

WRITING THE NEWS RELEASE

Chapter 5



The Backbone of Publicity



- ▣ The basic news release is considered the backbone of almost every publicity plan.
- ▣ But there are obstacles and challenges to getting the media to actually use your releases
- ▣ Some studies find that between 55 and 97 percent of all news releases sent to media outlets are never used
- ▣ And there is massive competition for the attention of reporters and editors

Three Keys to Release Success

- ▣ Follow a standardized format
- ▣ Provide information that will interest the audience
- ▣ Make sure your material is timely



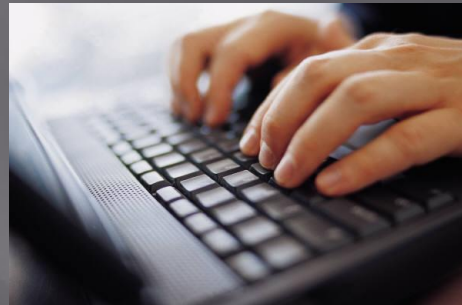
The Value of News Releases



- ▣ They can help achieve organizational objectives
- ▣ When they form the basis of stories in newspapers and broadcasts, releases help create awareness about ideas, situations, services and products
- ▣ They are cost effective- any organization, no matter the size and financial resources, can issue effective news releases
- ▣ Street cred- people consider info in a news story more believable and credible than an ad

When Planning a Release

- ▣ What is the subject of the message?
- ▣ Who is the message designed to reach?
- ▣ What is in it for this particular audience?
- ▣ What goal is the organization pursuing?
- ▣ What do you want to achieve with the news release?
- ▣ What key messages should this news release highlight?





Formatting the Release

- ▣ Use 8.5 by 11 inch paper that's 20-to-24 pound weight
- ▣ Color of paper not important...news editors are looking for news value not pretty colors
- ▣ Double-spacing is the standard for printed news releases sent via fax or regular mail– easier to read double-spaced
- ▣ Single spacing is standard for Internet and emailed releases
- ▣ Use Associated Press writing style and rules– conforming to AP makes the work of reporters and editors much easier

Basic Release Components

- ❑ Letterhead- organization name, phone number, address and website
- ❑ Below the letterhead, prominent words: News Release or “For Immediate Release”; “Embargoed”
- ❑ Contacts- usually release’s writer; media person
- ❑ Headline-bold print, larger than text; purpose to give journalist a quick content indication; subheads more commonplace; present tense
- ❑ Dateline (not always)- city of release’s origin
- ❑ Lead Paragraph- one to three sentences; basic details; try to entice to keep reading; most newsworthy or interesting points first
- ❑ Body of text- usually follow “inverted pyramid”
- ❑ Organization Summary (“boilerplate”)- PR jargon for basic information about an organization



Do's and Don't Tips

- ▣ 10 Classic News Release Mistakes (p. 129)
- ▣ Rules for Writing a News Release (p. 135)



Emailed News Releases



- ▣ News release format has changed somewhat to better fit email and other electronic distribution
- ▣ Email/online releases are shorter– traditional standard is fewer than 400 words
- ▣ Emailed release: 200 words with only four or five paragraphs and single-spaced
- ▣ Use email subject line to indicate release's significance– give recipient incentive to look at your message
- ▣ Use of bullet points common in email releases
- ▣ Never send release as an attachment- virus concerns

Multimedia News Releases

- ▣ Evolution of news releases: Smart Media Release or SMR
- ▣ Today releases can embed high-resolution photos/graphics, video, and audio components
- ▣ Tags to social media networks can be included to increase search engine rankings and to drive targeted traffic to organization's website
- ▣ SMRs pioneered by major electronic distribution services such as PR Newswire and Business Wire

Multimedia News Release

- ▣ PR Newswire specializes in mass dissemination of news releases from companies to the news media
- ▣ Offers multimedia news releases services
- ▣ See some MNR examples:

<http://multivu.prnewswire.com/mnr/>

