

Write News Proposals, Not Press Releases

By Rusty Cawley

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There are only two times to write a news release.

The first is when your story is so big that your only real problem is finding a room large enough to hold all the reporters who want to attend your press conference.

The other is when your news is so small that it warrants only the briefest mention.

The first instance is rare and is generally reserved for large-cap public companies. Microsoft announces that Bill Gates is stepping down as CEO. Coca-Cola announces a settlement in a yearlong racial discrimination suit. Ford announces it is recalling thousands of Explorers to replace their Firestone tires. These are examples of when a press release is the right choice.

The second instance is fairly common and is found in organizations of all kinds: public, private, governmental and not-for-profit. Your organization names a new vice president.

Your company announces its second-quarter profits. Such news is condensed into a release and distributed to local newspapers and trade magazines, usually with solid results.

But all too often a CEO expects the mainstream media and the trade press to jump on a story that simply has no obvious news value.

A prominent restaurant chain opens its second location in a major city. The first location got great coverage; the second should get even more, right?

Wrong.

There's no obvious news value to a second location. Send that as a press release to the media, and your story will line garbage cans throughout your town.

The PR Rainmaker knows: In most situations, it is better to think in terms of proposals, not releases.

Instead of releasing a general idea to the media at-large, tailor your story to specific reporters at specific publications.

Forget the headline: "Restaurant Opens Second Great Location."

Consider breaking your one large story into several smaller stories, then selling the pieces to the media one at a time.

Does your new restaurant offer a trendy new dish or an exotic cocktail? Call the local morning show producers and offer to show viewers how to make it at home.

Installing a high-tech kitchen with a flash-cook oven unlike any other in town? Call the restaurant-beat writer at the local business journal and offer an exclusive look at how the device will make your restaurant among the most profitable in town.

Is your celebrity investor dropping in to check out your site? Take high-quality photos and send them to the city's gossip columnist. Better yet, call the talk radio station and offer a live interview.

If nothing else, plan a stunt. Break a world record. Get outrageous.

But forget about mailing, faxing or e-mailing a press release.

Propose your stories one at a time. That's how the PR Rainmaker works.

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Rusty Cawley is a 20-year veteran journalist who now coaches executives, entrepreneurs and professionals on using the news media to attract customers and to advance ideas. For your free copy of the ebook "PR Rainmaker," please visit <http://www.prrainmaker.com> right now.

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