



Everything you need to know about press releases, but were afraid to ask!

Generating media interest is one of the best ways to ensure that the big wide world knows about your business - whether it's a success story, an announcement about a new product or service or some groundbreaking news that you think people should now about. For those of you who are new to the world of communications, here are some tips to help you along the way.

A **press release** is the standard form of communication with the national and local press. Journalists are extremely busy people and grabbing their attention requires a well thought out press release. Here goes...

- Make sure that you have something to say. In other words, you need to have some **newsworthy** information to share.
- Tell the recipient exactly what it is that you are sending. The words "**PRESS RELEASE**" should sit at the top of the page in bold letters.
- Make sure you say when the information is valid from i.e. **Embargoed until 12.00pm, 4TH July or FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**. Keep it all in bold!
- Chose an **attention grabbing headline** that will capture attention. Most journalists think in sound bites so distill the essence of your story into something punchy and memorable.
- Your **lead paragraph** should answer the five magic questions – who, what, why, where, when. This paragraph should summarize the press release and include a hook to get your audience interested in reading more.
- Use **language that is simple**, clear, direct, accurate and concentrate on the real "news" story rather than adding waffle. Ask a colleague to check your spelling, grammar and facts before sending out. Try and keep the release to one page if possible.
- The **main body of your press release** is where your message should fully develop. Many companies choose to use a strategy called the inverted pyramid, which is written with the most important information and quotes first. It's important to include a quote for human content and authority. (A journalist will probably phone for their own quote, but you should give them that option.)
- Create a **standard closing paragraph** about your organisation, this is often referred to as a "boilerplate". This should be a short paragraph that describes your organisation, products, service and a short history. If you are filing a joint press release include a boilerplate for both organisations.
- Always include **contact information** – name, phone, email, fax and web address.
- Try and **build up a relationship** with the press as a trusted source. It's a two-way street after all and they should be able to come to you at any time for comments or quotes from your organisation. Pick up

the phone and find out who the best person is to send the release to. Offer to meet up in advance or to send through some background information about your organisation.

- It's really important to **make sure the release goes to the right person**, so keep a record of contact names, email addresses and phone numbers. If you are faxing the release print the name of the recipient clearly on the cover sheet.

- Consider the **timing** when sending out your release. Think about times of the day when news is thin and you are likely to get more attention and in the case of weekly papers, what day of the week is deadline day. For example, early mornings are a good time to contact daily newspapers. Try to avoid Friday afternoons or the day before public holidays.

- Don't be shy about making a **follow up call**. With hundreds of press releases being generated everyday, it will be easy for yours to get buried. It's also good to get feedback from journalists as to why they couldn't use your story so that you can avoid this in future. Perhaps they ran a similar tourism story last week or the release arrived too late for them to meet their current deadline.

- You may also want to send through photographs after an event has taken place. It is not uncommon for newspapers to use these if they have been unable to send their own photographer along. Make sure you get the correct email address for the picture desk and that their inbox can take the size of pictures that you are sending. It's always best to check receipt.

Along with this note you will find a press release template on our website.

If in doubt about anything, just give us a call on 0800 028 0588.

Good luck!