

Issue #10

# How To Get Free Traffic With Press Releases

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# Introduction

You've heard it before:

You can promote your business, for free, using press releases.

Problem is, **most people have the totally wrong conception about how to use press releases.**

I blame the Internet for this.

You see, lots of beginning marketers think that writing and distributing press releases begins and ends with online distribution using a service such as PRWeb.com. Many of these marketers even focus on optimizing their releases for the search engines, so that they get Google traffic and backlinks.

Sure, that tactic should certainly be part of an overall press release strategy. But the truth is, **a press release (*when done correctly*) is worth so much more than that.**

- ✓ A good press release can get you ink in actual newspapers.
- ✓ A good press release can land you interviews on radio and the TV.
- ✓ And a good press release can snowball, so that soon your phone is ringing off the hook with media requests.

So, how DO you create an awesome press release? Like this:

- ➔ **First, you need to understand the true purpose of a press release.** Get this wrong and you won't get any traction with your release.
- ➔ **Next, you need to get a firm grip on the basics,** such as how to write and format a release.
- ➔ **Third, you need to find an angle, a hook,** so that you can create a good press release that will get you some ink (and the respect of your local media editors).

→ **Finally, you need to know the correct way to distribute this release** for maximum exposure.

That's an overview of the process.

Read on to discover the exact steps and instructions so that you too can start enjoying the publicity power of free press releases...

## How to Write an Effective Press Release

Before you write even one word of a press release, there are two things you need to understand:

1. The true purpose of the press release.
2. How to properly format a press release.

Let's look at these two issues separately...

### Understanding the True Purpose of a Press Release

Contrary to popular belief, reporters and editors don't print your press release to boost your business.

Truth is, they don't care about your business. They don't care about your products or services. They do NOT care about you.

See, what your local reporter cares about is the newspaper. And thus he's looking for content with these characteristics:

- **The boss will like it.** The reporter or editor you submitted your release to has to answer to a higher power – his boss. So, this person is only going to print content that makes the paper look good. Generally, that means your release needs to be a good fit with the paper's audience as well as matching the overall style of the other articles printed in the paper.

Tip: That last part is important! If you want to enjoy success with press releases in a particular newspaper, then see what kind of articles and releases that paper is ALREADY printing. Then model your release around these other successful releases.

- **It's newsworthy.** Yes, I realize you're looking to drum up some free publicity for your business. But if it smells even a little bit like a promotion, your release is going to wind up in the trash, lickety-split.

That's why your press release needs to have story behind it. It needs to have an angle. And that means you need to start thinking like a reporter.

Note: To better understand this, you can ask these questions to yourself:

- "Who'd be interested in reading this?"
- "What's the story?"

Which brings us to the next point...

- **Newspaper readers will enjoy it.** The articles in a newspaper are what create sales. Big sales means big readership, which translates into higher ad rates and subscription prices. But it all starts with good content.

By now you're getting the point. Press releases aren't promotional. Instead, they're news – and that means they're informative, educational and entertaining.

Depending on the release, usually any promotion is very subtle, such as slipping in the name of your business when you're quoting yourself.

Example: George Clooney, owner of GeorgeClooney.com, says "Celebrity baby names are overrated."

Now, just a bit later we'll talk about different ways to make your business newsworthy. But first, let's look at the proper way to format your release...

## Formatting Your Release

Reporters and editors have expectations about what a press release should look like.

They have professional guidelines that dictate to them exactly how the release should be formatted. And if you want your release to be accepted, it's a good idea to format it using these professional guidelines.

Here then is a template... *(Please see the next page.)*

-----

[Company logo - preferably company letterhead]

CONTACT: FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE  
[Contact Name]  
[Contact Number(s)]  
[Contact Email Address]

HEADLINE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS  
Subheadline in Mix of Upper and Lower Case Letters

[City, State, Date] First paragraph - journalists refer to this as the lead paragraph, and it should give an overview of the story. This is the who, what, where, when and why of the story. If someone were to only read this first paragraph, they'd have a pretty good idea of what the story is about.

Second paragraph. This is where you start elaborating on the facts presented in the first paragraph. This is also a good place to put a quote from an expert (preferably from you).

Subsequent paragraphs. The rest of your release finishes fleshing out the story.

Final paragraph. Your last paragraph may refer specifically to your business in just a sentence or two. This is where you generally tell readers what your business is about. This isn't a place to be hypey or promotional, so don't start talking about specials or anything like that.

###

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Important: Note the three pound signs (###) - this signals that the press release is finished. If your release is more than one page,



you can put "MORE" at the bottom of the first page. Then you'd put the pound signs on the second page at the end of your release.

Now let me give you an example of a press release so you can see how the above works (please note that the details are fictional and for illustration purposes only)...

-----

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS MAKING ENDS MEET ONLINE  
Families Find Relief Working Online in a Down Economy

[Detroit, MI, 3/17/2012] The reports coming out of Washington and Wall Street suggest the economy is turning around. Yet thousands of Americans in Michigan are still out of work, struggling to pay their upside-down mortgages and put food on the table. Jobs are sparse. And that's why so many unemployed workers have started exploring online options.

