



HOW TO ... Write a Good Press Release



Soon or later in his/her professional life a manager deals with something which could be noteworthy of communication to the layman or the specialist press. A clue to understanding whether what you are willing to communicate or to which media it should be given, is by evaluating the common definition of news. It is news as such, if it contains three elements: timeliness, the possibility of sharing, public interest or worries to a given audience.

If you still think you have something to communicate through media, you can write a press release.

Even if your institution has an external relations department or officer, the following tips could still be useful. In fact it is common practice for them to ask you to write down the core of your press release which helps them to define the mailing list of potentially interested media.

Here are some hints to deal with what could be an unusual exercise.

- Remember that journalists will decide to read (or discard) a press release from its title so provide a self-exhausting and comprehensive title, anticipating the contents. Don't bother to be too creative. Most media have journalists skilled in titling and providing appealing headlines for all the articles published.
- Indicate clearly and in bold if your press release is not expected to be published before a given date or time (embargo). Even so, do not be convinced that your news will have an early publication.
- Journalists love having a few articles ready for publication with minimum effort on their part. In fact, they are frequently asked to provide a few lines at very short notice. So write your press release keeping in mind that news is featured by 5 Ws:
Who, What, Why, Where, When

There is no need for an introduction.

You can safely start supplying the news:

- 5Ws for the news, followed by
- an explanation of its meaning
- either general information on your institution
- or general information on the topic

You can also provide additional information, e.g.

- current information on your institution
 - current information on the topic
- There is no need for a conclusion.

- Decide on the order of the general/current information keeping in mind that the latter items of information will have less chance of being published.
- In addition to the news given, a good journalistic article will provide at least two different points of view. Use the general information to provide either the opinion of a senior executive of your institution or an expert, or both.
- Write double spaced and keep the contents within 1500-2000 characters. Provide a contact person in case further information is needed.
- Monitor the publication and do not be too disappointed if the article is not published : reasons for non-publication are usually lack of space which is more common than lack of interest and interestingly, if your institution is producing a lot of press releases, your chances decrease.

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