

Five Simple Ways to Make Your Press Release Stand Out

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No matter what industry your company is a part of, you're bound to be facing competition—a lot of competition. To stand out from a sea of lookalikes and wannabes, your company must reach out to the right people.

That outreach starts with maintaining an effective network of press relations.

For a lot of companies, finding PR success can be extraordinarily frustrating—especially when just starting out. But the good news is that it's actually fairly simple to get your brand name out there and in the media.

Put on a smile, be patient, and follow the following five simple steps.

1. Make the right connections

Even the most extraordinary press release on earth will be ignored if it's not sent to the right people. So, before you start cold-calling journalists with news about your company's innovative new products, sit down and think about who it is you're talking to.

First, assess your target audience and decide which media outlets members are most likely to be using day in and day out. Then, take a look at each section of those publications to figure out where your business story would fit. For example, are you trying to raise awareness about a new tech product, or are you announcing a new company scholarship?

Not everything qualifies as a breaking news story, so you should bear in mind that firing off a quick email to the editor-in-chief of a national newspaper is a waste of time and energy. It will never be read, and you'll probably end up getting listed as spam.

Instead, take a look at the editorial contacts of each section, and go straight to the bottom of the totem pole. After all, if you're shooting for a large publication, even the deputy section editors might not have the time to read the dozens press releases coming through their inbox.

Try your run-of-the-mill reporters first, and don't just fire off a cold, automated email. It's not hard for reporters to tell when they're one of 300 people on the receiving end, and your impersonal

emails are far more likely to go unread. Instead, phone each reporter before trying to send through a press release. Introduce yourself and what you're promoting, and ask whether it's something they're interested in. That way, they'll have a human voice in mind when reading your work.

It's truly staggering how much that four-minute phone call will improve your chances of publication.

2. Remember the 5 Ws

Once you've figured out the target of your press release, start writing. Remember that most journalists are busy people, and they don't have the time to make corrections or rewrite gibberish. If you want to see your story in print, you've got to do your best to get it right the first time.

First and foremost, that means writing your press release like a news story. A winning release should be written [using an inverted pyramid](#). That's just a fancy way of saying that all the meatiest chunks of your release should be at the very top.

In essence, the first sentence of your press release should sum up the entire story in just a few words—answering all questions of who, what, where, when, and why... and in the process answering why your story is worth the reader's time.

As you progress, keep the language objective. If your press release is interesting enough, a lot of busy publications won't even take the time to edit; they'll merely cut and paste it onto their website. But the only way to achieve that sort of success is to give your release the tone of a typical news bulletin.

If your company is making some sort of assertion in your press release, acknowledge opposing viewpoints in the same way a news story would. Then, prove why your opinion is stronger. That will not only please editors but also help convince readers that your new product or service is a must-have.

To conclude, wrap up your news item with a bit of context: Will this development change your company's standing in a particular industrial sector? Is this the first time your new product or service has been made available in your region?

By showing how your news item fits into a bigger picture, you'll drastically widen the interest surrounding your press release. After all, your company's new "smart shoe" might appeal only to a small number of consumers, but plenty of readers will have something to say more generally about the advancement of wearable technology.

3. Add a little flavor

After you're done writing your press release, take a look at where you might be able to break things up with a bit of color.

Bear in mind that to slip it past their editors most journalists will require quotes from at least two people within the company. After all, a story isn't worth much if it hasn't got a couple names and faces.

Here is your chance to add a bit of color and analysis to your news item. Spice up the technical specifications of a new product with juicy adjectives. Compare it with competing products and make bold statements outlining why yours is superior.

In this day and age, nobody's got the time for a news item that's the equivalent of a dry piece of toast.

But be wary. Don't say anything [damaging or overtly disrespectful](#) about your competition, as that could ultimately turn customers against you. That said, your quotes should seek to create a bit of friendly controversy surrounding your company. With any luck, you'll have people disagreeing with your company's bold statements and turning your marketing campaign into a genuine news debate.

4. Don't forget a friendly reminder

Once you've got your press release signed, sealed, and delivered, it's time to play the waiting game. That said, sometimes journalists need a bit of encouragement. Give them a day or two to respond. If you don't hear back, nothing's wrong with dropping them a follow-up email or making a quick phone call.

Most news rooms are fast-paced, and it's likely your editorial contacts read just four lines of your press release before being asked to focus on something else. Give them a friendly reminder about your story and why they should be interested.

Eventually, you'll catch them on a slow news day, and they'll be eternally grateful that you helped them fill a news slot.

5. Publish, publish, publish

OK, so you've finally got a magazine to bite and your company news is out there in the open. Do you sit back and relish in your minor success? Of course not. Part of your job is to make sure as many people as possible see that clipping. Tweet the link to followers, start a conversation on Facebook... Capitalize on that publicity.

If you'd approached other publications about your release, it's time to go back to them to point out that somebody else is running the story. That might be all the encouragement they need. A lot of news outlets might pretend they run only exclusive stories, but it's usually just an act. News is news, and if people are expressing a genuine interest in your story, serious publications have no choice but to publish it.

That said, it's worth approaching different publications post-release to gauge how you might be able to repackage the story to suit their needs. For example, perhaps you can provide a local or

regional slant on a new-product release. You can earn your press release a much larger space in print if you take the time to offer different publications their own slant. That way, you're maximizing exposure, and they're upholding some claim to exclusivity.

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In the end, good PR is all about patience and perseverance. If your company news is truly of interest, it will eventually get the exposure it deserves, so long as you keep trying to get it out there. So develop sincere relationships with like-minded journalists, and keep thinking about ways to improve your media reach.