



CJAM's top tips for creating a winning press release

Creating a positive perception of your organisation is fundamental to generating membership enquiries and inspiring loyalty among existing members. Effective public relations activity is central to a good marketing communications strategy and helps to pave the way to building brand reputation while ultimately growing membership and generating income. CJAM's dedicated PR professionals have devised a straightforward guide to producing targeted press releases. By combining a sound knowledge of what makes an interesting story in journalists' eyes with a robust understanding of press release style and structure and a knack for writing, we help membership organisations to generate positive media coverage in all the right places, reaching both potential and current members with important key messages.

What makes a good story?

Journalists are busy folk and have little time for marketing puff. They want a concise, clearly written news story that has relevance and meaning for their readers, and ideally provides information that readers will find beneficial. It's important to take time to understand what motivates your target audience and present your news in a way that really piques their interest.

Key elements to include in any news story	
Who	Who is involved in the story?
What	What is the actual news, i.e. what is taking place?
Why	Why is the organisation in question doing it? What are the benefits to their members?

So what?

Why should the target audience be interested in the news? What is new, unique, different, agenda-setting or industry-leading about the news?

Secondary elements to consider**Where**

Where is the news taking place?

When

When is the news taking place?

How

How did the activity take place? Reinforce the organisation's role within it.

Writing the press release

1. **Create a concise, snappy headline** - encapsulate everything the journalist needs to know about the story in just a few words, ensuring that headlines use short, punchy words and active verbs.
2. **Maximise the first paragraph** - use the first sentence to sum up the 'Who, what, why and so what?' elements described above. The first sentence and first paragraph in general should contain all the key information about the story and highlight why it's important – you should always assume that a busy journalist may only have time to read this first section, so it's important to create an impact early on.
3. **Include compelling quotes** – incorporate a quote from a senior figure within your organisation explaining the relevance of the news and providing further context; then consider another quote from a third party (if appropriate) to add credibility. All quotes should sound as though they could be spoken, so avoid long, convoluted sentences!
4. **Provide key facts and figures** – make use of the body of the press release to reinforce the importance and relevance of your news with facts and figures. When referring to research, try to include the name and date of the report or source – footnotes are a neat way of doing this.
5. **Tailor your call to action** – end with a clear call to action – it's important to drive readers to contact you to enquire about the product or service you're offering, so include a reason for them to make contact and provide clear contact details.

Ensuring high quality press coverage

Images

Make sure that your press release is supported with engaging images that help to communicate the essence of the story. All captions should explain an interesting element of the news rather than state what is taking place within the picture.

Distribution

Once your winning press release is written, you'll need a targeted media list with all the most up-to-date journalist contacts at your key publications. CJAM can help with creating and tailoring media lists in order to ensure maximum impact.

Ensure that all press releases are posted on your website and disseminated as widely as possible via social media and e-newsletters.

Follow-up

Following up with journalists is fine, as long as you have something extra to communicate. Journalists are not fond of hearing 'Have you received our press release?' or 'I wondered if you were planning to use our press release?'. They would much prefer that either all the information was already present and correct within the press release, or if you do call, that you have something valuable to add. By showing that you have a full understanding of journalists' needs, you can begin to build a long and fruitful relationship.

Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is an important part of the press release process. CJAM can advise on the best ways to monitor press coverage both online (including interest via social media) and in print, helping you to maximise the return on your investment.