"People can't afford to go back to college or move across the country to find another job," says Nicheology.com's Paul B. Evans. "That's why so many people are starting their own online businesses."

Brown says that the low barriers to entry and low start-up fees - often less than \$100 - make starting an online business an attractive option for those who have more time than money. People can often use their hobbies to make money, such as blogging about cooking, selling products through Amazon.com, or selling antiques on Ebay.com. Those who focus can often start replacing their incomes in as little as a couple months.

However, Brown also cautions that there are plenty of scams online, especially for those who're looking to get rich quick. "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is," he says.

ABOUT

Paul B. Evans purchased Nicheology.com in 2007 to help people around the world to replace their paychecks by starting their own online businesses.

###

If you'd like to know more about this topic, Paul B. Evans or Nicheology.com, you can reach Mr. Brown directly by calling [number] or emailing [email].

-----

Now that you've seen an example release, let's go over some specific tips to help you create your own good release...

### **Write in the Third Person**

Remember, you're tackling this release as if you were a reporter. That means you need to write using the third-person viewpoint.

Take a look at the above example to see what I mean.

Even though I'm quoting myself, I don't use words like I, me or mine. Instead, I refer to myself in the third person ("Brown said").

### **Avoid Promotional Language**

You're a natural marketer. You're used to create articles, blog posts, emails and other content which promotes your business. And so you're used to using promotional language.

However, remember that a press release is news. It's NOT a promotion.

So you need to curb your tendency to use hyped-up, promotional language.

This includes avoiding words such as:

- Amazing
- Discover
- Secrets
- Reveal
- Guaranteed
- Revolutionary
- Breakthrough
- Little-known

You get the idea. If it reads like an ad, then it's not a true press release.

## **View Your Business With Fresh Eyes**

The second problem that many business owners encounter when they're writing press releases is that they're simply too close to their business.

They live and breathe their business. And so they can't objectively view their business to decide what is truly considered news.

As I mentioned before, you need to step back and put on your reporter's hat. But if that doesn't work for you, then I suggest you talk to a trusted colleague about your business.

If you're a member of a business or mastermind group (online or offline), you can brainstorm with your colleagues to determine what's newsworthy about your business.

## **Add a Boilerplate at the End**

Check the release above and you'll see an "ABOUT" section.

This is called a boilerplate, because it's a standard bit of text that you can affix to the end of all your press releases.

This is your one chance to actually write a line or two about your business. But again, make sure this boilerplate doesn't include promotional language.

Tip: Just because you put a boilerplate at the end doesn't mean that the newspaper will print this information. That's why it's important for you to include your business name once in the main body of the release.

## **Keep it Short**

Take a look at the above example – it's just a few short paragraphs, or about a page long.

Whenever possible, you should aim to send a short release too: Preferably one page, or two pages at most.

Here's why:

- 1. The paper isn't going to print the "life story" of you and your business.** Yes, I know – your business is absolutely fascinating... to you. But many of the details that you consider important just really aren't all that important. And even the story itself probably isn't that important – certainly not to take up valuable real estate in the paper.

Example: Maybe your press release is about how your business is sponsoring a local charitable event. Or maybe you run a mental-health site, so you create a release about how to spot early dementia. Great stories – they may get printed, but the editor isn't going to give you five columns to do it.

You know what would get you more ink? If armed robbers stole your money and your computer equipment, and then had a shoot-out with police in front of your office.

The reason I point this out is just to show you the difference between what you may consider "news" and what the editor considers news. This is why you're much more likely to get your releases published if you put some thought into them. Reporting an event is good. Telling human-interest stories are even better.

- 2. The reporter doesn't have time to read your story.** If you're sending five pages, the reporter will probably just set it aside for "later" – and that's if you're lucky.

So make it easy on your reporter and send a page or two. Make sure your release has an interesting title and a good leading paragraph – one that's not only interesting, but it also lays out the facts.

## **Encourage Reporters to Contact You**

Some people suggest that you write a "perfect" press release so that reporters can print it as-is. That's fine if you're just looking to get ink. However, you can take the approach of throwing an enticing story at a reporter and then encouraging them to contact you.

There are two reasons for this:

- 1. You can develop a relationship with a reporter or editor.** I'm assuming your goal isn't to just get one press release printed and then be done with

this strategy, right? Instead, you're looking to build on your success so that you can regularly get your press releases published.

Note: Here's a secret: Develop a good relationship with a reporter or editor, and you'll find it easier to get your releases published. That's because you can call the editor to pitch stories, and she'll happily call you to get more details.

- 2. You can get more ink.** If you get a regular press release published, then you're probably getting a small space in the paper – perhaps about five relatively short paragraphs. But if you talk to a reporter and let her create the story – especially if it's a "big" story or event – you may get a bigger article in the paper and/or an article that's featured or otherwise prominent.

## Follow Up With Reporters/Editors

This doesn't mean that you call reporters or editors to ask them if they got your press release. Trust me, that just annoys them. They waste a lot of time in their day fielding these types of calls, so you don't want to add to the slog of useless calls.

