Every marketer should know how to write an effective press release. They're essential for ensuring the media and public know your latest news. Plus, they can be cost-effective. Aside from paid distribution, they only cost your time to write. However, you need to know how to write them well. Journalists are extremely busy and only respond to the best pitches they receive. If you send something sub-par, it will get deleted.

Fortunately, if you spend the time to get it right, you can tilt the odds in your favor. In this post, you'll learn:

• How to identify newsworthy angles people care about. Every good news story should have a hook.

• The best way to write and format press releases. Learn how to do it right the first time.

• Make sure your release gets read (and drives results). Stay out of the trash folder and make a real impact.

When Should I Send a Press Release?

Any time you have something newsworthy to share. This includes:

• Breaking news announcements: News outlets want to be first to cover news when it breaks.

• Product launches: New products often make for good news pieces.

• Events: These can offer reporters something timely and interesting to share with their audiences.

• Partnerships: If you team up with another interesting company, the news may want to know.

• Sharing research: Unique data and original insights are always interesting.

• Awards: Don't be afraid to talk yourself up (a little bit).

• Hiring new executives: At larger organizations, this can be considered important news.

• Crisis management: When something bad happens, it's best to get in front of it before someone else.

Make sure you have something your audience (and the media's audience) will care about. This will dramatically increase the odds that your release will earn coverage.

What Information and Content Should a Release Include?

Here's what you should include in your press releases:

• Headline: Be sure to make it clear why your story is interesting and important.

• Press Contact: How can the media get in touch with you?

• City, State, Location: Where are you, and where is your news happening?

• Body copy: Order information by level of importance.

• Boiler Plate: What's your organization all about?

What is the Best Way to Format Your Press Release?

Press releases generally follow a familiar format. By keeping your formatting consistent, reporters will always know where to look, for which information.

So, what does a formatted press release look like?

EXAMPLE PRESS RELEASE FORMAT

For Immediate Release

Name of Press Contact:

Date:

Phone:

Email:

[INSERT HEADLINE]

Summary Bullet Point One

Summary Bullet Point Two

Summary Bullet Point Three

[CITY], [STATE] - Introductory Paragraph

[QUOTE]

[Second Paragraph]

[Third Paragraph]

[QUOTE]

Closing Paragraph

[BOILERPLATE]

Five Basic Press Release Writing Tips and Best Practices:

1. Think Like A Journalist

If you're writing a press release to send to a journalist you need to think (and write) like a journalist. You need to be able to pitch a story that captures the attention of the journalist you're pitching to. Some tips to keep in mind:

• Make the information they need easy to find. Tell them upfront the purpose of your press release.

• Keep your press release short and sweet. Your journalist is busy, don't waste their time with fluff.

• Don't overdo it. Everyone has the best event, the best new product the best whatever it happens to be.

2. Make Sure Your Story Has Value to a Publication's Audience

If you're a software company sending a press release to a publication that writes about pickup trucks, why would they run a story about your organization?

When determining where to pitch your story, ensure that:

• Their readership aligns with your target audience. Do both your audiences care about the same things?

• Their coverage area aligns with your product or service. Will the publication care about your company?

3. Follow the Inverted Pyramid

This format entails putting your most important information first.

4. Include Useful Quotes

One of the most critical parts of your press release is including a quote that writers will be able to pull and use in their own story. Remember, reporters, and writers, are already super busy. The more work that you create for them, the less chance they will have of covering your story.

5. Eliminate Fluff

Press releases should always be short and to the point. Reporters and editors are busy people.

6. Follow AP Style

Journalists follow AP style, and you should, too. This will make your information easier for them to use.

Writing a Press Release in 7 Simple Steps

Now you're ready to buckle down and write your release. Follow this process to get the job done.

1. Find Your Angle

Every good news story has an angle. An angle is the perspective your story will take. Some common angles are:

• Local impact - How is your story impacting the local community?

• Conflict - Is your press release giving another side to a conflict?

• Progress - Is your press release highlighting progress made towards a certain problem?

• Drama - Does your press release evoke an emotional response for readers?

When constructing your angle, remember the 5 W's:

1. Who is this story about?

2. What is happening?

3. Where is it going on?

4. When will it occur?

5. Why is it important?

Try following this template:

[WHO: COMPANY] today announced it will [WHAT] at [WHERE] on [WHEN]. The [EVENT/ANNOUNCEMENT] will provide [WHY - BENEFIT] for [AUDIENCE].

