



How to Prepare a Press Release

By Mitchell Friedman, APR

The press release is the document most frequently used to communicate information to reporters. Given the flood of documents, phone calls, and email these professionals receive, it's imperative that press releases be well written to cut through the clutter. The following guidelines should prove helpful.

- » Issue a press release only when there is legitimate news to announce. Promotions, awards, new products or services, and events merit press releases.

In general, information is more likely to be considered newsworthy if it meets one or more of these criteria:

- » It has a demonstrably significant impact on others;
- » It is timely (e.g. a weight loss program introduced in early January, when many people think about the subject);
- » It offers a different perspective or angle on a popular topic; it is new or unusual; there's a human interest component (e.g. people, children, animals);
- » It highlights organizational or individual achievements;
- » A well-known person is involved;
- » There is a local angle (related either to a neighborhood, city, region, state, or nation);
- » Or it is related to a subject about which people always want to learn more (e.g. relationships, love, making money).
- » Provide the name of a representative of the organization who can answer questions likely to be raised by a reporter. Offer a phone number (including cell phone number and/or pager, if appropriate) and an email address where this person can be contacted. If this person travels or is often unreachable for blocks of time, provide the name (and complete contact information) for a second knowledgeable organizational representative.

Place information on contacts in the upper right hand corner of the press release, and present it in the following format:

For More Information Contact:

Joe Jones

Acme Manufacturing

(123) 456-7890 office

(123) 434-9087 cell

joejones@acmemanufacturing.com email

Seymour Smith
Seymour Smith Public Relations
(333) 879-4509 office
(333) 887-4608 cell
seymour@smithpr.com email

- » Craft a clear, concise (one to two lines) and accurate title. It must communicate the main point of your press release *and* its potential newsworthiness.
- » State your news clearly and concisely in the first sentence, which is referred to as the lead. The lead sentence must answer the following question: "hat is the main point communicated in the press release?"
- » Present information in order of descending importance, starting with the lead sentence as most important. You will then want to cover who, what, when, where, why, and how as related to your story, as succinctly as possible.
- » Quote the words of an organizational representative only if they add essential details or perspective to the story you are telling. Do not simply include a quote for the sake of quoting someone or, even worse, to assuage the ego of an executive.
- » Provide a general description of your organization or cause as the last paragraph. This section is commonly called the "boilerplate." It consists of a one- to two-sentence mission statement, and your company contact information (including phone, fax, email, and Web site address).
- » Write short sentences and paragraphs. Use simple, active verbs. Be interesting and engaging. Purge your writing of unnecessary adjectives, adverbs, and jargon. Tell you story forcefully and clearly but remember that you are not writing sales or marketing copy.
- » Double space the text of the release, and leave one-inch margins on the sides.
- » Tell your story in one to two pages, at most.

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Mitchell Friedman, APR provides training in writing, media interview preparation, presentation skills, Internet public relations, and other communication skills.

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