

## **How to write a winning press release**

By Carol Ann Walters

Whether you're organising an event, announcing a new product or launching a campaign, the right publicity issued at the right time can be the key to success. A good press release is one of the most effective ways of getting your story covered in the media and it doesn't have to cost the earth. Press and Public Relations expert Carol Ann Walters tells you how.

### **What is a press release?**

A press release is a written announcement issued to the news media and other targeted publications for the purpose of letting the public know of a specific event or product launch.

### **Before you start writing your press release think carefully about what you want to say**

Journalists get hundreds of press releases every day so you need to make sure yours stands out from the crowd. Your press release has to be of interest to the journalist or they won't cover it. It should be accurate, jargon-free and to the point.

### **Your audience**

For the local media find a local angle. There's no point sending your press release to a news organisation in Cheshire if the story is about an event that happened in Kent.

### **The media to whom you are sending your release**

Do some research. Read as many magazines and newspapers as you can. Listen to the radio, watch local TV and browse websites. A day spent on the internet researching the key titles in your area will pay dividends. Find out who your local reporter is. Find out what they are interested in. Build a relationship with him / her.

### **A good press release will let the journalist who is reading it quickly understand what your story is about**

Start with a good, strong headline, supported by the key point in the first paragraph. Concentrate on what is news in the release and put it right at the top.

### **Make it newsworthy**

The most important thing about a press release is its content. There is no point publicising an event or activity that happened a few weeks ago – it's been and gone. The press release should be sent to the journalist as early as possible.

### **Include all the basic facts.**

Work through the five Ws - who, what, when, where and why and give as much information as you can on each. If you want to know how to do this, read the news stories in any reasonable newspaper.

### **Think man bites dog not dog bites man**

Local media is always on the look out for stories to fill their pages, particularly those which are timely and relevant to their audience or involve human interest.

### **Make it clear**

Remember that the journalist reading the press release knows nothing about you, and has very little time. Keep your press release short and to the point. If the journalist wants to know more, they will let you know.

### **State who you are and how you can be contacted**

Provide a contact name, a work number and a mobile number and make sure you are able to take calls day and night. If you get a media message on your answerphone return it promptly. There is nothing more frustrating for a journalist than to be unable to contact key sources before deadline.

### **And finally...**

Include an editor's note, with any basic information such as background statistics and facts so that the journalist has all the material they need.

### **REMEMBER**

The journalist reading the press release knows nothing about your organisation, and has very little time. Keep your press release short, to the point, accurate and interesting – preferably all on one page or maximum two. 90% of press releases often end up in the bin – don't let yours be one of them!

If you are unsure of what to say in a press release, contact the author to get more press release tips and ideas and to find out how she can help deliver a cost-effective PR plan for your business.

### **About the Author**

Carol Ann Walters is a results-driven PR professional with over 12 years experience working in PR & Journalism incorporating both in-house and freelance situations.

### **For more information**

Please visit my workology pages at

<http://www.workology.com/members/CarolAnnWalters2.aspx>

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