So when should you contact reporters and editors? Here are two situations:

- 1. To pitch a story.** That's right, you don't always need to submit a printed press release. You can also call the appropriate reporter and pitch your story directly (especially after you've developed a good relationship with a reporter).
- 2. To say thank you.** Yes, reporters are human – they appreciate when you thank them for printing your release. Of course you don't have to call them to do this. Rather, sending a handwritten thank you note is a nice touch. And again, this will help you build a relationship with a reporter.

Tip: If you're calling a reporter, just be aware that most newspapers have deadlines in the early afternoon. This is a BAD time to call. The reporter is super-crunched for time and will likely brush you off. If you want your reporter's attention, try calling in the morning instead.

## Study Good Releases

If you want to learn how to write really good press releases, then the best thing you can do is study GOOD press releases.

No, this doesn't mean studying sample releases from books like this. And it doesn't mean reading releases on PR (press release) distribution sites like [PRWeb.com](http://PRWeb.com), where anyone can submit a release.

Instead, you need to do the following:

- **Study releases in newspapers in which you'd like to get ink.** I mentioned this before – if you want to get published in a particular newspaper, then study their printed releases to get a feel as to what the editor is looking for. Then model your release after these successful examples.
- **Study releases from well-respected papers.** Here think of the old, established and respected newspapers like the New York Times, the Boston Herald or the Washington Post. You can study the releases printed in these papers to get a feel for what makes a business newsworthy, how to find a good angle, and how to write the release like a journalist.

## Quick Recap

You now know the TRUE purpose of a press release, you know how to write and format one and you even have tips for increasing the likelihood that an editor or reporter will print your release.

But before you start writing, you need to find something truly newsworthy about your business or products. That's what you'll learn about next, so read on...

# How to Uncover New-Worthy Angles in Your Business

You have a good handle on how to write your actual press release. As you discovered, the main point is to make sure you write it like a news article, not like an advertisement. To carry this theme forward, however, you also need to make sure your topic is newsworthy and not just a promotional ploy.

Example: The fact that you're going to have a sale on Saturday is NOT newsworthy. If you want to tell newspaper readers about an upcoming sale, you need to buy a display ad in the newspaper like every other business.

So what IS newsworthy?

Read on to discover 10 proven story ideas...

## **Idea 1: Write About Current Events**

Think about this:

- How can you tie your business into current events?
- How can you basically ride the coattails of a popular news story?
- What fresh angle can you provide for the media?

You see, whenever there's a popular news story, reporters need to go looking for related stories. They need to look for fresh angles.

So if you can bring them that fresh angle – bring them some related bit of news that ties into a BIG current news story – you'll make their job easier.

And of course it's a win-win situation, because you get your business mentioned in the newspaper.

The best way to explain this is by giving you a few examples...

Examples:

- Let's say a news story breaks in your local area about a hoarding situation (where a person hoards possessions, to the point of not being able to live normally). If you run a mental-health website, you can write a news story about what causes hoarding and why hoarders are unable to give their possessions away to someone else or throw them out.
- Maybe a national news story breaks about an athlete running a dog-fighting ring. If you have a dog site, you can write a press release that talks about how these dogs are rehabilitated.

- The Boston Marathon is in the news because it's going to be held in a few weeks. And maybe you run a marathon-training site. You can write a press release about what marathon trainers need to go through in order to train for the Boston Marathon. (Hint: Getting quotes from runners - especially previous marathon winners - will make your story even better.)

## **Idea 2: Educate Readers**

This doesn't have to tie into any particular news story. Rather, this is more of an educational article. Indeed, if you have a knack for creating these types of articles, you may even make a pitch to the editor to land your own column! (And lest the paper worries that they can't afford you to write for them, let them know you'll do it for free... in exchange for a byline at the end of the column.)

### Examples:

- You can write a gardening column if you have a gardening website. In the summer you can submit regular gardening tips. In the winter you can talk about hydroponic gardening, indoor gardening, greenhouse gardening and preparing transplant starts for the next upcoming gardening season.
- You can write a business column. Here you'd educate business owners about things such as developing mobile websites, using social media, setting up Google AdWords campaigns and more.

## **Idea 3: Tie Your Business into Seasonal Events**

There are some topics that come up repeatedly, like clockwork, during certain times of the year. Your job is to figure out how to tie your business into these seasonal events, and then create a press release about them.

Example: During the summer months you can write informational articles about hurricane preparedness. You can tell people what types of supplies they should have on hand and how to create an evacuation plan. This would be a great news article if you sell hurricane preparedness kits or supplies.



Now, let me give you a few other events, along with how different types of businesses can create news stories around these events...