2. Write Your Headline

Your headline should grab the attention of your audience. That could include a reporter, editor, business partner, or a general audience.

3. Write Your Lead

The lead of your press release is the first paragraph that appears underneath your summary bullet points.

The most critical information should be in this first paragraph, including:

• An angle or a hook. This is what will get your audience interested.

• The 5 W's - It's an old school journalism best practice, but it'll make sure your release is informative.

• A reason for a reporter or editor to care. Put them first, and only send something they're interested in.

This lead includes each of the following:

• A clear explanation of the 5 Ws. The who (Doctors Without Borders), what (an awareness campaign), when (International Chagas Disease Day), where (Latin America), and why (severe public health issue) are laid out in a logical progression.

• A hook. Typically, when one hears the phrase "big heart," we think of something positive. However, this campaign uses this turn of phrase to explain the dangers of Chagas disease (heart issues).

• A reason to care. It's a major health concern, affecting more than 6 million people globally. That certainly sounds relevant.

4. Write 2 - 5 Strong Body Paragraphs with Supporting Details

The next several paragraphs should tell the complete story (in a concise way). The most important supporting details should be included. Each paragraph should be concise, ideally keeping your release under a page.

5. Include Quotes

Your best bet is to write the quotes yourself then send them to the subject you're quoting for approval. Quotes don't have to be complicated. In fact, there are three things you can do to ensure that you have the perfect

Quote in your press release:

1. What purpose does this quote serve? Is it helping tell the story of your press release?

2. Sound like the person you're writing the quote for. Don't use big elegant words if the person you're writing your quote for doesn't.

3. Always attribute your quotes. Tell them who is saying what and why.

Think about the style and language that your subject would use and once you have two or three potential quotes written, send it to them for feedback.

6. Include Contact Information

The people reading your press release need to know who to contact for more information. Include the following:

• Point of contact: This should be a name and job title for who to reach.

• Email address: Give them the best one to reach the preferred point of contact.

• Phone number: In case they'd like to call, rather than email.

You might also include a mailing address.

7. Include Your Boilerplate Copy

 "A boilerplate is usually found at the end of a press release, and briefly describes the company or organization related above. The short paragraph consisting of just a few sentences concisely explains the company or organization."

The boilerplate should appear on every release you send. Include the following information:

• The name of your organization

• The business mission statement

• Founding dates

• Company size

• A brief statement on what your organization is doing today to fulfill the ideas in your mission statement

When Should You Send Your Press Releases?

Sending your press release at the right time is crucial to help get the release you wrote the maximum amount of exposure. The most important stories get sent early in the week, while stories companies want buried usually goes out on a Friday afternoon (don't do this). Editors typically assign stories early in the week, so aim for Tuesday, beating the Monday rush while still getting in front of them at a good time:

How Should You Distribute Your Press Releases?

You've now written a perfect press release. Now, it's time to make sure it gets read. This will most likely entail:

1. Pitching your story directly to a few carefully selected editors. Editors like having exclusives. If your story is perfect for one particular publication, consider offering it to them alone.

2. Blasting it out using a wire service. This way, it can get picked up by tons of different outlets.

Or, you might do both. Services such as Cision make it easy to find reporters and deliver press releases.

If you don't have the budget for Cision, consider building your own database of reporters and editors manually. This can be something as simple as a spreadsheet.

Review Your Work with This Checklist

Before sending your release, double-check that it's error-free:

1. Is the release date
2. For immediate release in the top corner?
3. Is the publish date correct?
4. Is the contact information in the right-hand corner?
5. Name
6. Phone number
7. Email
8. Is the location of the organization in the correct all caps format?
9. Is all the relevant information in the top paragraph of the press release?
10. Is the boiler plate at the bottom of the template?
11. Are the pound signs in the correct places?
12. Is the spacing formatted correctly?
13. Two lines between each paragraph?
14. Is the press release error-free?
15. Spelling
16. Grammar
17. Any incomplete sentences?
18. What time is the press release being published?
19. Are the contacts in our media list up to date?

Where Should You Send Your Press Release?

If you decide to send your press release to different news outlets or publications make your list in advance. Some potential ideas to look into are:

• Industry publications

• Local newspapers

• General news sites

• Bloggers

• Industry partners

Start small and build your list of trusted contacts over time. Eventually, it'll be easier to get bigger publications to write about you.