

## **Creating a Powerful Press Release that Demands Attention**

A successful press campaign can give your business a great deal of free publicity without burning a hole in your pocket. There is no other more cost-effective way to generate publicity and credibility for your business.

But getting the press interested in your story is an uphill task as editors everywhere are bombarded with hundreds of press releases every day. To increase the chance of having your story published, you must make the editors' job easier by presenting your press release in a format and style that appeals to them.

### **1) COLLATE AND ORGANIZE YOUR FACTS**

Contrary to what most people think, a journalist actually spends the bulk of his time in collating information and facts. When everything is ready, it is not uncommon for journalists to finish writing the story in just half an hour. How should we go about collating all the information and facts surrounding a particular event?

A simple rule of thumb is to find answers to questions pertaining to the who, what, when, where, why or 5 Ws of the event. And we do not stop at just the absolute facts and figures. These must be presented in the right perspective relative to some industry norms, trends and statistics. You may have to undertake some research by going through past industry and newspaper's reports.

### **2) IDENTIFY YOUR STORY'S ANGLE – WHAT IS THE HOOK?**

Now that you have collated all the relevant facts and figures, the next step is to identify the "angle" or headline of your story. A good story angle must have the following three attributes:

- It must be the most important fact in your story.
- It must be timely.
- It must be unique, newsworthy or contrary to industry norms and trends.

This story angle must be presented in the first paragraph as well as the headline of your press release. Most newspapers employ an "inverted pyramid" format that presents the most important information in the opening paragraph, followed by other information that supports or develops the key points raised in the first paragraph.

### **3) CREATE A CATCHY HEADLINE**

By all means, keep your headline short and simple using less than ten words. It should convey the key point raised in your opening paragraph in a light-hearted manner that catches people's attention and imagination.

### **4) WRITE IN THIRD-PERSON VOICE**

Unlike an emailed newsletter that is written in a personal voice, a press release must be presented objectively from a third person point of view. The reason is obvious. Every journalist has a duty to provide his readers with impartial facts and figures. He must not be seen as endorsing a company's products or services.

Some of the guidelines are listed below:- refrain from using any sales pitch in your press release.

- remove "you", "I", "we" and "us" and replace them with "he" and "they".
- provide references to any statistics, facts and figures raised in the press release.
- refrain from expressing personal opinions, unless they are done in quotes.
- draw conclusions from facts and statistics only - not general opinion.

## **5) PROVIDE "QUOTES" FROM THE NEWSMAKERS**

As a newsmaker, put your most important message down into a quote. Reporters always use quotes from the newsmakers to add an authoritative voice to their reports. If your press release contains quotes that are important and relevant to the story, chances are high that they will be replicated in full in the published article.

## **6) PROVIDE ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

You should end your press release with an appendix that provides brief background information on your company, newsmakers, as well as who to contact for further information.

The above writing tips are not meant to be an exhaustive guide to writing a good press release. But, it should help you get started on writing a press release yourself. Remember that practice makes perfect and the best way to learn how to write an effective press release is to observe how business news is reported in the business section of your newspapers.