### Example 1: Christmas

There are plenty of different businesses that can bring their own news stories and tie them in with the Christmas season. Here are three examples:

- A business related to pets: Here you could send out a press release listing some of the holiday-related dangers. This includes plants that are poisonous to pets, electric cords (e.g., a dog might chew on them), people foods that aren't good for pets, etc. You might also talk about how it's NOT a good idea to get a new puppy during this time, simply because people tend to be too busy to properly care for a new pet.
- A business that offers weight loss solutions: Obviously, people struggle during the holidays to stay on track with their diets. And even if they're not dieting, they struggle to keep off those extra holiday pounds. You can write a press release that reports data on how much the average person gains each holiday season - plus tips for avoiding this weight gain.
- A travel/tourism business: Anyone who's doing any traveling during the holidays - especially flying - knows that holiday travel can be a nightmare. You can send out a press release that reports the statistics, such as how many people are expected to travel, the expected delays on roadways and airways, and other facts of interest to travelers. Then you can offer tips on how to avoid delays and reduce stress.

### Example 2: Wedding Season

Here's another season around which a vast variety of businesses can write press releases, such as:

- Weight loss business. There's a joke among brides-to-be that they don't buy wedding dresses that fit. Instead, they buy their perfect dress and then lose weight until the dress fits. Plus every bride wants to look her best on her wedding day. So you can bet there are a lot of soon-to-be brides looking to lose weight. If you sell weight loss information or services (like bride boot camps), then the winter (leading up to wedding season) is a great time to educate readers about how to lose weight.

- Party planning businesses: If you sell wedding-planning guides, then it's a no-brainer that you should be sending out press releases during this time. But even if you sell more general party-planning information, you can still position your products for those who need to plan bachelor and bachelorette parties.
- Travel and tourism businesses: Yes, here's another topic for this particular industry. In particular, you can write a press release about the popularity of destination weddings.

## **Idea 4: Do Publicity Stunts**

The beauty of this particular press release idea is that it gives you the opportunity to get free publicity multiple times. That's because you start by sending out a press release to announce your publicity stunt. If you catch the media's attention, they'll show up for your stunt (and/or interview you after the stunt). And if the media doesn't contact you, then you can send a follow up press release talking about the results of the stunt.

So what kinds of stunts can you pull?

These are indeed stunts, so they're only limited to your imagination. Often, the wackier the stunt the better chance you have of getting free publicity.

### Examples:

- Let's say you sell ping-pong equipment. You can try to beat the world record for two people playing ping pong continuously for the longest amount of time.
- Let's say you sell cookbooks, especially those with a focus on ethnic foods. You can have an event where you serve up some of the craziest dishes from around the world (like fried bugs).

That's one approach. A different approach is to do a true publicity stunt where you create a stir in your community, but you do NOT tip the media off first. If you choose this approach, then you'll truly need to do something big – something that gets people talking, immediately. Something that could possibly even attract the media to the scene.

Example: If you want to see an example of these sorts of publicity stunts, just look at groups like PETA (People for the Ethical Treatments of Animals). These folks will stage protests, do flash

mobs, have celebrities pose in the nude and more. PETA is a master at getting free publicity by doing publicity stunts.

## **Idea 5: Hold a Contest**

Here's yet another event that can get you press both before, during and after the event. Specifically:

- You can send out a release before the contest to announce the contest.
- You can send out a release in the middle of the contest to remind people about the contest.
- You can send out a release after the contest in order to announce the results.

Now, keep in mind that a "plain Jane" contest probably won't get too much press.

Example: If you're simply having people enter a random drawing, that's not really very newsworthy.

In order to make your contest newsworthy, you need to do one or both of the following:

- **Hold an unusual contest.** "Enter for your chance to win" is boring. But something interesting – like a contest to see who can eat the most live insects – is interesting. It has a "yuck" factor that makes it newsworthy.
- **Giving away unusual prizes.** Small prizes of small amounts of cash won't attract too much attention. Big prizes will get attention (like giving away a car, especially in a small town). And unusual prizes – like skydiving lessons – will also tend to attract attention.

## **Idea 6: Sponsor a Charitable Event**

Here's yet another press release idea that packs an extra promotional wallop. Here's why:

- **You get an opportunity to get mentioned in the media repeatedly,** including before, during and after the charitable event.

- **The charity often sends the press releases.** This means that you get "credibility by association," such as a trusted organization is mentioning your business. But even if it's up to you to send the press releases, you still get to mention the charity – thus you get the boost to your own credibility and reputation.
- **You'll get additional advertising opportunities.** Usually when you sponsor a charitable event, the press release is only part of the promotion. You also get mentioned in all signage and advertising collateral that the organization uses leading up to and during the event.

The best way to find a charitable event to sponsor is to pick up the phone and start calling local organizations.

Obviously, it's best if you choose organizations and events that closely match the target market for your audience.

Examples:

- If you have a business centered around pets, then sponsor an event for the local Humane Society or another rescue shelter.
- If you have a health-related business, then sponsor a health-related event such as a fundraiser for the American Heart Association.
- If you have a weight loss business, then sponsor a fundraiser for a diabetes association.
- If you have a website aimed at parents and kids, then sponsor your local Little League group (this is a kid's baseball team).

You get the idea.

## **Idea 7: Tell News About Your Business**

This type of press release works best if you send it to local media. That's because national media generally isn't going to be interested in news about your business itself, unless you already have a big, well-known company (in which case you wouldn't be reading this report).

While many local newspapers do print news about the goings-on inside local businesses, not all do. Thus it's best if you read back issues of the newspapers you're targeting in order to determine what type of business news they will print. Then you can create a similar release.

