

## Key facts on the overall presentation and content of a press release

Does the thought of writing a press release make you cringe? Fear no more! After you have read this information sheet by Spiral MPR, press releases will flow from your fingertips.

Let us begin by reviewing what a press release is: By definition a press release is simply a statement prepared for distribution to the media or client base. The purpose of a press release is to give journalists or recipients' information that is useful, accurate and interesting. **Read that bit again!.....useful, accurate and interesting**, it is that easy.

What should you write about? See our list below:

- New or unusual contract win
- Award win
- New product
- New service
- Report / accounts success
- Increase in turnover
- Staff appointments
- Charity donation
- Achievement of industry accreditation
- Partnerships with local schools/universities/other companies
- MBO or acquisition
- Results of company backed survey
- UK first
- Public first
- Restoration
- Comments on national news items for local readership

...and don't forget the photographs! Often a press release will be taken up purely on the merit of the accompanying photography. For coverage of your events good quality photographs can be used in diary pages, just remember to get everyone's names.

Once you get the hang of writing them, all you have to do is fill in the blanks. Press releases conform to an established format. Journalists receive many press releases a day, they have set standards and expectations that you need to conform to just to have your release read, let alone published.

To increase your chances of having a press release published, make the editors, freelancer, reporters or journalist's job easier by presenting the release in a format and style that appeals to them:

Press releases should be printed on company letterhead, if this is not feasible, adding the company logo is essential, say in an email for example. The companies name, web address, location address and phone number should be printed clearly at the top of the page. "PRESS RELEASE" should be spelled out in CAPS and left hand justified in bold. The press release contact persons name should be underneath the wording and all contact numbers printed clearly underneath. If the press release is for "IMMEDIATE RELEASE", say so, on the left hand margin, directly above the title, again in caps. If the press release is sent out in advance of an official announcement you can place an 'embargo' on it by stating the date from which it can be used: "FOR RELEASE 20<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2007". However, do not use an embargo unless absolutely necessary.

The next essential component of the press release is the Headline or Title. It should be left hand justified, and in bold. The heading of the press release should capture the journalist: make it short and snappy, thereby, hopefully grabbing the attention of the journalist and impressing them enough to read on.

Keep the headlines short and simple using less than ten words: It should convey the key point raised in the opening paragraph of the release in a light-hearted manner that will spark their imagination and grab their attention.

With all the above under way, you are now ready for the useful, accurate and interesting body of the press release, but first you need to consider the following:

- Why the release is being written: to broadcast information, increase business, update target audiences?
- Who is the audience?
- Does the press release contain invaluable or newsworthy information that will be used by the target audience?
- Is there a just cause for the release of the information that you wish to broadcast?
- What do you want recipients to take away from the press release?
- Do always include industry facts and figures

...and remember "Yesterdays news is not going to go far"

So to the body of the press release:

Begin by collating and organising your facts -Don't forget to include the very basic; who, what, where, when, how and why. A press release must always be presented objectively from a third person point of view. For example refrain from using any sales pitch in your press release: remove "you", "I", "we" and "us" and replace them with "he" and "they". Provide references to any statistics, facts and figures raised in the press release and refrain from expressing personal opinions, unless they are done in quotes.

- Ensure the release is grammatically correct and doesn't contain any spelling mistakes or errors, and that sources are quoted correctly.
- Be concise - keep it punchy and don't use unnecessary flowery language e.g. cutting- edge, revolutionary.
- Keep to the facts- only present information that is true, correct and doesn't embellish.
- Timing is crucial - The content may not be topical, but you may be able to incorporate your story with a more recent news event.
- Try to keep your release to one page of A4 – journalists are busy people- they will contact you for more information if they need it

The Physical Format – how it should look:

Let the journalist know where they should start. The first paragraph of the press release should contain in brief detail what the press release is about. The second paragraph explains, in detail: who; what, why; where information or products can be found and if relevant when it will happen. Also, included in the second 'informative' paragraph is generally a quote that gives the release a personal touch. Touchy feely go a long way with journalists. Press releases and news stories are boring to journalists without a 'human interest'. The third and generally final paragraph should be a summation of the release and further information on your company with the company contact information clearly spelled out.

Let the journalist know where the release finishes with the word “-ENDS-” or a series of hash symbols (####) in bold at the bottom of your copy.

Remember to separate sections clearly to ensure that the recipient can access the information that they need quickly and effectively.

After the –ENDS- of the press release you can provide extra information about the topic, company, etc., e.g. summary of the companies’ activities, how long they have been established etc, under the title “-NOTES FOR EDITORS-“. You can also provide the contact details again such as contact name, title, address, phone number, fax, e-mail and websites address if the journalist needs more information or additional quotes.

Notes on electronic distribution:

- Don't send attachments as some recipients do not open files that they think may contain a virus, or may not find attachments acceptable unless they are warned beforehand.
- You don't know what email software your recipient will be using, so it is far more effective to send it by email in plain text.
- Remove bold, italics, underlining and unnecessary formatting, as when it is delivered it will be received as gibberish.
- Most importantly ensure that the release is hitting your target audience and not sent to recipients that are not relevant.

