

Writing a Media Release

Good communication and good media releases are...

- Well organised, well planned
- There to support your key messages
- Clear, Consistent and Concise

Attracting media attention

- Media outlets are in the business of News.
- "News is that which has been previously unknown to the reader/listener/audiences, it surprises them, informs them, intrigues them."
- To attract media attention you need to find the *newsiest* angle of your event and pitch it in the most convincing manner.

News Values

- Timeliness ... new, first time ever etc.
- Proximity ... local angle.
- Prominence ... person of note involved.
- Human Interest ... what is the most interesting aspect of the event.
- The Unusual ... x-factor, quirky angle etc.

What is a media release?

- A media release is the most effective way to communicate with all media outlets.
- Your media release will say a lot about you and your event to the editor and journalist.
- If you can write a professional, clear, concise, informative and most importantly newsy media release your chances of gaining media attention will increase considerably.
- If you can't be bothered to go to the effort to tell your event's story, why would a journalist?

Structuring and writing a media release

Headline - Provide a heading which clearly identifies the subject matter of your media release. Put heading in bold and large font to make it stand out.

Intro - Make sure the first paragraph attracts attention. The 'intro' should include the key facts and display the newsiest element of the event.

Content - Construct your media release to answer ALL 5 W's and 1 H: What – Who – Where – When – Why - How

Basic layout of a media release:

| | |
|---|--|
| Your logo | |
| Media Release | |
| Today's date | |
| HEADLINE | |
| Intro paragraph – usually includes most or all of the who, what, when and wheres. | |
| Next most important para | |
| Third most important info etc | |
| etc | |
| Ends | |
| <hr/> | |
| Your Contact info for the media | |

The TRIANGLE approach to news - Assume most of the text in your media release will not be used. So, it's important to make sure the most important information is first, then the next most interesting detail, followed by the other information. Don't save the best for last as it might never be read.

- Keep it simple. A media release is not a feature article. It is a list of facts put into sentences.
- Write from the media outlet's point of view. Think about what will make your story relevant to their readers, listeners or viewers.
- Paint a picture of what the event will be.
- Keep the text short and simple. Use clear, accessible, everyday language. Technical or highly academic descriptions sound boring or may confuse. Avoid abbreviations and acronyms as the journalist may not be familiar with your organisation.
- Use SHORT one or two line quotes from relevant people involved in the event.
- One page Media Releases are more effective.
- Contact - At the end of the release include the name, title and phone numbers of the contact person who will give the interview.
- If appropriate, include the time, date and venue for a media conference, interview or photo opportunity (work to suit media outlets working times – mornings on weekdays are best).
- If attaching a photo to the email include the photo caption and credits, including names of all people in the photo and who took it.
- Check, re-read, check again and get someone else to read it. Give someone 10 seconds to look at the page and then tell you what it was about – the key messages and info need to sink in in 10 seconds, that's all some journalists will give it.

Delivering your media release

- Email is best, but fax also to make sure
- Keep your file sizes small
- Send as a MSWord file

Timing – When to send your media release

- When you send a media release can be just as important as its content.
- Send first release at least a week before the event.
- If your targetting a specific publication, check their content deadlines.
- Re-work original release to be more relevant and re-send it two days before the event.
- Don't just send your media release to local media outlets send them to as many as possible – there is no harm in trying and there is only new audiences to gain.

The follow up call

- It's always best to follow-up your media release with a call the next day.
- 10-11am is a good time to call journalists.
- If they're not interested be polite .. you are more likely to get media coverage in the future if you are able to build a relationship with the editor or journalist.

Photos

- A great photo will more than double the chance of the release being ran in print media
- Construct a visually interesting image that tells the story
- Attach photos to the email as jpg files that are ready to be used in print

Notes on image quality for digital images:

- For black and white newsprint: 150 dpi
- Photo quality magazine: 300 dpi
- Strike a balance between file sizes that can be sent easily and an image that in real size is big enough to print at full quality in the paper/magazine
- If in doubt, call the media outlet to ask how many MB they can receive (how big the files can be).

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