

# Elements of a Successful Press Release Campaign

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## Introduction: What Is A Press Release?

A press release is a targeted document announcing news of your product, service, or business. The point of a press release is to inform the media, with the ultimate goal of obtaining enough interest so that the media reports on your activities. With persistence and a little luck, your press release may result in “free” advertising that lets the public—your potential customers—know about your business.

## Press Release Campaign

A single press release can be compared to a single bullet: it may or may not reach its target and produce results. A press release campaign, on the other hand, is a planned succession of press releases sent on a regular basis. Subsequent press releases may build upon results of the initial press release; may introduce new features or benefits of your product or service; or may simply inform the media about additional news of your company. A well-written, well-targeted campaign has a much better chance of success (defined as media coverage) than a single shot of one press release.

## Elements of a Good Press Release

A typical press release looks a certain way and contains critical elements. Press releases are strictly businesslike, do not contain fluff, and are intended to inform. This section defines the elements, the formatting, and the content of a press release.

### *Elements*

There are seven basic elements of a press release.

1. **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.** These words appear in the upper left corner of a press release, immediately identifying the document as a standard press release. Typically, the words appear in all capital letters.
2. **Contact information.** Should a media representative decide to act upon your release, it is imperative that he/she knows exactly who to contact and how to get in touch with them. The contact information includes name, title, phone, fax, email, and address of the person most knowledgeable about your company, product, or service.
3. **Headline.** Write a compelling headline announcing the main point of the press release. Use a bold type and title case (initial capital letters).
4. **City/Dateline.** Indicate the city from which the release is issued, as well as the date of the release.
5. **Initial paragraph.** Include all of the basic information in the first paragraph, answering the basic journalism questions: *who, what, when, where, and why.*
6. **Body.** Elaborate on the initial paragraph, providing essential details of the announcement. The writing should be clear, crisp, and professional.
7. **Brief Bio.** Following the body of the press release, include a brief overview—or bio—of your company. One paragraph is enough.

## **Formatting**

Common business sense prevails when it comes to formatting your press release. Use 8½" x 11" paper, a minimum of one-inch margins, and bold formatting for the headlines. The headline should be title case—initial capital letters for each word, with the exception of common words such as *to*, *of*, *a*, or *the* for example. Lay out the text so that a paragraph ends on one page and is not divided and carried over to the next page. Use only one side of the paper, and if a second page is used, type the word *more* between two dashes and center it at the bottom of the first page:

– *More* –

At the end of the release, following the last paragraph, insert three number symbols to indicate the end:

# # #

## **Content Tips**

Your press release must contain information that your audience deems worthy of attention. Make sure your release is really news, and identify how the information is directed to your audience. You may need to wait until you have a newsworthy topic before sending your next release. Try to impress your audience with a reason to continue to read. The first few sentences of the release are the most critical, so pay particular attention to how you begin. Ask yourself if the audience can relate to what you are saying. Stick with factual information; don't try to embellish with excessive adjectives or impress with elaborate language. Include a short quote from the president or spokesperson relating a first-hand view or commentary of the news.

Above all, make a reporter's job easier. Present your contact information clearly, and include everything—contact name, address, phone, email, fax, website,

## **Follow Up**

When you initially planned your press release campaign, you outlined a series of releases. Be flexible in your plan, and if one of the releases generates particular interest, capitalize on the momentum and follow up with another release based upon the successful release. For example, if your product is featured in a trade publication as a result of a press release, the next release could announce, "XYZ Product Featured in May's Issue of ABC Trade Release." It's news about the news, so to speak.

After each press release, be sure to post them on your website for easy, accessible information for journalists. When they need to research a story, they'll appreciate the easy access and complete information.

## **Online Press Room**

Use your press releases to develop an online press room on your company website. Your online press room is a place where journalists can go to access everything they need to know about your company. Include a history of press releases, chronologically listed

with date and headlines and clickable to the full release. Include contact information, a history of the company, and any financial or other quantitative data that may be of interest to the media or to shareholders. Resist the urge to limit accessibility to your online press room with passwords or registration. Don't put up any roadblocks—your goal is to make the information complete, easy to read, and easily accessible.

Carefully consider the contact information, and list only those contacts that are informed and prepared to answer inquiries. Include phone and email addresses, unless one of your goals is to limit phone calls. In this case, include only email addresses.