

Press Releases

Top Tips



You want to write a cracking press release?

Buckle up! Let's do this thing!

Ever wonder what happens to the press releases you send out?

When I worked as an editor, you could usually find me at my desk, sifting through the mountain of information that arrived every day by e-mail.

I confess I ignored most of it. You see, most press releases are monumentally dull. This is bad news for me, but excellent news for you.

It means that if you can write a press release that is even the tiniest bit more literate, newsworthy, well-presented and entertaining than the rest of the dross that journalists get, then you're almost guaranteed it will appear in a magazine or newspaper.

Here's how to get ahead of the rest:

- **Put yourself in the place of the reader**

They want to be informed and entertained. Readers are selfish with their time - they want to know what's in it for them.

- **Don't just plug your company**

If you want an advertisement, I know several people who will gladly sell you one. Journalists want news. They're looking for something interesting and relevant to share with their readers.

- **Make the journalist's life easier**

Summarise the whole story in the first paragraph. Answer the: who, what, where, when, why and how. You get bonus points if you write a decent headline.

- **Don't miss important details**

Call me Mrs Picky but if you mention people (and you should, because people sell stories) I want to know their names, ages, job titles, and where they are from. Don't overlook the obvious - explain whether Jan and Sam are men or women. And while you're about it, include a short history of your company.

- **Include contact information**

Yup, it's basic but you must include a contact name, company name, full address, phone number, e-mail address and website URL, please.

- **Keep it short**

If you're writing a press release, keep it to two sides of A4. If you're writing a feature, stick to the number of words that the editor gives you. And don't just rehash something from your corporate brochure. It's a cue for eye-rolls and you will be called unspeakable things...

Press releases

- **Avoid cliches like the plague...**

Mwahaha - ahem. But yes, cliches are best avoided - unless you're naturally hilarious and have managed to create a really funny punny headline.

- **Don't call to check they got your email**

They did.

- **Networking works!**

Owing to rules of breathtaking unfairness, journalists are generally no longer able to go on six-hour lunchtime jollies on expenses. But they are surprisingly amenable to a light working lunch or a swift pint after work. Befriend them!

- **Deadlines matter**

When journalists give you a deadline, they mean it.

- **Write quotes that sound real...**

Like most journalists, I hate reading obviously made-up quotes. I like quotes that sound like someone actually said them. Take the time to read through a quote to see if it sounds at least vaguely human.

- **Don't put an apostrophe in the possessive form of 'its'**

It drives many journalists into a furious, shouting rage that can last for up to six days. And although it may not always catch this one, think of Word checker as your friend. That blue line? Check Grammar. Red line? Typo...

- **Send a photograph**

Professional is always preferred, and avoid clichéd or gimmicky poses. Try not to send huge images, but do have a high-resolution picture available on request. (Wherever you are in the UK - I've worked with HUNDREDS of photographers. For a free informal steer in the direction of a photographer to suit your brand and budget, email hello@naomisnelling.com)

Don't state the obvious

Let me guess... You sincerely believe that it is vital to deliver quality, individual advice/products/services to your clients. You listen to their needs and devise unique solutions for their problems. You offer an innovative approach. You believe the needs of the customer are paramount. You provide a full range of bespoke services.

Well, I've got news for you! These are the claims made by every company in the universe. Demonstrate your uniqueness differently: "show don't tell!"