Here are some ideas:

- **News about the grand opening of your business.** This could also be the grand re-opening of the business.
- **News about employees.** This includes new hires, promotions within the company, long-time employees who're retiring and similar stories.
- **News about your business moving to a different place.** This includes just moving offices across town. It also includes stories about opening another set of offices (either in the same city or expanding out into different cities).
- **Something interesting about your business.**

Example: It's been passed down from parents to children for three generations. Or maybe it's been in continuous operation for a long time. Or perhaps you're just coming up on an anniversary, such as 10 years in business.

- **A press release you send to your hometown announcing your new business or talking about your business success.** This works best in a smaller city or a smaller paper, because it's a "local guy or gal makes good" type of story...
- **News about launching a new product.** This works best if it's something revolutionary (otherwise your press release just sounds like an advertisement). And if the product is truly revolutionary, then you might even be able to pick up national press about it.

Example: The people who created and started selling keychain breathalyzer tests used press releases to promote their product initially. And they sold boatloads, because it was such an unusual product at the time.

- **News about customers.**

Example: Let's say you run a business selling weight loss products and services. And maybe you have a couple who

uses your products to lose a combine total of 250 pounds before their wedding day - that's interesting and newsworthy!

## **Idea 8: Conduct a Survey or Scientific Research**

Earlier I talked about riding the coattails of current events and news. Now here's a chance for you to make news by doing a survey or conducting research.

Not only can you send out a press release announcing your findings, but others are likely to quote your findings - and thus you'll enjoy a free press snowball! The idea is to survey or otherwise do your research on some segment of your target market.

Let me give you a few examples:

- You survey people who're trying to make money online to see if they've been scammed, how much money they make, how they're making this money and how long it took them to start making money online. The idea here is to provide a realistic picture for those who're interested in starting a business.
- You survey dog owners to see where they got their dogs. Did they purchase them? Did they get them from the newspaper? Pet stores? From rescue shelters? You can then marry this research to findings about how many pets are bred each year and how many are abandoned in shelters.
- You conduct research to see if caffeine helps people lose weight. Perhaps you pull together a group of 50 people who need to lose weight and randomly assign half the group to ingest caffeine and half the group to be caffeine free. Then you see if caffeine has any thermogenic effects.

Naturally, the more scientific you are in your approach, the more likely it is that you'll get national attention.

Indeed, if you have a research idea that you think could land you national publicity, then you may want to partner with an independent research firm in order to do the survey. That way there's no possibility of you collecting or interpreting biased research.

## **Idea 9: Pitch Yourself as an Expert**

The goal behind this particular press release isn't just to get your press release published.

Instead, the goal is to use this release to get yourself publicity opportunities, such as an interview with a reporter on TV or a spot as an expert on talk radio.

The idea here is that you send out a press release with some kind of hook or story idea. That is, what can you talk about on a particular show?

Example #1: Maybe there's a "car guy" talk show on your local radio station. And maybe you sell classic car restoration information and kits. You can send out a release to the show's producers that positions you as the classic car restoration expert. And you might pitch a particular show, such as a segment on restoring classic Mustangs. You might even provide a list of possible questions that the show's host can ask you.

Example #2: Perhaps there's a "health chat" segment on your local TV news. You can offer yourself up as an expert on childhood obesity - what causes it, how to prevent it and how parents can help their kids lose weight. Again, you can provide the story angle as well as suggested questions.

Here are additional tips for landing these interviews:

- **Provide links and information on your website for your visitors.** In other words, promote the radio, TV or internet station on your website. Not only does this make the station producer smile, but it boosts your credibility and reputation in your customers' and subscribers' eyes.
- **Give producers clips.** Once you start landing interviews, then you can start giving clips to producers when you pitch your story. This gives them a chance see how you handle interviews.
- **Move fast if the story is hot.** If there's breaking news on something that you can comment on, don't delay - contact the producers as soon as possible. Indeed, you can just skip the release and call the producer instead.

Example: If you have a site about horses and there's a breaking news story in your area about neglected horses, then call the producers immediately to pitch your angle

(e.g., how these horses can be treated, how to prevent cruelty to animals, etc)

## **Idea 10: Expose Scandals, Cheats and Scams**

Take a look at just about any newspaper, and you'll see that the stories aren't all about rainbows and kittens.

Indeed, there's an old newspaper adage that says, "If it bleeds, it leads." Point is, people seem to gravitate towards negative stories.

You can use this to your advantage by exposing the seedy underbelly of your industry. This means sending out a press release about the scandals, deceptive practices and outright scams.

### Examples:

- If you sell online marketing information, you can expose some of the most common online money-making and get-rich-quick scams.
- If you have a dog site, you can talk about the unethical and cruel practices of puppy mills.
- If you have a weight loss site, you can talk about dangerous weight loss drugs.

## **Quick Recap**

Now you're ready to write a press release! Not only do you know the keys to formatting it and writing a release that pleases editors (news, not promotions!), you also know how to uncover print-worthy news in your business!