The finished result:

Be sure that your product/service is up and running and fully finished, before you offer it up for review. The last thing you need is a bad review.

Once the press release is written and you are happy with the end result, its ready to be shown to the outside world, but first, here are a few final points you may want to consider:

- Find out who the Editor/customer is, and their correct title and contact details
- Make a list of the features that make your product perfect for the readers of your chosen magazine/paper/company.
- Ask yourself “Is my product affordable for the readers of this magazine/Paper/company?”
- Find out which issue it will be appearing in and when the ‘press day’ is for that issue, i.e. the deadline for sending the issue to press.
- Call the day before to ask if all is well and if they need anything else.
- Press day is usually 3-4 weeks before actual publication (i.e. the publication available on the shelf).

This could be you:

Daily Echo, TUESDAY DECEMBER 7, 2004

**JOB'S** **BUSINESS SOUTH** **JOB'S**

She wrote the book on promoting products

**I WANT TO Buy Your Product...** Have You Sent Me A Letter Yet? - that's the new book from Swamp-based Promote Your Business's Carol Bentley.

She outlines how to create powerful sales letters, advertisements, flyers, brochures, web pages and newsletters, including:

- 79 words and phrases to make your letter of advert compelling
- nine elements "that will make your advert outperform competitors"
- the nine biggest mistakes people make in newsletters - and how to avoid them

It's been using these techniques for many years and has had considerable success, both for myself and my clients," said Carol, a director of Dorset Business, the chamber of commerce & industry and F&B regional vice-chair.

"I felt that many more business people could create their own success stories once they knew how to make their letters and adverts so vibrant and compelling that people would respond, which is why I wrote the book."

Firms can download the first chapter and list of contents for free at [www.accelerateyoursales.co.uk/freochapter.htm](http://www.accelerateyoursales.co.uk/freochapter.htm)

SALES ADVICE COVERED: Carol Bentley with her new book

DAILY ECHO

Wednesday, May 10, 2006

Nicky Findley spent a night on the tiles' as she discovered DIY

**Laying it on thick**

she working in Dorsetshire was getting to be a bit bit with the floor with her...

It's those late Friday evenings when the great leads in the region of Dorset Business Centre, says Nicky, who they have had all sorts of projects from in the last few days and she's still in the office.

"I've been out since, plastering and tiling."

"We've already had six houses that we've done - started back in January," she said.

"I don't know if you can see it, but it's a bit of a mess about the house, but the rest of it will be done."

And she's not alone. According to one report, Dorset has become a hotbed for DIY as a result of the recession. The number of people who have taken up the hobby has risen 10 per cent in the last year, according to a survey by the British Retailers Association.

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Daily Echo, WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 1, 2006

Dutton Gregory Solicitors **BUSINESS** by Roan Fair

**Spiralling into wider service**

A POOLE PR agency is upping the ante and repositioning itself to focus further on marketing.

Spiral PR has rebranded as Spiral MPR - ahead of a new trend in the industry.

Spiral MPR principal Darren Norrish said: "After I established the company less than two years ago, it quickly became apparent that we offer so much more than just PR."

"MPR stands for Marketing Public Relations, which means using public relations strategies and tactics to achieve marketing objectives - thus integrating PR activity into the business plan and providing a framework for measurability."

What are the missed and business issues that doesn't get most? Email the Business Editor on [info@spiralmpr.co.uk](mailto:info@spiralmpr.co.uk)

BUSINESS PLAN: Darren Norrish, Spiral MPR

**COFFEE ANYONE?** Rosemary Jones, assistant manager of Basepoint Business Centre, Christchurch, recently organised a strawberries and cream coffee morning. She's pictured here with Basepoint area manager Nigel Reed

**'Digital ink' pen to aid form fillers**

A "DIGITAL INK" pen that can track what is written then email it is hitting the streets of Dorset and Hampshire.

On-the-road formfillers such as sales teams, utility company workers and housing association staff are expected to be among early adopters.

It is already being used by Dorset Police, the first force in the country to adopt it.

The pen scans as it writes. Users send data via mobile phones to computers where it is stored as pdf copies and also in editable sections.

Digital Ink has been launched locally by IT firm Portal Concepts which employs five people at Basingstoke.

fill out a form using a writing implement and the results are instantly communicated to a company's systems and processed immediately. It's breathtaking - you have to see it to believe it."

Digital Ink's secret lies in the paper - it is covered in millions of tiny dots that 'tell' the computerised pen exactly where it is on any given page.

The dots appear to be uniform but in reality are of different sizes and arranged in a myriad of different patterns, enabling the pen to 'read' them.

This means that the technology can work only with pre-printed forms, rather than any old sheet of A4.

**The Digital Ink pen from Portal Concepts**

Bournemouth Airport. Portal Concepts founder and MD Dr Ian Woodgate said: "Digital Ink uses the basic concept that everyone uses and learnt to operate from an early age - the pen and paper."

"This means that for the first time a person can

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" using marketing pr to maximise awareness and expand your business "