

# Writing A Press Release

By Chuck And Sue DeFiore

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News releases (also called press releases) are an important part of a public relations campaign. They are also an important part of marketing your business. They are the primary means of "selling" your story to the media. All press releases are structured the same way. Make sure you answer "yes" to these key questions when writing your next press release:

Is it easy to read?

Editors look at hundreds of press releases every day, and if your news release is difficult to read, they will throw it out. It should be on plain white paper and printed in black ink. The main body of the release should be double-spaced and have at least a one inch margin all around the edges.

Your letterhead should appear at the top of the first page to establish your identity.

Have you double-checked your spelling and grammar?

A good press release has no typographical or grammatical errors. If yours contains such errors you'll lose credibility; it will have the same effect as a badly written business letter or resume. The release should be typed. Print out (or type out) a fresh copy for each person to whom you will send it. Do not send out poor-quality photocopies with dark staple marks or blotches.

Did you include the six news elements?

Because all news articles include six basic elements-who, what, when, where, why, and how - your press release should also follow the same guidelines. Put the most important facts in the lead paragraph, with the facts decreasing in

importance as you go down the page. Why? Suppose you send a press release to an editor who has five inches of space open in the newspaper and your release runs eight inches long. Ideally, the editor would trim your press release from the bottom. Therefore, to make sure the most important information gets run, put the less important information at the bottom.

Did you include a contact source?

In the top, right-hand corner of the first page, directly beneath your company name, there should be a line that states, "For further information, contact." A name and telephone number should follow. The editor must have somebody in your business to call to answer questions or to be interviewed about your news item. If you can only be reached during certain hours, specify them.

Have you included a dateline?

The best press releases have a dateline with the city in which the business is based and the date the release is written. Every press release needs a dateline so that the editor can tell when it was mailed. Nobody wants to cover an old story that has lost its timeliness.

The other morning during my favorite radio talk show they mentioned this guy who wrote a book about selling water beds which was coming out next week. How do you think this guy got the radio stations to talk about this - you got it - a press release or a publicist who sent a press release.

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