

TWENTY GOOD SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL PRESS RELEASES

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1. Write on only one side of a sheet of white paper of (A4) ordinary letter size. Use a typewriter with black ribbon. You may write on a letterhead but it is equally acceptable to use plain paper. Avoid showy letterheads - they give the impression of advertising.

2. Leave wide margins all the way around. The lefthand margin should be widest - at least 4cm - in order to make room for instructions to the typesetter. Use wide line spacing so that the editor can make corrections, clarifications and additions between the lines.

3. State name, address and telephone number. State also the name and telephone number (office, home and, when possible car) of the contact person (s). It is important that they are available and willing to answer questions from journalists.

4. At the top of the paper, indicate that the text is a press release, communiqué, mass media information or whatever you prefer to call it. State the date of release. Avoid involved publication stipulations. A press release should be "free for immediate publication". Never send out a press release covering trifling matters. Doing so will only make things more difficult on those occasions when you want to convey really important news.

5. Write so that the reader will immediately recognize what is a headline, introduction or the main text. It is preferable to give two headline alternatives. Write the text according to the so-called pyramid principle so that it is possible to delete from the bottom without the main theme being lost. In extreme cases, the pyramid's top - the headline and introduction - can suffice as information. In other words, always start with the news and then develop it further piece-by-piece in the main text.

6. A press release should be written in a journalistic style so that it can be published without changes. This means, among other things, that it should be concise. It's better that you yourself keep the text short than to have someone else make deletions. Use the correct language level. Be careful about using trade terminology that the general public won't understand.

7. Make use of paragraphs in the main text. That makes the text easier to read. In longer press releases, it can be wise to use subtitles in the text. Remember, too, that one typewritten line in a manus is often the equivalent of approximately two type-set lines in a newspaper. Paragraphs in a newspaper text having more than 10-12 lines are difficult to read.

8. Try to limit the press release to one page. Enclose background material for those who are particularly interested. If you cannot limit your press release to one page, never use the back side as a second page. This is important because it is easy for people to forget to read the back side and, in addition, the text there can be disfigured should someone make cuttings on the front side.

9. An innovation should preferably be presented in separate points. That makes the message clearer and easier to understand. The addition of some comments by a responsible person is also recommendable. Remember that journalism is tuned to people.

10. Don't make the amateur's mistake of repeating your company name or trademark on every other line. Or even worse, writing it in capitol letters. The only possibility to get such a text accepted is to pay for advertising space. In other words, avoid making your press release look like an ad. Try instead to present your news in a social context, for example how it can influence employment or environment, etc.

11. There is an old saying that, "A picture says more than a thousand words". Pictures attract attention and increase reader interest. Therefore, if possible enclose one or several pictures, preferably having the same width as the set column. Use black/white copies for publishing in black/white. Colour pictures are often dark when printed black/white. Or try other types of illustrations such as sketches, maps, diagrams and tables.

12. Provide each picture with a text, preferably in two copies. One copy should be fastened to the back side of the picture so that there can be no doubt about what the picture illustrates. The other copy should be written on another sheet for use in the type-setting. But if you provide the picture text in one copy only, fasten it to the back side of the picture text in one copy only, fasten it to the back side of the picture with removable tape so that it can easily be switched over to the manuscript. Give the photographer's name and preferably also state that the picture is free for publication. Be parti-

cular about the wording of picture texts because people read headlines and picture texts first, then the introduction and lastly the main text.

13. Avoid writing on the back side of the photos with a sharp pen. That can make marks that will be visible in print. Paper clips and staples can also damage a photo, so don't use them to fasten together photos and picture texts. In addition, protect the pictures with cardboard when sending out press releases so that they won't be damaged under way.

14. Make up four lists covering suitable recipients of a press release. The first one should include telephone numbers to be called when the news is urgent or in order to offer exclusive rights to the material. The second list should give the telex and telefax numbers so that the material can be sent via the telecommunications network. The third list should include the visiting addresses to which material can be sent by messenger. The fourth list is the longest-postal addresses. Distribution by mail is made easier if addresses are, for example, copied onto self-adhesive labels that can be attached to envelopes.

15. Give careful consideration to your choice of recipients. For example, study the yellow pages of the telephone catalogue under the headings "Newspapers and magazines" and "News agencies", in order to determine a suitable media. In addition, there are lations, etc. But be careful to not confuse addresses to editorial offices with those of advertising departments and printers. It's better to include too many than too few recipients. Information via mail is relatively cheap.

16. Remember to send press releases to mass media other than the press. In addition to the daily press (morning and evening), there can be interest for the popular and trade press. For instance, the editorial offices of the various TV channels, the National Broadcasting Corp., local radio stations, the Central News Agency and other telegram and news bureaus. Perhaps even personnel newspapers in larger companies.

17. Remember that many editorial offices have several departments, for example central editorial department, editorial department, business department and local editorial department. It is quite common to address press releases to the "editorial secretary" who is day-editor at an editorial office. If you know of journalists who have a particular interest in your information you should, of course, send your press release direct to them as well.

18. If possible, try to get your press release in at a time when there is less competition for space. With regard to times of the year, there is generally a "dry period" from the beginning of July to the middle of August-the summer holiday period. There is another one from the middle of December to the middle of January and New Year holiday period. It is most difficult to get material printed in March, April, May and the

first half of June, as well as in October, November and the first half of December.*

19. News competition varies also within weekdays and hours of the day. It is normally easiest to get attention if the news media receives your press release on Mondays or Fridays and, to a certain extent, Saturdays and Sundays, before the sports rush starts. The most difficult days are Wednesday and Thursday. With regard to the time of day, you will have greater chances if your material gets to editorial offices between 09:00 AM and noon. After, lunch, the flow of news increases successively while the time left before going to press decreases. For evening papers and their equivalent, the best turn-in time is afternoons and evenings.*

20. Follow up press releases. You can subscribe to press-cutting services with country-wide press, radio and TV coverage. Analyse what lies behind variations in result from time-to-time. Particularly daily newspapers in big cities have a bad habit of publishing news from press releases without stating the source. When that happens, phone the persons responsible and make a complaint. This can result in a improvement in the next distribution of a press release.

* These observation apply to many areas in Europe and elsewhere. However, conditions vary and you may, for instance, find that the "dry period" occurs later in the year.

An Example Press Release :

Video News Release

" New Breakthrough in AIDS Research"

With the constant threat of AIDS, anti - viral research is becoming increasingly more important. It could also prove to be invaluable in the fight againts cancer.

The enclosed Videotape News Release shows what the scientific community is doing to battle AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. We hope you will find a spot in your newscast for this material. Thank you.

example continued.

Suggested Announcer Lead-in (Live): Doctors are researching the possibility of using a person's own immune system to fight off viral infections. Here's a special report on what doctors feel could lead to a major breakthrough in battling cancer, as well as ADIS, and other sexually transmitted diseases.

If you use your own narrator:

Channel One has announcer V/O
Channel Two has wild SOT

If using package, playback on "mix"

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