

Press Releases 101



We all want to get the word out about Under YOUR Influence.

A press release is a great tool that can help raise awareness. Here are some tips to get you started!

What is a press release?

It's a newsworthy story that involves your organization. The press release is sent to newspapers, television and radio stations, and other media groups. They may then run the press release as an article, or they may want to interview you for more details.

What are the benefits of a press release?

- They get the word out quickly to many different media outlets.
- A news story may be more likely to capture people's attention than an ad. Having a media outlet run your story is like having an endorsement.
- It is very inexpensive – usually free!

When should a press release be used?

The press release needs to focus on a specific piece of news that is of value to your community. Have your entire event planned before you submit a press release. Media outlets want information, not just possibilities. Be ready to answer questions.

How is a press release written?

Use the following parts:

1. FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – These words should appear at the top of the release with all letters capitalized.
2. Contact Information – Include a contact name, telephone number, and e-mail address.
3. Headline – This should be a sentence that explains the essence of what the press release is about. Articles, prepositions, and conjunctions with three or fewer letters are not capitalized.
4. Dateline – This should be the city your press release is issued from and the date you are mailing your release.
5. Lead Paragraph – A strong introduction paragraph should grab the reader's attention and contain the information most relevant to your message. Include the five W's (who, what, when, where, and why), and summarize the message of the entire press release.
6. Body – Fully develop the message here. Write the most important information, and include quotes.
7. Organization Boilerplate – End your press release with a short paragraph that describes your organization, the services it provides, and a brief history.
8. -END- (or # # #) – End a release with one of these traditional concluding marks.

What are some tips on how to write a press release?

- Avoid excessive use of adjectives, flowery language, and jargon.
- Stay away from hyped-up phrases like “break-through”, “unique”, and “state of the art.”
- Use a journalistic voice. Never use “I” or “we” unless it is part of a quote.
- Read good newspapers to get a feel for the writing style.
- Shorter is better. If you can say it in two pages, that's great; if you can say it in one page, that's better.
- Include relevant quotes from key people, if possible. They give authority, credibility, and make it easier to read.
- Provide as much contact information as possible.

How is a press release best distributed?

If it would be of interest to the general community, send it out to newspapers, radio and television stations, Web sites, magazines, and any other outlets. Create a form that lists contact information for all of the media outlets in your community. Take special note if there are any special instructions on how each media outlet would like press releases submitted. In general, mass mailing your release to every media outlet is a mistake. Focus on those that would best serve the project or program.

Source: “Making the Most of Press Releases” by the Channing Bete Company