Note: Don't want to write your own press release? No problem. Later on I'll show you how to find a professional to create it for you at a reasonable price.

Your next step is to distribute this release. Read on...



# How to Distribute Your Press Release

The way you distribute your press release depends on what type of release it is and what your goals are for that particular release.

This starts with you categorizing your release as fit for local/regional news or national/international news.

Once you've done that, then you can distribute it as follows...

## Distributing to Local Media

This is your first step regardless of whether you have a release of local interest or one with wider interest. Indeed, sometimes you can get your release printed locally first – then you can send the clips alongside the press release that you send to other media.

Your first step in distributing to local media is to compile a list of media outlets. You can find these media outlets in your local phonebook. You can also use a site like <http://www.50states.com/news> or <http://www.newspapers.com>.

Your list should include:

- **Radio stations.** Remember, if your topic is something that's worth talking about, you may even contact the producer of one of the talk radio shows to land a guest spot.
- **TV stations.** Same here – you can land interviews where applicable. Otherwise, submit your release to the appropriate news department of the TV station.
- **Newspapers.** Don't forget to look into college newspapers, niche newspapers even free newspapers.
- **Other publications.** This includes any local magazines or other specialty (niche) publications.

Once you've compiled a list of media outlets, the next thing you need to do is figure out how to send your release and who to send it to.

Generally, you can get this information from the publication's or station's website. If they don't have a website, or if the information isn't listed or updated, then you need to put in a quick call to the media outlet to ask for the correct information.

This step is important – in order to increase the chances of getting your release published, you need to:

- 1. Send your release to the right department.** You may need to spend some time reading archived issues of the newspaper to determine the right department. Most newspapers have a "business" section, and most of your traditional press releases will get printed in that section. However, depending on what you're sending, your press release might be better suited to another section (such as the "lifestyle" section, for example).
- 2. Send your release to the right person.** Your safest course of action is to call the newspaper and ask who to send the release to. Be sure to get the correct spelling of the editor's or reporter's name.
- 3. Send your release using the right delivery method.** Different editors have different preferences regarding how you send these releases. It could be fax, email or regular postal mail. If they prefer email, it's usually better to copy and paste the release directly into the email, as many people do not like to open attachments from strangers. Again, when in doubt, call the newspaper or station and ask for the preferred delivery method.

As mentioned earlier, don't be afraid to develop relationships with producers and reporters, as it will make it easier to get more publicity later on.

## **Distributing to National or International Media**

If you have a release that's worth of national or international attention, then you'll start with local media and then distribute your press release more widely.

There are four ways to approach this task...

### **1. Compile the contact information yourself.**

If you're simply looking to submit your press release to a select group of newspapers – such as those most likely to be read by your target audience – then you can compile the list yourself.

Again, this means getting the right department, the right person and the correct delivery method. You can start here: <http://www.50states.com/news/> for newspapers, and then go to <http://newslink.org/broad.html> for radio and TV stations in the U.S.

If, however, you are seeking to get a wide distribution, then compiling this list is an arduous task.

Example: There are over 3300 newspapers listed on the 50States.com website – and that doesn't even include TV stations, radio stations or magazines. That's why you'll want to use one of these other distribution methods instead..

## 2. Buy a distribution list.

Fortunately, others have already compiled these lists for you – and you can simply buy the lists, thus saving yourself a lot of time.

Here's what to look for:

- **Updated information.** Almost anyone can put together a list and start selling it. Unfortunately, some people do this – but they never update the list. Obviously, media outlets fold, merge, get bought out or otherwise change. And of course journalists and editors retire, change jobs within the company, go to a different company or even just get a new number and email address.

Point is, any list is going to be worthless if it's not updated regularly. That's why you should seek out reputable PR firms from which to buy these media lists. And be sure to confirm that the lists are indeed updated regularly.

- **Searchable, targeted databases.** Depending on what your release is about, it may simply not be suited to a mass distribution. That's why you need to use a firm that is able to create targeted lists for you.

Example: If you're sending out a release about hurricane preparedness, then you don't need this release to go to papers in Michigan or North Dakota. Or if you're sending

a sports-related release, then you don't need this release to go to business-only publications.

- **Ask about extras.** In other words, what information does the service provide? Do they give you names, newspapers, departments and contact information only? Or do they give you extra information, such as a short profile of the media outlet and/or the journalist?

You can find these lists by running a search in Google for terms like "press release distribution lists." You can also check out these companies directly:

- <http://www.vocus.com>
- <http://www.gebbieinc.com>
- <http://us.cision.com> (This company has been in business for over 50 years – and they update their lists regularly, even daily.)

### 3. Hire someone to distribute the release.

Rather than buying a press release distribution list and distributing the release yourself, you can hire a firm to distribute it for you. Here's what you need to know about these services:

- **Investigate these companies carefully.** Some companies that claim to distribute your press release simply use an online service (which we'll talk about later). These aren't targeted distributions. And what's more, many of these online distribution services depend on journalists visiting the site to pick up the releases, rather than having the releases get delivered straight to them.

Point is, don't confuse targeted, personal distribution with untargeted online distribution.

