Seven Steps to Effective Press Releases

1. **Write the lead**, the first sentence which grabs the reader and says who, what, when, where, why, and how. Then fill in the next 1-2 sentences which expand the lead.

   - The press release headline should be brief, clear and to the point. Treat press release headlines and sub-heads as the ultra-compact version of your entire press release content.
   - Generally, news release headlines should portray an "announcement"-type style in order to attract readers, i.e., journalists. It may describe the latest achievement of an organization, a recent newsworthy event, a new product or service. For example, "XYZ Company Announces Strategic Partnership with ABC Company in India & United States."
   - Headlines are written in bold and are typically much larger in size than the press release text. Conventional press release headlines include the use of present tense and exclusion of "a" and "the" as well as forms of the verb "to be" in certain contexts.
   - The first word in the press release headline should be capitalized, as should all proper nouns. Most headline words appear in lower-case letters, although adding a stylized "small caps" style can create a more graphically news-attractive look and feel. Do not capitalize every word.
   - The simplest method to arrive at the press release headline is to extract main points (highlights) and then the most important keywords from your press release. Now from these keywords, try to frame a logical and attractive statement. Using keywords will give you better visibility in search engines and it would be simpler for journalists and readers to get the idea of the press release content.

2. **Write the press release body copy.** The press release should be written as you want it to appear in a news story.

   - Start with the date and city for which the press release is originated.
   - The press release body copy should be compact. Avoid using very long sentences and paragraphs. Avoid repetition and over use of grammar, fancy language and jargon.
   - A first paragraph (two to three sentences) must actually sum up the press release and the further content must elaborate it. In a fast-paced world, neither journalists nor other readers would read the entire press release if the start of the article didn't generate interest.
   - Deal with actual facts - events, product, service, people, target, goals, plans, projects. Try to provide maximum use of these 'real' facts and contents. A simple method for writing an effective press release is to make a list of following things:

3. **Communicate the 5 Ws and the H.** Who, what, when, where, why, and how. Then consider the points below if pertinent.

   - What is the actual news?
   - Why this is news
   - The people, products, items, dates and other things related with the news
   - The purpose behind the news
   - Your company - the source of this news

   - Now from the points gathered, try to construct paragraphs and assemble them sequentially: The headline > the summary or introduction of the news > event or achievements > product > people > again the concluding summary > the company.
   - The length of a press release should be at least a page and maximum two or three pages. ***These must be doublespaced.
• The more newsworthy you make the press release copy, the better the chances of it being selected by a journalist or reporting. Find out what “newsworthy” means and use it to hook your reader.

4. **Include information about the company.** When a journalist picks up your press release for a story, he/she would logically have to mention the company in the news article. Journalists can then get the company information from this section.

The title for this section should be - About XYZ_COMPANY

After the title, use a paragraph or two to describe your company with 5/6 lines each. The text must describe your company, its core business and the business policy. Many businesses already have a professionally written brochures, presentations, business plans, etc. - that introductory text can be put here.

At the end of this section, point to your website. The link should be the exact and complete URL without any embedding so that, even if this page is printed, the link will be printed as it is. For example: http://www.your_company_website.com. Companies which maintain a separate media page on their websites must point to that URL here. A media page typically has contact information and press kits.

5. **Tie it together.** Provide some extra information links which support your press release or close the press release with the contact information.

• **Add contact information.** If your press release is really newsworthy, journalists would surely like more information or would like to interview key people associated with it.

  • If you are comfortable with the idea of letting your key people being directly contacted by media, you can provide their contact details on the press release page itself. For example, in case of some innovation, you can provide the contact information of your engineering or research team for the media.

  • Otherwise, you must provide the details of your MEDIA/PR department in the CONTACT section. If you do not have dedicated team for this function, you must appoint somebody who will act as a link between the media and your people.

