature story. Reporters are more likely to consider a story idea if they first receive a press release. However, because journalists receive so many requests for coverage, to be successful the release needs to:

- Have an eye-catching headline
- Contain the who, what, when, where and why of the story
- And be error-free and attractive



### Write an Eye-catching Headline

The headline, or title, should be an abbreviated version of the press release's key point. Just as newspaper headlines are meant to grab readers, the title or headline of a press release also needs to be attention-getting.

The headline is typically in bold type and uses a larger font size than the body copy. Conventional press release headlines use the present tense and exclude articles such as "a" and "the".

A common way to create the headline is to use several of the keywords from the body copy to create a relevant and interesting title. Likewise, use the same process if you plan to have a tagline that clarifies the purpose of the release. Plan on writing the headline several times before you create a satisfactory one.

### The Body Copy and the 5 "W's"

The press release should be written just like you want it to appear in the news story. Reporters are very busy and don't have time to research your company's information, so typically what you write is what will be in the journalist's version of your event.

Start with the date and city in which the press release originates. The first sentence should grab the reader's attention and say precisely what the release is about. The body copy should be

brief. The first paragraph should summarize the press release, and the following paragraphs should support it.

Communicate the 5 “W’s” very clearly. The who, what, when, where, and why should tell the reader everything they need to know:

- Who is this about?
- What is the actual news?
- When does this event happen?
- Where does this take place?
- Why is this news?

Once you have written the basic information, go back and fill in with more detail. The more newsworthy you make the press release copy, the better are its chances to be used.

### **Make it Error-Free and Attractive**

Because press releases are so inexpensive and effective, your submission will most likely be one of many that will be received by the news service. To make sure yours stands out, it needs to be error-free and have a very professional appearance.

Traditional hard copy press releases that are mailed or personally delivered must be on nice paper similar to your letterhead. Using letterhead is not recommended, but if you have second sheets that only have your logo on them, they can be used. Or if you plan on sending out quite a few releases, it would be desirable to have printed press release blanks that complement your letterhead.

When an editor looks at your story, she is first considering if it is appropriate for her audience, and then if it appears professional. So make sure you have: correct spelling; good grammar; it’s printed on nice paper; and all the major points are clearly covered. Reporters and editors will appreciate the fact that you’ve helped make them look better and will be watching for more releases from you in the future.

### **The Basic Structure**

Finally, it’s important to make sure everything in the release is organized correctly.

- **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** should go at the top of the page, on the left margin.  
If it is not for immediate release, the date you would like it to be published should be clearly stated in the same location.
- **The headline:** usually in bold, should be centered below that. If you plan to use a subhead or tagline, put it in italics right below the headline.
- **First paragraph:** this is where the most important information must be located. Make sure to include all the key points here.
- **Second and third paragraphs:** this additional

information should include the 5 “W’s”. This is also a good place to include quotes.

- **Boilerplate:** place the information about your company underneath the body of your release. Describe your company or organization with five or six lines. Typically this would be the same type of introductory information that can be found in your company’s brochure or website.
- **Contact information:** if your press release is newsworthy, reporters will like to contact some of the key individuals in your organization for more information or for quotes. This is where you include that appropriate contact information. This section should also contain the company’s official name and address; phone, fax and mobile numbers; and email and website addresses.
- **Other media:** mention other ways to receive more information such as requesting a brochure or links to websites, Facebook pages, LinkedIn, blogs, twitter, etc.

### **Tie it Together**

Once you have completed the actual press release, think about what else you can provide that will be helpful to the journalist. Consider including a general brochure about the company, as well as a brochure that is specifically about the new product or service. A personal note is always a good idea, along with your business card. Provide internet links that support your press release. If you have additional information online that readers may find useful, make sure you include the exact address to the location on your website.

Remember, traditional printed press releases remain one of the best ways to get the news to the right audience, at the right time, very inexpensively. Let us know if you’d like us to help you make your next news release stand out, grab attention, and be more effective. To set an appointment, call us at 513.248.2121.

# a vocabulary of the graphic arts

# worlds

**Boilerplate:** Generally a short “about” section providing independent background on the company or organization issuing a press release.