- **Understand that some PR (public relations) companies are "full service" firms only.** Some of the firms who offer targeted (personalized) distribution are full-service firms, in that they want to take you on as a full client. This means they'll work with you to develop a publicity plan, they'll write your press releases and they'll even seek to get you interviews with the media.

If this is what you want, then be all means hire these public relations firms. Otherwise, seek out a firm that will only do the services you require or desire.

Here's an example of a site that offers distribution:

- <http://www.massmediadistribution.com>

You can find other sites using a Google search (use searches such as "mass media distribution" or "press release distribution service").

Here's another recommended resource:

- <http://www.prleadsplus.com/>

There you'll find a range of services, from simple distribution to full service offerings.

#### *4. Distribute it using an online service.*

Yet another way to distribute your press release is through an online distribution service or wire.

Here's what you need to know about this strategy:

- **The distribution usually isn't targeted.** Many of these sites claim to send the releases directly to journalists. Mainly, however, the main benefit is that the release is printed on the site itself – and journalists may come by the site and see it. You will get an opportunity to categorize your press release, which helps with targeting.
- **You will get backlinks.** If you're interested in getting backlinks to your site or optimizing a press release for the search engines, then online distribution is a good option. You can distribute your release on several of these distribution sites, which gets you backlinks.

Here are the most popular online press-release distribution services:

- [www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)
- [www.pr.com](http://www.pr.com)
- [www.ecommwire.com](http://www.ecommwire.com)
- [www.pr9.net](http://www.pr9.net)

- [www.pressbox.co.uk](http://www.pressbox.co.uk)
- [www.prleap.com](http://www.prleap.com)
- [www.188pressrelease.com](http://www.188pressrelease.com)
- [www.pressking.com](http://www.pressking.com)
- [www.prlog.com](http://www.prlog.com)
- [www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com)
- [www.i-newswire.com](http://www.i-newswire.com)

## Distributing Using Your Own Media List

No matter which option you choose for distributing your press releases, you should also start compiling your own media list.

This is a list of journalists, bloggers and others who voluntarily opt into your list. Then whenever you create a press release, you send it to your entire mailing list.

To create this list, you'll need a mailing list manager like [www.Aweber.com](http://www.Aweber.com). You'll also want to create a link on your site called "Press" or "For the Media" or something similar. On this site you'll include:

- **The subscription form.** This is the place where journalists and other interested parties can join your media list.
- **Your press kit.** This is where you provide a photo of yourself, perhaps photos of your products and an "about" section which talks about you and your business. Basically, this is background information for journalists who may write a story about you or your business.

Tip: You can also use this section to pitch yourself as an expert, thereby landing interviews in your industry.

- **Links to past releases.** Here you should list all your press releases. So even if a journalist doesn't opt into your media list, he can still pick your press releases directly from your website.
- **Links to interviews, published releases, etc.** Here you can show your web visitors as well as journalists the press you've already received, the interviews you've done, etc.

- **Requests.** Here you tell journalists how to request interviews and other information from you. Again, this is a good place to position yourself as an industry expert who's available for interviews.

## **Quick Recap**

Congratulations – at this point you now know everything you need to know about creating and distributing press releases!

You're ready to go snag yourself some free publicity.

Unless, of course, you're not interested in writing the release yourself.

In that case, read on...

## **How to Find a PR Pro**

You can start writing and distributing your own press releases immediately. Indeed, get started now and you could have your first one finished and distributed in a matter of a few hours.

But just because you CAN write your own press release doesn't mean you have to do it all yourself. That's because writing a really good press release is a bit of an art form. It requires the ability to see a good hook, spin a good story, and keep it all within journalistic standards.

Truth is, publicity experts – those who write press releases for a living – tend to be very good at writing these releases.

Some of these folks are even former journalists, so they know what journalists want and they know how to write press releases that get published. Some press release pros will even help you decide what type of press release to write (e.g., they'll help you discover what's newsworthy in your business).

If outsourcing this task sounds good to you, then read on to discover how to do it...

### **Step 1: Determine Your Needs**

Are you looking for someone to write your releases? How about someone to write and distribute them? Or are you looking for a public relations firm to develop a PR strategy with you, create your releases and distribute them?

If you're looking for someone to create them only, then you're seeking out a press release writer. If you're looking for someone to strategize with you, then you're looking for a public relations firm.

Since usually only bigger companies hire PR firms, for the moment I'm going to assume that you're primarily looking for someone to write your press releases.

With that in mind, move on to the next step...

## **Step 2: Find a Press Release Writer**

There are a few different ways you can uncover prospective press release writers, including:

- ➔ **Searching Google.** Here you search for terms like "press release writer" (no quotes). Be sure to look at the regular search results as well as the sponsored results that run alongside the regular results.
- ➔ **Asking for recommendations.** If you know business owners online or offline who hire press release writers, you can ask them for their recommendations.

Note: If you're a member of a business or marketing forum (such as [WarriorForum.com](http://WarriorForum.com)), then you can get a range of recommendations. Just be sure to only accept recommendations from respected members of the forum community.

