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The Power of the Press Release – Generating Effective Media Coverage Results

By Mel-Lynda Andersen

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Producing an effective press or media release is one of those tasks that initially seems quite straight-forward - that is, until you actually sit down at your computer to draft one yourself.

·First there's the writing – a process that can instantly cause beads of sweat to form on your over-stressed brow.

·Next there's the distribution - which organizations and specific individuals should you send it to, should you fax it, e-mail it, mail it or send it by courier? What should you include with your release?

·Then there's the follow-up - who will you call and what will you say? How can you ensure that you will be creating the best possible impression of your product, service and company without becoming a pest? And finally, how can you ensure that your new product or service is profiled accurately in the media?

STEP ONE - WRITING

A common challenge in writing a press release is being too close to your products and services to write about them effectively. Where do you begin? How much detail should you include? How much history should you include? How do you ensure that initially disinterested third parties will come to care enough about your products and services that they will actually do something to help you spread the word?

1. Brainstorm. Ask yourself some key questions before you start writing and jot down your answers without worrying about structure, spelling or tone:
 - a. What makes your product or service so special? What makes it new?
 - b. Why would an editor care enough to want to publish your news? Why will you customers care about this new product or service? List all the reader/listener benefits you can think of, as well as the benefits to the publication or show.
 - c. What makes this news release actual news?
2. Compose a first draft.

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- a. Start by crafting a catchy, newsworthy headline that addresses the main benefits to your target audience. Expect to spend some time developing this headline because it is by far the most important line of your entire release. A strong, all-encompassing headline also serves an important outlining function and forces you to tighten your focus.
- b. Draft your first paragraph, conveying the most pertinent details of your new product and service. Answer who, what, when, where and why using the most convincing language at your disposal.
- c. Throughout the release, keep your sentences short, eliminate passive voice and write in second-person imperative ("Visit, See, Do, Buy, You, Your, etc.").
- d. Use specific, powerful quotes and testimonials from key company representatives and satisfied customers to underscore the quality and durability of your new product and service.
- e. End the release with a sense of urgency about your news, encouraging your readers into action. Make sure you list a contact person at your company who is not only willing to answer questions, but who also has strong communication skills and who is able to reflect a positive, professional image to

both the media and your customers.

3. Rewrite, Edit and Refine.

- a. How long is your completed first draft? If it's longer than a page, get out your red pen and be brutal. Due to the volume of the material that they must process every day, most editors will not even look at a press release that's longer than a page. It's perfectly acceptable to supply a company/product backgrounder with a press release, along with descriptions and photos of related products and services (more on that later).
- b. Ensure each sentence is short, active, punchy and positive. Use the shortest possible transitions to tie your ideas together. Make sure your paragraphs are short (no more than five sentences long).
- c. Keep your main points at five or under. Do not bombard the release with too much information or too much detail. If editors want more information, they can look for it in the background material that you send along with the release, they can visit your website or they can call your contact person directly.
- d. Help editors and producers do their job as easily and effectively as possible by eliminating the need for rewriting. If an editor has to rewrite the release due to sloppily worded copy or a buried lead, mistakes about your new product or service can easily be introduced. If your release is well written, edited and proofread, your release will have a better chance of getting published word for word.
- e. Ask someone else to proofread your release, searching for spelling, grammatical and other errors. Be open to their feedback if they have comments that extend beyond the scope of proofreading. If necessary, edit or rewrite the release again. Be careful not to circulate the release to too many people (too many cooks in the kitchen).

STEP TWO - PACKAGING & DISTRIBUTION

After you have finally produced what you think is a strong, effective press release, then what do you do with it? How do you distribute it? Where and to whom should you send it? How can you ensure that all the right people - not just your target customers but newspaper and magazine editors, as well as radio and TV show producers - will not only read it but do something to help spread the word?

1. Packaging. Compile a professional media support package to accompany your release. Include some or all of the following:
 - a. A collection of the best-quality images you have

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- b. Company backgrounder or profile outlining the history of your company, products and services
- c. Customer testimonials that underscore the quality and effectiveness of your product or service
- d. A product sample. Everyone likes a freebie, and editors and producers are no exception. Remember, your new product or service could be published in a New Products section or it could receive front–page coverage! The more professional and complete your package the more likely you are to receive maximum exposure.

2. Distribution. Take the time to research the market you want to reach. List all of the relevant publications, newsletters, newspapers, TV and radio shows that address that market. Track down addresses, e–mail addresses, web site addresses, and find the right person to send your package to. This may mean some online research or even picking up the phone and calling the media outlet to find out the name of the right person; and connecting with the right person at the outset will help you by alerting him or her to your incoming release package.

