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Four Steps to Writing a Newsworthy Press Release

By Dana Victoria Sophia

Four Steps to Writing a Newsworthy Press Release by Dana Victoria Sophia

When running a business, whether it is located on Main Street in your town or online, publicity is essential. When a small business has little or no advertising budget, the best thing for the owner to do is to get people interested in your company. How do you do that with a limited budget? Write a newsworthy press release and send it to the editors of local and national publications in the market that potential customers read.

This press release should be no longer than one page. Make sure you only send the release to the editors that directly cover your field and don't forget to include your contact information. It is not necessary to follow-up with the editor as long as you include your contact information. In fact, most editors do not like getting follow-up calls about your press release. If they like it... they will call.

Here are the four steps to writing a newsworthy press release:

1. Decide when you are sending out the release. It is always best to send out your release after 11AM EST, any day besides Friday and Monday unless you have hard news. Also decide whether the release is "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" or not. If not, include the specific date and time that you want the publication to make your press release public knowledge. Write the release date and time or "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" at the top of your press release.

2. Create a catchy headline that accurately summarizes your press release. Your press release's headline can be one line or have a subheading as well. Just remember you are competing against hundreds of other press releases on the editor's desk. When editors do not have time to sit and read every single press release that comes in, they sometimes just take a glance at the headline. It is very important to have a headline gets their attention so they start reading. Work on the headline because it is just as important as the body of the press release. While you should make your headline interesting and intriguing, make sure it has something to do with the contents of the press release. Using a headline like "Free Trip to Bermuda" when your press release is about your organic baby food company is not appropriate unless you are giving away free trips to Bermuda to your customers, and even then that headline should be revised.

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3. Compose the body of your press release. A short (3–4 paragraphs), newsworthy press release will grab the attention of editors, which will in turn get you publicity—and for only the cost of emailing, faxing or mailing the release. The release has to highlight the uniqueness of your business—what differentiates you from your competitors. If you can't think of a unique thing about your company—wait until you can before you send out the release.

Here are a few newsworthy topics to write about in your release: 1. Grand Opening/Re–Opening of your business, e.g. an interesting story about why/how you started your company and the target market of your business. 2. The results of a recent survey your company created, e.g. provide the results of the survey to the news media. 3. Tie Your Company to an Upcoming Holiday, e.g. a company that makes Hawaiian lays in National Luau month or if you work at home and it's Home Based Business week.

4. A strategic partnership that your company has formed: e.g. Annabelle's Organic Baby Food has formed an alliance with Shannon's Baby Gift Baskets. 5. Include a short, concise company profile or business owner bio at the bottom of the release.

If the editors have never heard about your company, this is the place to give them some additional background information or to give them your standard company description.

After writing your release, edit it and re–edit it. Get rid of words that are not necessary. Make sure the sentences are easy to read and even easier to understand. Use strong and lively words in your release.

Format your press release to be double–spaced on one page and at the end of the release type "###" so the editors know they have reached the end of your press release. Remember when you distribute the press release to only distribute it to publications where the readers would be interested in your subject and make sure the release is real news and not an advertisement.

Dana Victoria Sophia, a small business consultant/coach and publicist to women entrepreneurs across the country, actively assists women in achieving their business goals through her website for small business coaching (www.DanaSophia.com) and her website for small business public relations (www.SophiaPR.com). She can be reached at Dana@SophiaPR.com.

Site Promotion Tools: The Press Release

By Scott Lindsay

One of the most powerful site promotion tools is the press release. A quality press release submitted to the right news distribution portal will definitely bring important revenue if its content is of interest, qualitative and actual (yes, that's what press releases are for!).

News distribution portals and services are used by thousands of journalists all around the world. If your press release has it all, you'll probably see it published in thousands of other locations: online or offline. All in all: a good press release will attract immediate attention to your business and website. Unlike articles, that bring you visitors a long time after their first release, press releases have a shorter life.

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That's why it is so important to write them well.

A well-written online press release has another important advantage: it will increase the number of one way links to your website, thus your search engine ranking. So, although the traffic boost will not last long, you gain by having your press release archived in an online searchable database.

Write Well

Editors will not just publish anything. Your press release needs to respect a few important guidelines.

1. The layout is very important. Your first paragraph should always answer the following five questions: "who?", "what?", "when?", "where?", "why?". Limit your press release to one or two pages and always end your press release with a conclusion.

2. Always write the content from the view of the public. Highlight customer benefits, not your own. Know your audience and "think" your audience.

3. Always use proper grammar and spelling. Avoid other silly mistakes such as wrong date, misspelled names, etc.

4. Last but not least, always sign your press release and provide contact information. There is no such thing as an anonymous press release.

Your press release has to be newsworthy. What you might consider great may have little or no importance for your readers. A press release is not a sales brochure it's an announcement. It publicizes an event, a new, extraordinary product or a service. It does not repeat the contents of your website and it does not tell stories that have been told.

Submit Well

Once you have a quality press release you need a quality submission service to reach a broad audience. You need to know that you'll get what you are paying for. PR Newswire is great, reliable and has great coverage. Their fees are fair and accessible. Since this is not an article advertising PR Newswire, I'll include other options too: Eworldwire, PR Web, Submit Express and so on. Just type "press release submission" in any search engine and you'll find plenty of press release submission services, some of them even free.

You should really take care how you write your press release, especially when you pay for submission. For best results I suggest you hire a professional writer. Note that the press submission services listed above do provide press release writing services. But: don't pay for a press release writing service UNLESS your press release is newsworthy for your potential clients.

Scott Lindsay is a web developer and entrepreneur. He is the founder of HighPowerSites and many other web projects. HighPowerSites is the easiest do-it-yourself website builder on the web. No programming or design skill required. Get your own website online in just 5 minutes with

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