

This Guide explains what you need to know if

- you've ever written a Press Release but lacked guidance on how to go about it, or
- if you've ever issued a Press Release but it failed to achieve the impact you had hoped for, or
- one day soon, you think you might want to write a Press Release.....

I've never ever had any problem remembering how to write and distribute a Press Release since the day I received a very 'to the point' briefing from the City Editor of a prominent newspaper who has since gone on to work for international newspapers and win a prize for business journalism. Each day, this man was sent a small mountain of Press releases. He explained precisely what he looked for in a Press Release and how best to survive his morning ritual of culling the weak ones – which he conducted standing over his rubbish bin.

The first lesson he taught was that if you haven't got a great title - which tells him what it's all about – plus a punchy concise hook for the first two to three lines then he simply didn't waste his valuable time reading any further - and the Press Release would drift down towards the bin.

He worked purely on the basis that if you can't be bothered to introduce your material properly then he can't be bothered to read it. He's not alone in adopting this view.

THE REALLY IMPORTANT AND REALLY DIFFICULT BIT - BEING CREATIVE

Before you even start to write a Press Release, the first thing you must do is work out who it's going to and why you have a story that might interest them. It doesn't matter what field you work in, the reality is that you and lots of other people like yourself are all competing for the attention of the relevant people – and the people who bring them their news.

Your reader's time is valuable - so show some respect and don't waste it. It all boils down to finding something which makes them want to read on. You're creative – so be creative and find an answer to these questions!

- What's new or unique or different about you and your news?
- Why is your news worthy of their attention in the virtual equivalent of a cattle market for news?
- How can you find a way of avoiding being boring with more of the 'same old, same old'?

THE ESSENTIAL BUT TECHNICALLY DIFFICULT BIT

You don't need to be a marketing professional to write an effective press release but you do need to adopt a professional approach and technique. The technically difficult bit is about sticking to the 'rules'. Your pitch can also be helped by how you design, present or write your news.

How can you make an Editor's life simple? This is it - the technique and some basic tips in a nutshell.

- **Audience:** know who your audience is and pitch the PR to them - use concepts and language which are appropriate to them.
- **Grab their attention with a good title:** The title makes a difference. Do NOT be boring - you have one line to produce a hook to catch their attention

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- **Now keep their attention:** Most people will skim read a PR. (Think about how you deal with your junk mail). You therefore have about 10 seconds maximum to make them want to read more. That equates to the title and a short first paragraph which spells out why your news is new / unique / different AND newsworthy.
- **Keep all text brief and to the point:**
 - Top of the page (above the title) state PRESS RELEASE (bold caps) and the date/time of issue
 - ALWAYS write in the third person
 - ALWAYS double space text
 - ALWAYS write concise points in a simple sentence structure using as few words as possible
 - The first paragraph states what the PR is about AND contains the 'hook'
 - (If required) The second paragraph states the essential facts – these are the five 'W's: who / what / where / when / why and how
 - Use a quote if it adds value
 - Eliminate flowery language, bias and hype
 - Check that facts, grammar and spelling are all correct
 - Remember that your text might be used verbatim
- **Short means short:** A press release should ideally be no more than one side of A4 and NEVER EVER more than two sides of A4 (It has to be incredibly important to warrant this). Use sub-heads as signposts if more than one side. Keep editing until you've removed all unnecessary words.
- **Further details:** Include at the end:
 - Journalists like people who respond promptly to their queries. Provide precise, accurate details of a contact for further information. Include a telephone number which has a person and not an answerphone at the other end.
 - An 'About You' section: spell out the factual details of who you are / who your company is / what your product is.

Remember – providing an Editor with good copy that's accurate, newsworthy and easy to use will increase your chances of a favourable reception for your next press release.

THE BORING BUT VERY NECESSARY BIT

Don't waste your time by producing a press release which sits unread in the wrong place.

Getting to the desk of the right person greatly enhances the chance that your missive will be read. You MUST find out the names of the people that the press release needs to go to. It takes a bit of research and a phone call to check names and titles and the correct address and/or e-mail address.

THAT'S IT. REACH THE RIGHT PEOPLE, DON'T WASTE THEIR TIME AND MAKE THEIR LIFE EASIER BY PROVIDING GOOD COPY - SIMPLE!

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Here are some websites which also have advice about how to write a Press Release

- PublicityInsider.com
 - [How to write a Press Release](#)
 - [the Insider secret](#) - definitely worth reading
- [Pressbox UK](#) - [pressbox: press release writing](#)
- [The Cabinet Office – PR toolkit – writing a press release](#)

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Travel sketchbook blog: <http://travelsketch.blogspot.com>

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