  • The contact details must be limited and specific only to the current press release. The contact details must include:
    
    o The Company's Official Name
    o Media Department's official Name and Contact Person
    o Office Address
    o Telephone & FAX Numbers with proper country/city codes and extension numbers
    o Mobile Phone Number (optional)
    o Timings of availability
    o Email Addresses
    o Web site Address

6. **Signal the end** of the press release with three # symbols, centered directly underneath the last line of the release. This is a journalistic standard.
TIPS

- You must include the company name in the headline, any sub-head, and in the body of the first paragraph for better visibility via search engines and for news-editorial professionals and other readers. If you're mailing the press release, make sure it's printed on company letterhead. At the very least, include the company logo.
- If the press release is for immediate release, write "IMMEDIATE RELEASE" in all caps on the left margin, directly above the headline.
- Research actual press releases on the web to get the feel of the tone, the language, the structure and the format of a press release.
- The timing of the press release is very important. It must be relevant and recent news, not too old and not too distant.
- A follow-up call can help develop a press release into a full story.
- Include a "call to action" in your release. This is information on what you want the public to do with the information that you are releasing. For example, do you want them to buy a product? If so, include information on where the product is available. Do you want them to visit your Web site to enter a contest or learn more about your organization? If so, include the Web address or a phone number.
- Do not waste time writing the headline until the release is done. Copy editors write the real headlines in newspapers and magazines, but it is good to come up with a catchy title or "headline" for the release. This headline may be your only chance. But if you try to write it before you write the release, you waste time. You don't know yet exactly what you - or those you interview, will say. When you have finished a draft of the release, you may decide to revise your lead -- or not. Then and only then think about the headline.

WARNINGS

- Always remember that editors are overworked and understaffed. If you can make life easier for them, you're more likely to get coverage. If you write a press release that's close to the way the editor will actually publish it, you will have nearly total control of the published work. If, however, you fill it full of fluffy advertising copy, don't use proper AP style, etc., the editor will have to edit your piece to use it. That means he or she is more likely to just move on to the next press release (there's plenty in the pile), or edit your release in ways you won't like.
- Avoid the temptation to make the first words of your press release a glowing generalization about your company ("XYZ Corp, a global leader in the manufacture of high-end widgets for the royalty of Europe, today announced...") Many PR releases are written this way, despite the fact that editors nearly always delete this kind of fluff. Everybody says they're the leader. Don't waste the editor's time.
Headlines that attract readers

1. Get Your Prospect's Attention. Your first job as a marketer is to grab your prospect's attention and get them to focus on your message. The two factors that influence whether a headline will have the attention-grabbing effects that you desire is the content and design of your headline. The content is the actual words used in your headline, and the design is how it is visually presented. The text you use in your line should cut right to the heart of how your product or service can benefit the reader. This should be a benefit specifically targeted to your desired audience. Get into the mind of your prospect. Whatever it is that they need or want the most should be addressed in your headline if you want the reader's attention. Visually, the design of your headline should cause it to leap off the page to the viewer. Find a way to make your headline stand out amongst other ads that it shares space with, by using a different typeface, color or other attention grabbing visual design elements.

2. Identify Your Target Audience. You should know whom your specific target audience is that you are trying to reach through your marketing, and target your headline to get their specific attention. Wording your headline to appeal to your target audience heightens their interest and draws them into your ad copy like a magnet. This technique of narrowing your message to appeal to a target audience is known as flagging. In a sense, you are holding up a flag that says to your target audience, "This message is for you"! This alerts the prospect to give your ad priority attention because you are specifically addressing them. A message that specifically addresses your target audience speaks to them on a more personal level and your ad copy has a higher perceived value because of this.

3. Make A Clear, Benefit-Filled Statement. When your targeted visitor reads your headline the one thing that they need to see to continue onward is benefits. Your headline needs to clearly address how your product or service can benefit your reader. A benefit is different from a feature. A feature describes the contents and characteristics of a product or service. A benefit clearly answers the question in the back of every prospect's head: "What's in it for me?" A benefit is the solution or result a customer can get from using your product or service. A benefit should satiate a hunger or relieve a pain, and is the number one reason why a prospect will continue to read your marketing piece. Your headline should inspire the reader with hope that the advertised benefit can be theirs. This hope of a realized dream, or the cessation of a pain compels the find out more about your solution. Clearly state the benefit of your product or service in your headline and your potential customer will be receptive to hearing more about what you have to offer.

Tips

- In summary, a powerful headline that covers the above three points will serve you well by setting up the rest of your ad copy and marketing message for success. A headline sets the marketing "dinner table" and inspires your guests to gather around it, ready to partake of the rest of the message about your product and service.

Extracted from www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Press-Release