

WRITING FOR MEDIA SUCCESS

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Pages: 2



A media release's primary role should be to communicate a company's activities/mission/ideas to the media.

It should contain 'news' or the latest information from the company. Above all it should always be NEWSWORTHY!

The structure of a successful release is:

1. Headline
2. Introduction
3. More detail on story
4. Quote from the company
5. Closing paragraph
6. Media contact information

In writing the news release, consider what your objectives are, for instance:

- Informing a target audience.
- Providing positive exposure for the company.
- Increasing credibility of the company.
- Securing third-party endorsement of a company's activities/mission/ideas.
- Creating a sense of interest from a target audience for the company.
- Increasing profile and recognition of brand.
- Increasing business objects (sales, footfall, brand awareness).

To help you assess to what extent your release will capture the attention of journalists, ask yourself these key questions before you disseminate it to the media:

1. What aspects of the information in your release are newsworthy? How does it meet criteria used by reporters to determine news value? (i.e. the unusual or odd element; something new; timeliness; size; common interest; a local angle; celebrity involvement; disagreement or conflict; human interest; reputation.)
2. Does your release highlight these newsworthy elements while at the same time clearly and concisely communicating your organisation's relevant key messages?
3. Does your release focus on one subject, issue, or topic?
4. Does your release concentrate on presenting information as opposed to interpreting or selling?

5. Does your letterhead identify the source of the release (ie. organisation or cause)?
6. Is a spokesperson available for further comment? Are they credible in the eyes of the media?
7. When should the release be disseminated (i.e. day/date and time of day)? Is this timeframe the optimal one for gaining media attention?
8. Is the headline accurate, newsworthy, and concise (two lines maximum)? Does the lead sentence (and paragraph) summarise the subject of the release in a newsworthy way? Will it interest readers? Does the lead paragraph include the who, what, when, where, why, and how of your story?
9. Does the remainder of the body of the release amplify the lead sentence and paragraph?
10. Do quotes amplify or substantively support information presented in the release? Should you quote anyone outside your organisation (eg. elected official, industry analyst, customer)?
11. Is the inverted pyramid used to organise release material (ie. the most important information is presented first, then in order of descending importance)?
12. Does the last paragraph of the release (referred to as boilerplate) provide a brief (two to three sentences, maximum) overview of what your organisation or cause does, including contact information?
13. Are sentences of an appropriate length? (10 to 12 words, at most). Paragraphs? (4 to 5 lines, at most). The release itself? (two pages, maximum).
14. Is the copy in your media release double-spaced?
15. Have you eliminated unwanted jargon, technical terms, adjectives/adverbs and use of the passive voice?
16. Why should the potential audience for your release (i.e. readers or viewers of the media outlet(s) you're targeting) care about what you've written? What is in it for them?

A feature story is different from a media release. It:

- Has a more in-depth analysis of the story.
- May be written from multiple perspectives and be thought-provoking.
- The structure should be more fluid than a news story; it can be written in the first person and follows a narrative storyline.

- Is longer than a news story and generally not as time sensitive.

What are the objectives of writing a feature? They are to:

- Provide a more in-depth analysis of an issue.
- Provoke thought and influence attitudes of an audience.
- Present an opinion of a company or individual.
- Convey topical trends/issues in a more opinionated form.
- Position a contributor as a 'leader' or 'expert' in their field.
- Showcase the opinion and thoughts of an individual from a company in a positive way.
- Increase brand awareness/drive sales.

About The Reputation Group

The Reputation Group is a boutique public relations agency based in Melbourne, Australia. We are a strategic communications and public relations consultancy with particular expertise in brand and reputation building, marketing communications and corporate responsibility and sustainability. We are passionate professionals, offering the one-to-one service of a boutique agency with deep experience gained working with major corporations, industry associations, government, and not-for-profits. We strive to provide clients with the highest level of service backed by total accountability and value for money.

If you would like us to help translate your communication challenges into opportunities to enhance your organisation's reputation, our contact details are below.

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