3. Select your distribution method.

a. E–mail - This is the cheapest and easiest method of distributing your media release, and it can be very effective. Remember, though, how easy it is to press "Delete". If you've sent your release to the wrong person who doesn't feel like forwarding it on, all your hard work and effort will be trashed before

it even reaches a person who can provide you with effective coverage. Another limitation with e–mail is you are assuming the editor will take the extra step of printing out or copying your information to the working files for the issue/show–in–progress. If you choose to distribute your release via e–mail, remember to include all of your press release and photos in the body of your e–mail. DO NOT send unsolicited attachments, as they will be deleted before they're even opened.

b. Fax - Another cost–effective distribution method, faxes can sometimes be misdirected to the wrong person in an organization, or they can be trashed before they find their way to the editor's desk. Another limitation with faxes is that you cannot send photos or product samples with your press release.

c. Mail/Courier - While these methods are both the most expensive means of distributing your press release, there is nothing better than experiencing the real thing. If you send your release via mail, you can include good–quality images, lots of background information, and even product samples, thus ensuring the best possible and most positive exposure to your product or service.

STEP THREE - FOLLOW–UP

It's one thing to write a strong press release and distribute it to all the right people who address your target audience; ensuring these people will publish or broadcast your information, giving your new products and services the best possible exposure, is another thing entirely.

1. Pick up the phone. Wait until several days after the editor/producer has received your press release package, then call that individual to ensure that he or she has received it. Ask if there are any questions, or if you can supply him or her with anything else. Ask if he or she knows whether or not your product will get into the next issue or onto an upcoming show. Ask if there is anything else you can do to help the process along.

2. Do not be a pest, but keep yourself at the forefront of the editor's/producer's thoughts. If more than a

month will pass between your sending along the press release package and the next issue/show being published or produced, then send a friendly e-mail (or call again if you feel comfortable doing so), reminding them about your new product and asking if they know about whether or not the information about the product will be published/broadcast. Always be polite, do not take up too much time, and always thank them for their time and assistance.

3. Call back and offer your sincere thanks for a job well done when you do receive coverage. Pave the way for sending this person future press release packages.

Mel-Lynda Andersen is a Communications Strategist and a principal of INCOMPAS Communications. INCOMPAS offers strategic, innovative approaches to communications and marketing initiatives to a broad spectrum of private and public sector organizations from initial concept and abstract idea through to completion. Subscribe to INCOMPAS's newsletter, eNEWS, for more original articles. Copyright © 1999–2004 INCOMPAS. www.incompas.com

"HUGE FREE Exposure With A Press Release!"

By A.T.Rendon

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The whole process of releasing information to the media can be very tedious. There are many online services that will do the job for you for fees ranging upwards of \$500.

However, even if you never heard of a Press Release before, a little online research will yield the SECRETS to establish your very own release in the format expected by the media pros who already receive hundreds of submissions daily.

And, just one successful "Press Release" can bring you HUGE FREE Exposure!

The first import thing to know is the FORMAT.

Nothing will get your Press Release deleted faster than sending it out in the wrong style with too little or even too much information. Send for your free copy below.

FREE Sample of a proper Press Release:

Via Auto-Responder at: mailto:pr_sample@emailexchange.org

If you "know" the basic format for a Press Release, then you have "Won the Battle" to at least get your info read by someone that can expose it to a huge audience and all

for the incredible low price of FREE!

That is the whole premise of a Press Release.

You give vital info to the media and they spread the word as a service to all of their viewers, readers and subscribers.

If all you have to offer is some chain letter or one of those, "Give me \$10.00 to earn \$1,000,000!" do NOT waste your time or the valuable time of the media rep to which you eventually email your release info.

I found all the info I needed to create my very first Press Release by doing a great deal of research online.

It takes many hours of research but basically, all the info

you need to actually create a Press Release can be found online with just a little digging on your part.

Just go to your favorite search engine and enter in the words, "Press Release", and you will find a wealth of information.

Of course, if you do not want to bother with the research, you can always make use of one of those "Press Release" services which can run you upwards of \$500.

But, as I already mentioned, all the info you need is online, there for the taking. That is what I did.

Why pay when you can get it for FREE?

My first Press Release was so successful, that after just one week, I had to stop taking orders. It was too much for me to handle and process.

Better to stop taking orders for something you will not be able to supply than accept the order and then be unable to fill it properly.

I got coverage in newspapers, magazines and on TV!

All of this media coverage was given to me for FREE!

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And it all happened just because I emailed out around 100 Press Releases! There are literally thousands of such media contacts. Pick and choose according to what info it is that you are trying to publicize.

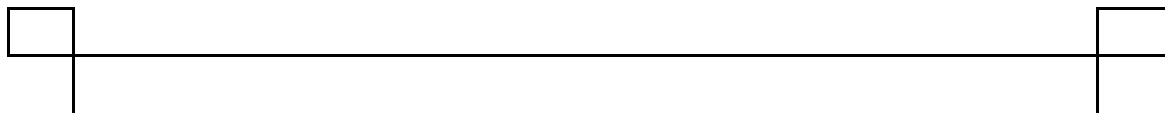
These people can reach millions of people with just one Press Release. That is why it is so important to tap this FREE resource for publicity and exposure.

Next week's article, will reveal the basics of a Press Release which will save you hours of research, and also detail for you how to tap into the email addresses of all these media pros.

A.T.Rendon is an entrepreneur and published writer. Subscribe to FREE Business Classifieds Newsletter & receive FREE online access to our Password Protected "FREE Submit To Over 2.6 MILLION FREE Ad Sites!" mailto:subscribe_fbcn9@emailexchange.org Visit us at: <http://emailexchange.org/?articles>



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100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!