**Byline:** Identifies the name of the journalist or author of a piece or editorial and is placed just under the headline.

**Close:** In North America, traditionally the symbol “-30-” appears after the boilerplate or body and before the media contact information, indicating to media that the release has ended.

**Copy:** The text produced for a press release or article. Journalists also refer to their news stories or features as copy.

**Dateline:** Place of origin and date of press release.

**Editorial:** An article or opinion piece written to communicate key messages to the target audience.

**Exposure:** The extent to which the target audience becomes aware of a person, message, activity, theme, or organization through the efforts of PR.

**Ghostwriting:** Writing generated without published credit to its author and often credited to another.

**Hard news:** A story that is truly newsworthy, presented factually and objectively.

**Integrated campaign:** A multi-disciplinary approach which

includes a number of marketing communication techniques in order to deliver a consistent set of messages.

**Introduction:** The first paragraph of a press release that generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and why.

**Media:** Channel for the communication of information including newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, mobile phones, and the internet.

**Newswire:** An electronic service providing late-breaking news stories or other up-to-the-minute information.

**Press kit:** A branded package handed out to the media by an organization. It normally contains background material, photographs, illustrations, and news releases.

**Sound-bite:** A very brief quote excerpted from a person’s broadcast interview, used in the media to convey a certain idea or opinion.

**Stakeholder:** A party who affects, or who can be affected by, a company’s actions.

**Tagline:** A phrase used to clarify a point or create a dramatic effect.

## T H E I D E A

### *Getting Several Releases Out of One Story*

Many events last several days and include quite a few different activities. Rather than just writing one press release that lists everything that will be going on, each activity could be made into its own press release.

There could be a separate story about each activity; for example, a story about how the event is organized each year, a story about the various contest winners each day, a story about the vendors, a story about who the event benefits, a story about records broken, etc.

Press releases can be sent out before, during, and after the event, each one addressing a different aspect. Newspapers

and magazines are always looking for additional content, and your newsworthy events could give them content to fill up space in their publications. Regardless of what your story is about, more than likely you can get several press releases out dealing with the various aspects of your product, service, or business.

The more press releases you send out, the more opportunities you have to get press coverage. And the more press coverage you get, the better your chance for success.

# TRICKS & tips

## *More Press Release Tips*

- Prepare each release to target a specific news organization, and send it to the most appropriate reporter. This information can usually be found on their website. Sending the identical press release to multiple organizations and multiple reporters is a sign that you have not carefully identified your target market.
- When the press release is sent out is very important. It must be relevant and recent news... not too old and not too distant.
- Copy editors write the real newspaper and magazine headlines; however, if you come up with an attention-getting headline for them, they may use it. The title is your best chance to get noticed. Keep it brief, and be sure it includes the main point. It's a good idea not to write it until after you finish the press release. Once you have finished a draft of the release, you may decide to revise your title.
- A phone call to alert a reporter that a press release is coming, and a follow-up call after it has been delivered, can help develop the news into a full story.
- Avoid using jargon. If accuracy requires the use of a technical term, define it in such a way that everyone will be able to understand it.
- Include a "call to action" in your release. This is what you'd like the reader to do once they've read the release. Typically, it's a visit to your location, a phone call, or viewing a specific page on your website.



## *How can I measure the success of a press release?*



Before beginning to write a press release, you should consider what you hope to accomplish. It might be an increase in website traffic, more downloads of an app, or more visits to your new location. Some news releases are meant to give your business or organization "top-of-mind" awareness so that when a company or individual needs what you have to offer, your name will be the first to come to mind. Top-of-mind awareness is hard to measure, but still very important.

If at all possible, start with a goal in mind before beginning your press release strategy. An example would be to set a goal of a 50 percent increase in website traffic after the press release has been sent. It's important that you know exactly what your activity is both before and after the release is sent out. If your goal is reached, you had a successful distribution.

Another example might be the announcement of new product now available at your location. It will be easy to see if sales of the product increase after the press release.

If at all possible, every press release should have a goal, even if it is only to create top-of-mind awareness. Without goals, you can't measure results.

*questions and answers*