

Six Steps to a Winning Press Release

Want publicity but can't seem to get it? Maybe it is your press releases - more like obituary announcements instead of finely crafted news pieces, worthy of someone's attention.

Sure, we all hope for a enormous amount of publicity for our businesses, yet we continue to produce "ho hum" press releases day in and day out. So what is the secret to creating that perfect press release – one that'll get your phones a -ringing, and your boss a-singing? It's simple, really. In just six steps you, too, can reap the rewards of prolific PR.

1. Get Ready, Get Set ... Go With Your Objective!

What are you trying to accomplish with the release? Maybe generate inquiries from the press, get an interview or prompt orders from your customers? By starting with your objective, you'll most certainly determine what to emphasize in your release as well as who should get the release.

2. Create a Killer Headline!

Approach this with the same tenacity as you would a headline for an ad. Don't be afraid to be bold. The effectiveness of your headline will directly determine how many people will read it and who will eventually contact you. According to Jeffrey Dobkin, author of *How to Market a Product for Under \$500*, "I recommend starting the release with a headline that offers your biggest benefit: the specific formula is NEW PRODUCT OFFERS BENEFIT, BENEFIT, BENEFIT." Spend most of your time working on a powerful headline, and it will do the rest.

3. Don't Tell 'Em Everything, But Put All the Important Stuff First

In the first few lines of the release, tell your whole story minus the gory details (remember you want them to call!) Cram all your benefits at the top. Many times this will be the only part of your release that is read (besides the headline) so you'll want it to convey the message of the rest of the release. Accordingly to Dr. Paul Hartunian, author and renowned PR expert. "If you can't sum up your story in three or four sentences, you don't know how to say what's on your mind. Keep working on it until you can get your whole story into one short paragraph."

4. Quote the Experts!

Use quotations as often as possible. People like to know what others have to say, and are often easily impressed. Of utmost importance is to include credentials with your quotes. Who is this Jane Doe, Mary Smith, or Susan Jones? Why should anyone care what she says?

Instead of

According to Pauline Matthews, "Working women are on the web in greater numbers than their male counterparts..."

Use

According to Pauline Matthews, three time winner of the SBA's Business Woman of the Year Award, "Working women are on the web in greater numbers than their male counterparts..."

5. Tell 'Em What You Want 'Em To Do

In other words, this is your call to action. Be careful here. This is not the time for a hard sell. If your release sounds like a sales job, most likely it'll get tossed. Too much rewriting will be needed to make it newsworthy. Go back to your objective. How what was the purpose of your press release? Maybe you'd like an interview (during which you can pitch your product, service, company), If so, Dr. Hartunian suggests a good way to end such a release is to say, "Terry is a superb interview who will fill your readers with information that will be of value to them today and for the rest of their lives. To schedule an interview with Terry, call 303-555-9593

6. Last But Not Least - The Boring Administrative Stuff

Limit your press release to one page. If it exceeds one page, go back and refine it, or rewrite it again. Remember, in most cases you want someone to call you - the media, your customers, prospects – so don't give them the whole story. Double space your release and leave big margins; editors often write remarks and instructions in the white space while creating their piece. And, signal the end of your release with either "###" or "****." Also, including a personal letter to the editor and photos (if appropriate) have been shown to improve your odds for publicity.

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