Tip: Here's my recommended resource: <http://www.thepressreleasesite.com/>. This site is owned by a former journalist who has an eye for what reporters, editors and producers want.

- ➔ **Using a freelancing site.** Another good way to find a press release writer is to use a freelancing site. Three of the most popular sites include:



- [www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com)
- [www.odesk.com](http://www.odesk.com)
- [www.vworker.com](http://www.vworker.com)

In order to attract the most qualified candidates, you'll need to offer as many details as possible when you post your project.

Here is an example:

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Wanted: Professional Press Release Writer

Do you know how to extract stories out of businesses and get these stories published by the media? And do you have a good (verifiable) track record for writing press releases that get ink? Then I want YOU to write my next press release!

Here's a bit about my company and what we're looking for in terms of publicity: [insert short description of your business/industry and what type of press release you need].

And here's a bit about you:

- Native English speaker and writer.
- Verifiable record of getting press releases published.
- Prefer experience writing about [topic or industry].
- Rates ranging from [insert your budget range].
- [Insert other requirements, such as whether you need distribution services.]

Let me know why you're the best writer for this job and send me your bid. I look forward to hearing from you!

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### **Step 3: Do Your Due Diligence**

You're going to come across some mighty attractive prospective PR writers if you follow the tips in the last step – but don't hire the first one to strike your fancy.

Instead, do these due diligence steps first...

- **Check the writer's portfolio.** Do you find the press releases engaging? Are they newsworthy? Do they avoid promotional language? Does the writer do a good job of the extracting the story?
- **Ask for verifiable, published releases.** It's one thing to have a portfolio of press release samples. It's quite another to have a portfolio full of PUBLISHED releases. If you're looking to get actual ink in the media (as opposed to just seeking to get backlinks via online distribution services), then make sure your prospective writer has a record of getting releases published in the media.
- **Make sure the writer has a good business history.** You don't want to hire a writer who has only been doing this for a few weeks or a couple months. Instead, look for someone experienced – someone with an established, long history. Look for people who've been professionally writing press releases for at least a year or more.
- **Check the writer's feedback.** If you hire the writer from a site like elance.com, then you have access to ratings and feedback provided by others who've hired this person. Be sure to hire someone who has a good history of creating quality releases, on time.
- **Research the writer.** If you don't hire the writer through a freelancing site, then you should take a few moments to research his or her name, business name, website link and email address in Google. Keep an eye out for red flags, such as complaints about quality, slow delivery times or other unprofessional behavior.
- **See what all is included.** You're going to find that press release writers charge a wide variety of prices, which mainly depend on their skills and experience. However, you'll want to compare any "extras" that are included in the price, such as revisions or distribution services.

If you follow the steps above, it will become pretty clear who the best press release writers are for your particular job.

Pick one from this newly shortened list and move on to the next step...

## **Step 4: Create a Project Brief**

Once you've found a press release writer that you want to work with, then you can hire him or her.

At this time you'll want to discuss specifics and even sign agreements so that you're both clear about the scope of the project.

You'll want to nail down specifics.

Example: The cost of the release, how and when you'll pay for the services, and exactly what is included in these fees.

Your last step is to tell the press release writer exactly what you want by creating a detailed project brief. Your project brief may include the following details:

- **The purpose of this press release.** What results do you hope to achieve? Is this local or regional news? National or international news? Or are you submitting it online primarily for backlinking purposes (meaning you'd like the press release optimized for certain keywords)? And do you want this release printed, or are you hoping to land media interviews with this release?
- **Your idea for the press release.** If you're hiring a basic press release writer, then you'll need to give your writer the idea for your release and he or she will create the article. In other words, what is your release about?
- **Access to relevant details.**

Example: If you want a press release created about a new book, then you need to give your writer a summary of this book and its features, as well access to the book itself.

- **History and background about you and your business.** This gives you writer an idea about your goals and your business history, which will help him create a better release.
- **Quotes.** You should create several relevant quotes (from you) that your writer can use. You may also provide quotes from other experts and relevant persons.

Even if you talk to your writer over the phone or by Skype, be sure to follow up with a written project brief that includes as many details as possible. This helps reduce miscommunications and misunderstandings regarding the scope of your project.

## Quick Recap

As you just discovered, you can reap the rewards of getting traffic with press releases, without actually writing the release yourself. And as you learned earlier, you can even hire someone to distribute it.

Now let's wrap things up...

## Conclusion

Now the official congratulations are in order – because now you know exactly how to start getting free traffic and exposure by harnessing the power of press releases! Let's recap what you've learned:

- ✓ **How to write your press release.** This includes writing with the proper tone ("journalistic" rather than "promotional") as well as following the proper accepted format.
- ✓ **How to uncover newsworthy items from your business.** Here you learned about 10 press release ideas, from news about your business to publicity stunts.
- ✓ **How to distribute your release.** Here you learned tips and tricks for distributing your press locally, nationally or internationally as well as online.
- ✓ **How to get someone else to do the work for you.** Don't have the time or inclination to create your own press releases? No problem – just hire a PR pro!

Bottom line – you know how to use press releases to get free traffic.

So now it's up to you to take action... *preferably starting right now!*