

# NEWS OR SNOOZE: Will Your Press Release be a Doosie or a Dud?

By Meredith Pond

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A press release can be an effective weapon in the fight for media and public attention. In fact, many businesspeople don't even think twice before writing or ordering a press release, correctly assuming that a release can provide the necessary publicity to boost sales.

As much as a well-written press release can do for your image, you need to be sure that your business or product is appropriate for a release. Believe it or not, a press release that isn't truly newsworthy can easily end up sounding like a sales pitch, which can do irreparable damage to your company's image.

A press release should make an announcement about a new product or service, an event, or a change in the way a product or service is marketed. If your company has changed management, released or upgraded a product, or is staging an important event, you have material for a solid release.

Also, any little-known business or service can make a good release if it serves the needs of the public in an interesting way. For example, I just wrote a release for a gentleman who provides a service that allows homeowners to pay off their mortgages years sooner, without making larger payments or refinancing their current loans. With mortgage rates falling and the real estate market picking up, that kind of material made a very good release.

So, a story that surrounds current events and peaks public interest usually makes good release material. Now, let's talk about what doesn't.

If your business is, for example, an MLM that hundreds of other people are taking part in and marketing on their own, chances are that the media has already heard about it and won't pick up your story. I'm not saying that MLMs are automatic losers in the media department, because a brand-new or extremely unique program

may still be newsworthy. In most cases, however, people trying to market an MLM should rely mainly on classified ads or informative articles that dance around their business, then reveal the contact information at the end.

Similarly, if you belong to an affiliate program along with lots of other people who are using their own marketing techniques, a press release probably isn't the way to go. Media people are extremely busy, and easily get overrun with press releases. Again, in this situation a classified ad or well-written article is probably a better use of your time and money.

A clever writer can take almost any subject and turn it into a press release without sounding like a sales letter. As great a talent as that is, however, media professionals will easily see through it. An effective press release doesn't just SOUND newsworthy, it IS newsworthy. A sales letter in disguise does not make a good release.

Above all, keep in mind that the last thing an editor wants to read is a sales pitch; sending them this kind of material will only get you blackballed in the media. If you're not sure your material is appropriate for a press release, ask an expert. Before ordering your release from an outside source, for example, call them or send them an email, tell them about your business, and ask them if they think a release is the right tool for you. If it's not, chances are they can recommend something that will serve you better.

Meredith Pond is a professional and freelance writer with extensive experience working on the web. Meredith provides writing and editing services to individuals and businesses alike at great prices. See <http://www.geocities.com/wordsmith25/MeredithPond.html> for details. For instant info on prices and services, send a blank email to <mailto:meredithpond@getresponse.com>. Contact Meredith directly at <mailto:wordsmith25@hotmail.com>.

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