

Ten Tips to Help You Write a Press Release that Gets Results

*By Linda Dickerhoof
President
Signature Strategy, Inc.*

Writing a press release can get media coverage for your company or organization, or can help fill a reporters trash can just that much quicker—which one is really your choice. So the next time you are writing a press release to try and get some media coverage for your company's new product, service, appointment, event, or other news-worthy happening, remember these ten tips that should help you write a press release that gets results.

- 1- Is the subject of your press release really news? Put yourself in the reporter's shoes that you are contacting. Would they REALLY be interested in what you are telling them? If not, can you hold off on the press release until you DO have some real news to tell?
- 2- Is a press release really the best vehicle for your message? There are so many other ways to get the message across to your target reporter other than a press release. Perhaps a media alert, a query letter, a phone call—if it is not breaking news, maybe some other form of contact is better suited for this purpose.
- 3- Is your press release formatted correctly? Does it have a headline immediately telling the reader why they want to read more? Do you have your contact information located in a visible spot on the release? Do you have the city/state of where the news is originating from and the date it originated? If you don't know how to format a press release correctly, look around at different online newsroom sites and see how other companies and organizations format their news releases.
- 4- Does your press release tell everything that needs to be told? News stories tell the who, what, when, where, why, and how. Does your press release do the same?
- 5- Do you have photos to go with your press release? You should try to provide photos, then state on your release, "photos available" and how they are available. Not convinced? Look in your local newspaper at the column inches given to stories with photos and stories without photos. Providing photos just makes an editor's life that much easier.
- 6- Does your press release have quotes from executives or decision-makers within your organization? Similar to #5—more quotes can potentially mean more column inches.
- 7- Make sure that all facts presented in your press release are correct.
- 8- Make sure that everything is spelled correctly. Your press releases are going to people who read and write for a living...and can pick out a mis-spelled or mis-used word a mile away. Nothing can damage your credibility faster than one of those.
- 9- Make sure that your press release is going to the correct contact person at your chosen media outlet! The sports desk won't care about a fashion show coming in two weeks to benefit a local charity that isn't sports related, and the business desk won't care about the

latest win by the local high school football team. A wire service such as BusinessWire, PR Newswire, Market Wire, US Newswire, and others is a great way to make sure that your news goes to the correct desk, but those cost money. If you are on a shoestring budget, a few hours with a phone and pad of paper can be all you need to make sure that you have the correct contact person at your targeted media outlet.

10- Make sure that you are using the correct method to target your desired media contact! If they prefer their press releases via email—well then send them an email. They prefer a fax? Send a fax. (God forbid) they prefer snail mail? Get out an envelope and a stamp.

11- And last, but not least, (I just couldn't stop at ten), follow up. Call your targeted member of the media to find out if they got your press release. Members of the media receive so many press releases every day, yours could have fallen through the cracks, it could have gotten lost in electronic no-mans land, it could have gotten mixed in with another fax...you never know.

Linda Dickerhoof, President of Signature Strategy, Inc, is an experienced public relations professional with experience in both the for-profit and non-profit arenas and a list of happy clients. For more information, see www.signaturestrategy.com