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How to Write Your News Release

By George Torok

How to Write Your News Release by George Torok

Follow this step-by-step process to write and expose your news.

FORMAT

Call it a 'News Release', 'News Bulletin' or 'Announcement'. 'Press Release' sounds like propaganda.

Add, 'For immediate use'. This implies urgency. It also allows them some choice on when to run it. If the news is date sensitive state 'for use before' or 'for use after'.

Fax or mail? If urgent – fax. But to get noticed mail it. They get a lot of junk mail and junk fax. The fax junk looks too much alike. If you mail it you have a chance to get attention with the colour and feel of the paper. Send it on good quality paper with your logo. That could be your letterhead.

Don't address it to 'newsroom' or 'editor'. That's the same as 'occupant'. Instead address it to a person. Get their name.

Make it easy to read. Maximum one page. Use easy to read font. Twelve point size Times Roman works well. Add a little spice by bolding key names – but sprinkle lightly. Italics draws attention but is hard to read. Use capitals and small letters – don't print the whole thing in capital letters. That is extremely difficult to read. Keep paragraphs and sentences short. Double spacing is best.

Make it clear whom the release is from. Lead with city and date of the release. This gives perspective. At the bottom of the page state, 'The end' or '- 30-' Show contact name(s) and phone number(s) clearly at the bottom or top of the page.

Make sure those contacts receive a copy of the release and that they will be available and prepared to talk to the press when called. Impress on those contacts that the press need speedy responses to make their deadlines.

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CONTENT

Start with a strong title. A subtitle is not necessary if the title is strong. Study newspaper headings for ideas. Examine the style of the target media you are trying to reach to get ideas.

You have only one chance to hook them with the title. If you do not, they will not read any further. One glance at the headline is how they preview the release. There must be words, themes, companies, personalities or issues in the title that slows their glance enough to invite them to read the first paragraph.

The first sentence must grab them. Rework that first sentence until the first few words or even the first word pulls the reader in.

The first paragraph is important. It should contain your most important message. If they read that far – it is what draws them into the story. Write that first paragraph as if that might be the only paragraph they print.

Follow with the next points in order of decreasing importance. Assume that they might chop it after any paragraph. Write each paragraph applying the same approach to your sentences. If they only print one sentence make that the first sentence.

Good news releases are not written , they are re-written and re-written.

Make it easy to read. Maximum one page. Use easy to read font. Twelve point works well. Add a little spice by bolding key names – but sprinkle lightly. Italics draws attention but is hard to read. Use capitals and small letters – don't print the whole thing in capital letters. That is extremely hard to read. Use many short paragraphs and short sentences. Double spacing is a very good idea.

Proof read before you send it. Journalists are especially sensitive to poor grammar and typos. It hurts to read garbage – so they won't.

The media will read your release thinking, 'Will this interest my readers, listeners or viewers and is it unique?' It doesn't have to be 'very' unique – just a little. Every January we get news about the first News Year's baby. Because the first one is unique at that time, the second is not news.

Relate the news to the reader. Why is it important to the readers, listeners, or viewers of the media? Test for significance by asking, 'So what?'

Answer a reporter's key questions: who, what, why, where, when and how. You could even use these questions as sub headings – or as a summary. Use these questions as a quality test before you send it.

Quotes are good and more interesting. You might use quotes from company officials, community leaders or customers. When you use a name always state who they are, e.g. National Sales Manager, President and Founder, author of... Use quotes that evoke emotion, create controversy or present a position.

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Don't introduce too many new names. This confuses readers. Talk about one or two.

Write the name in full the first time you use it. After that you can use only the last name. If you want a name to be remembered use it several times in the release.

AFTER THE RELEASE

The reporter(s) may call for more information or to arrange a photograph. Be available. If you are out of the office check your voice messages often. The press has tight deadlines.

Don't expect to review the reporter's article before publication. Occasionally they will run the article exactly the way you wrote it – but not often. Once you give them the information they have control. It helps if you have read other articles from the reporter and know their slant and hot buttons.

If they use your news release, send them a thank you note.

Keep and file all your news releases in sequence – even the ones that did not get action. Clip and save the articles that ran with the release. Study them to find what works with whom and when.

See you in the news!

Top Ten Tips For Writing Your Best Press Release Ever

By Susan Valeri

Keep these few crucial details in mind when writing and submitting your press release to increase your chances of news coverage:

1. If you are not the news: become the news. No matter what your release is about, you need to find a way to tie into the news. Make use of current trends and statistics.
2. Make sure your headline is catchy, compelling the reader to continue. Research your newspaper to see what works to help you write one.
3. Use "Who, what, where, when, why, how" but not in that order. Your first paragraph should state the problem your product/service/book is trying to solve. This is the "why".
4. Your next few paragraphs should contain the "what" and "who" that is solving the problem. Your last paragraph is the "when and "where".
5. Keep it short and sweet. Concise contact information should be included on the top and bottom of the release. Provide a link to your website.
6. Do not "advertise" – this is the news. Keep it fact-based.

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7. Use short quotes that evoke an emotion about the product/service/book.
8. Type ### at the end of your release to indicate there are no more pages. A release of more than one page is not recommended.
9. Include a brief history section at the bottom of your release with details about your company or your bio.
10. Most importantly – research and send it to the correct editor using the method they prefer to receive it. Don't just assume that fax is okay. If you are unsure, pick up the phone and find out.

Susan Valeri is a book and small business publicist who gets clients in front of their audience. Her company, V.A.S. & Associates, obtains maximum visibility for their clients through personalized and persistent contact with the media. Combined with her talented associates, V.A.S. offers 15 years experience in the U.S. and Canadian book publicity market. Visit

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Top Ten Tips For Writing Your Best Press Release Ever

Press Releases vs. Advertising Or How To Get Free Publicity for Your Business

10 Secrets to Get Your Press Release Noticed

Site Promotion Tools: The Press Release

Press Release: Marketing Good News

Press Release E–Manual

Traffic Boost News Ticker

Beat that Fat

News Letter Genie Pro

RSS ADVERTISING SECRETS



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