

Tips on Writing Press / Media Releases

Sometimes the devil can be in the details and a good press release is no exception. Here are a few tips to help get your media release noticed.

Timing Your Release.

It's definitely not an exact science but generally releases should be sent to a radio or TV station at around 4 am if they are to make breakfast news. Sometimes if your story has a few different angles, or you want it to develop throughout the day, you can send one release first thing, and then another one a few hours later. Sometimes this is used to great effect. Even sending the same release at 4am and then 9am ensures that someone on a different shift at the news desk (again, this is radio and TV) will see it before they get deleted.

If you want to get an expert to talk about a product on radio or TV (radio is generally easier) then a great technique is to send out a release marked 'interview opportunity' a week before the expert is available. Always put a time frame (e.g: 6am until 9am) otherwise your expert will be hanging around all day. Then on the actual day the interview(s) are to take place send out another release saying that so and so is being interviewed about such and such. One of the biggest PR companies in Sydney use this technique for a large pharmaceutical company to publicise a about various health issues. The subtext is, of course, the products are great, but advertising restrictions prevent them from doing that directly – that where PR comes in.

Newspapers are a different beast as deadlines are usually around 6-7pm the night before unless the news is absolutely astounding, in which case material at late as 11pm might make it into the next day's paper. For events in general it is almost just as important to send a release before as well as after the event, as long as you don't leave it too long. That way the story has a chance to develop and you might get more copy written about your issue.

Under the banner of newsworthiness, it's also worth mentioning that using a current issue to make your issue/ organisation/ product relevant is always a good move. If a story is 'hot' then something attached to it will be 'warm' as a result. An example of this might be when anti smoking legislation comes in banning smoking in all indoor venues, and there is a bit of media hype about it, Nicotine patch manufacturers might do a campaign mentioning how their product could be used to stave off the grumps.

Format Your Release Correctly.

If you don't want to get your story binned before it has a chance to be read, make sure you put **Media Release** or **Press Release** (in large letters) at the very top, or down the left hand side of the page. When sending e-mails, ensure that you have "Media Release" and your headline in the subject.

If your release is to go out immediately, say "For Immediate Release". If your release is for a specific date and time, either ensure your release is sent through the [OzMedia](#) system using the embargo feature or states "Embargo Until" with your date & time at the top of the page

Start the first paragraph, with your city and date I.E. "Sydney, NSW, 25th January 2007."

For further media enquiries, ensure that the correct contact name and phone number is at the foot of the page.

You can download sample media release templates [HERE](#)

Consider Your Audience

News desks, news rooms and journalists are always pushed for time and busy. When your release arrives, it's important that its eye catching and communicates the "news worthiness" of your story quickly and efficiently. This means creating a good headline and giving the most important information in the first paragraph.

Content is King

Make sure that your story is newsworthy. Try to find and communicate the "angle". Be sure of your facts. If your release is an opinion piece, be prepared to take questions from journalists, especially if the subject matter is highly interesting or controversial.

Presentation & Images

Resist the urge to "Pretty Up" your release with fancy fonts or graphics. This could be considered a sign that you have no content. If you have graphic material available, this can make your release more "newsworthy". Ensure that your release states that material is available and if possible, provide a web address where the images can be downloaded. Where delivery is by e-mail you can include low resolution versions of images to give some immediate visual impact.

Size is Important.

The best size for a media release is to fit on a single sheet of A4 and not be cluttered. Some media releases can go to 2 pages, but should rarely be any bigger. Include any company or biographical information in an "About" section at the bottom of your release, but try and keep it clear and simple.

Above all, don't be afraid to be "bold". Send regular media releases and keep yourself in the media eye.