Veterans For Peace: Write a Press Release

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How To: Write A Press Release

Reporters' desks are overflowing with news releases announcing some "big news" that really is not. Most of these are trying to sell some commercial product or event in the guise of news. Fortunately, your release, which will promote your cause, can and will distinguish itself from the others if you follow these basic tips.

The headline is key. Most reporters have about thirty seconds to scan a news release. They want the news to jump out at them. If you do not catch their attention in the headline, into the "circular file" the release goes.

Summarize your news into a headline. The headline can be up to four lines long, centered, in bold face and written all in capital letters, usually in a larger type size. You may do a stacked headline: a main, attention-grabbing head followed by a slightly smaller, more detailed head. The headline should capture the larger frame of the news, communicate a sense of drama, and pull reporters into the story. After the headline, the first paragraph—"the lead"—is paramount. This is the summary paragraph that communicates the most important components and frames the issue for maximum media impact. It must also capture attention. Caution: Do not try to explain everything in this paragraph.

Frame your news—establish its importance and impact, and your position—by the end of the lead paragraph. At the latest, your news should be framed by the end of the second paragraph. By the third paragraph you should move your key messages.

Write the remainder of the press release in descending order of importance. In journalism, this is called the "inverted-pyramid" style of writing. The most important, base-laying news goes at the top,the lesser details below.

Reporters throw away or ignoremany if not most press releases because they:

- ✓ Do not contain any news
- ✓ Do not have contact information or other key data to makethe reporter's job easier
- ✓ Are filled with typos and other embarrassments, causing the reporter to doubt the
- ✓ integrity of the organization that sent the release
- ✓ Are confusing, poorly written,or worse—boring

Tips for Media Advisories and Press Releases

Starting at the top of the page, all news releases should contain:

- ✓ Your organization's logo. This should be at the very top of the paper.
- ✓ Either "For Immediate Release"—meaning the information can be used as soon as a reporter gets it; or "Embargoed Until [date]"—
- ✓ meaning the reporter cannot use the news until the date specified.
- ✓ The date the release is distributed.
- ✓ Contact name(s), email and web addresses and phone number(s), including cellular phones.
- ✓ A "boilerplate," a 2-3 sentence description of your organization in clear, concise, jargon-free language.
- ✓ Include one or two pithy soundbite quotes in the press release.
- ✓ In media advisories, list the "Five W's"—who, what, when, where and why—after the headline and lead framing paragraph.
- ✓ Since your event will feature strong visuals, tip reporters off to the photo opportunities at the end of the media advisory. This is utterly essential for TV.
- ✓ End both advisories and press releases with the marks ###, or -30-. This lets journalists know the release is over. If your release jumps to the next page, write "more" at the bottom and center it.

When to Send the Release

In general, you should mail (including email, for those reporters who prefer emails) the release ten days before the event, fax it five days before the event, and follow up with a phone call within three days of the event. Of these three methods, faxing (or emailing) and calling are paramount.

Remember: Do not call reporters to ask if they got your release. They do not have time to respond to every release they receive. Instead, call them to pitch the news and remind them about the release. Be prepared to send another if the first was misplaced.

News Release Taboos

- ✓ Do not include jargon or political rhetoric in yourreleases.
- ✓ There should be no mission statements in releases.
- ✓ Do not write in long sentences and ponderous paragraphs. One- or two-sentence paragraphs are fine.
- ✓ Typos, factual inaccuracies and other mistakes kill the integrity of your organization and news.
- ✓ Keep it short.
- ✓ Write a strong headline or stacked headline.
- ✓ Write a tight and hard-hitting lead paragraph.
- ✓ Move your messages!

[Your Logo Here]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **(date)**

[Title Here]

(Example: XYZ Inc announces launch of new website <>)

Description: (optional) This is a very short description about the press release. some distribution sites will ask for this.

[CITY], [STATE],[Date] – [This is the opening paragraph. It should contain about 3-5 lines and considered most important since this catches attention of news readers and journalists. Typically questions for questions of who, what, when, where and why answered here. Keep it short and highlight what's whole release is all about.]

[This paragraph goes into little depth. Give more details of product or any events taking place. This should contain about 2 comments made by spokespersons. For example, Mr. XXX said "xxxx".]

[This paragraph focus on where users can find detailed information about product or events. Give a contact or website site for more information so that more additional information can be found. This paragraph should be concluded within 3-5 lines]

[The conclusive paragraph is known the "boilerplate" and can contain no more than 2-3 lines. A short "about" section, providing independent background on the issuing company, organization, or individual. Here you should explain future aspects, your or aim in meeting the current market or success. In general what you intend to do achieve.]

Contact Information:
[Company Name]
[Address]
[Telephone]
[Website]

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