



Press Release Guide



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BASIC GUIDANCE

A press release is a low-cost, high-impact method of marketing your business. A well-constructed, targeted and to-the-point press release can reach a large audience with minimal investment of your time. This guide provides Eureka Chamber of Commerce members a helpful resource to making your business more prosperous.

WHERE DO I START?

A press release describes a newsworthy event. Not everything you do is newsworthy. For example, a routine sale would not necessarily merit a press release. Specific media such as trade magazines or newspapers restrict their content to industry-specific information.

THE TARGET AUDIENCE

When writing a press release, first consider the publication's general audience, then the editor and other reporters. It's essential to attract the attention of publication editor. He/she decides what to publish – or not publish. The editor needs to be sufficiently impressed to want to relay your information to his/her readers. The publication's general audience is your main target. From the perspective of the audience, questions to ask yourself when deciding to create a press release include, "Why should they read about this?, Why should they care?, How do they benefit?" It's important that the press release be written for the audience – not purely for your business interests. Finally, press releases that contain a unique local or regional angle often get the attention of other reporters who may follow-up, especially in small-town publications. If your information doesn't meet the needs of the publication's audience, save yourself the time and effort.

WHAT DO I WRITE?

A press release is foremost and always factual. Avoid excessive adjectives or adverbs which tend to read like an advertisement. It's also important to avoid self-aggrandizement. To quote detective Joe Friday, "The facts...just the facts." An attention-grabbing headline (10 words maximum) to peek the readers' interest and summarize the overall message is most effective. Publication space is limited and editors often cut the length of articles. Therefore, construct the body of the press release as an inverted pyramid with the most important information up-front (who, what, when, where, why and how). The opening paragraph should "hook" the readership by getting straight to the main point. Follow-on paragraphs contain information that adds credibility, background and depth. Quotes, for example from business owners, important clients or loyal customers are good testimonials. The close is written in a way that reinforces the key points to the audience.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

- Use company letterhead
- Include "For Immediate Release"
- Contact information
- Headline
- Body (inverted pyramid)
- Concluding paragraph
- 1-2 pages maximum (400-500 words)
- Double-spaced
- "-more-" at bottom of continuing page
- "-30-" or "###" at end

COMMON PROBLEMS

- Event not newsworthy
- Bad news
- Lacks a strong angle
- Trite quotes
- Of no interest to the audience
- Poorly written (wordy, lacks focus)
- Missed publication deadline
- Missing basic information

EXAMPLES – EVENTS

- Up-coming (and post-event) conference
- Unusual meeting or well-known guest speaker
- Opening new business office/new ownership/new business
- Upcoming appearance/interview on radio/TV
- New product line/contract/services
- Renovation/remodeling/relocation
- Human interest
- New business partner/associate
- Employee promotion/new title
- Appointment/selection to a board/committee
- Business anniversary
- New contest/contest winner
- Charity fundraiser
- Open house
- Significant gifts/contributions to non-profits/causes
- New business logo
- Release of survey results/poll/research
- Employee certification/significant achievement/recognition
- “Local person makes good”

PRESS RELEASE – GENERAL FORMAT

Company Letterhead
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Name
Telephone Number
E-mail Address

HEADLINE: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (10 words maximum)

NEWS LEAD (Main point. Write to grab reader's attention. One-two sentences maximum. Double-space entire press release.)

SUPPORTING PARAGRAPHS (Why should audience read this? Why should they care? How do they benefit?)

QUOTE/S (Follows theme above. Adds credibility.)

RELATED POINTS/ANGLE/EXPLANATION (Follows inverted pyramid format.)

CONCLUSION (Reiterate main point. How can reader get additional information?)

END ("—30—" or "###" – without the quotation marks)

SOURCE, WRITER AND DATE

PRESS RELEASE – EXAMPLE

XYZ Computers R'Us
[LOGO]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: John Doe
636.555.5555
jdoe@computersrus.com

COMPUTERS R'US HIRES WORLD FAMOUS EXECUTIVE

Computers R'Us yesterday hired world famous computer guru, Bill Gates, as it's new Vice-President of Customer Service. Mr. Gates will relocate to the new corporate headquarters which recently opened in Eureka, Missouri as soon as he can sell his current house.

Mr. Gates has also agreed to initiate a community outreach program. Local residents can sign-up for his free evening classes to be held at Eureka High School. Specific dates and times have yet to be announced. Free laptop computers will also be given to class attendees. Classes will emphasize basic word processing, Excel, and COBOL computer language.

Mr. Gates brings with him over 20 years of experience in computer systems and customer service in both government agencies and private industry. He holds an Associate of Arts degree in drama from I.C.U. University and a M.B.A. from the University of (Hard) Knox.

-more-

According to Gary O'Grady, President and COO of Computers R'Us, "Mr. Gates has pursued this opportunity for some time with our firm. Until recently, we couldn't afford him because of the salary cap. However, with the recent labor law change wherein all executives will be paid only on a commission basis, we were able to convince Mr. Gates that this was a great career move. We also look forward to seeing him build a house here in Eureka."

Mr. Gates is expected to bring with him many of his current employees, including his house staff. Computer's R'Us specializes in all types of computers, computers software and educational tools. It employees 500 people locally and, in light of it's 200% increase in revenue during the last three years, is expected to add an additional 500 in the next 90 days.

John Doe
Director, Public Relations
Computers R'Us
March 11, 2003

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LOCAL PUBLICATIONS as of March, 2003

<u>Publication</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>	<u>Fax Number</u>	<u>E-mail Address</u>
Current Magazine (Eureka)	636.938.9967	636.938.9983	news@mvcurent.com
Current Magazine (Pacific)	636.271.0990	636.271.0901	news@mvcurent.com
St. Louis Business Journal	314.421.6200	314.621.5031	stlouis@bizjournals.com
St. Louis Post- Dispatch	314.340.8000	314.340.3050	ekohn@post-dispatch.com <i>Assistant Business Editor</i>
Suburban Journal	314.821.1110	314.821.0745	mkleban@yourjournal.com <i>Managing Editor</i>
Union Missourian	636.583.7701	636.583.5298	waltzc@emissourian.com <i>Editor</i>
Washington Missourian	636.239.7701	636.239.0915	washnews@emissourian.com
West Magazine	636.405.2500	636.405.2400	editor@westnewsmagazine.com