

## How to Write a News Release the Media Will Love

By Joan Stewart  
The Publicity Hound

“How do I write a news release about my business?” is the one question people ask me most often. News releases fall into two categories:

1. Releases about routine news events like new hires, promotions, awards, etc. that will result in a 2- or 3-sentence blurb in, for example, the back of The Business Journal, or a slightly longer article in your weekly newspaper. These news releases should be written exactly the way they will appear in the newspaper.
2. Enticing news releases designed specifically **to encourage the reporter to pick up the phone and call you for an interview that results in a much longer story, and possibly a photo.** You include just enough information in the release to help the media understand the story and what it’s about. But if they want all the details, they have to call you. Trust me. This works. The biggest mistake people make is trying to cram the entire story into the release. But it’s written so poorly and the release is so lengthy, that the media never bother reading it and never call.

That said, here are important do’s and don’t s:

- Media people spend an average 5 seconds reading a news release before deciding whether to use it or toss it. So limit a news release to no more than one page, preferably double-spaced.
- Make sure all information is accurate, particularly the spelling of names and any telephone numbers. Let someone else proofread your release before you send it. Ask them to call telephone numbers listed in the release, or visit websites that are listed, to make sure the release is accurate.
- Don’t write a news release with no news value. News is what happens that is different. If it isn’t different, it isn’t news.
- Avoid blatant commercialism. When describing your products and services, avoid hackneyed words and phrases such as “spectacular,” “incredible,” “breakthrough” and “unique.”

Here are the key elements of a news release:

### Contact information

In the upper left corner, type:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Joan Stewart at 262-284-7451 days or evenings.  
Cellphone: 414-708-1264  
Email: [jstewart@PublicityHound.com](mailto:jstewart@PublicityHound.com)

**The headline**

Write a compelling headline. Resist the temptation to put your company's name in the headline. Instead, concentrate on the benefits of what you are providing. Also, don't think you have to write a short headline, just because newspapers and magazines do. The advantage of writing a longer headline is that you can use more words to attract the attention of journalists.

**The sub-head**

Use a one- or two-line sub-head to explain more about the story

**The lead**

The first paragraph should explain the most interesting element of the story and concentrate on what's in it for the reader. If you are writing about a product or service, explain no later than the second paragraph how it is the solution to a problem. A good formula to follow is the XYZ formula:

"X (product or service users) who have struggled with Y (problem your product or service solves) will now be able to Z (what the product or service will do for them), thanks to A (the product or service.)"

For example, an office supply store that has a new ergonomically correct back support for chairs can write a news release like this:

People who suffer from lower back pain after long hours spent at the computer will now be able to work in comfort thanks to a new support cushion that keeps their back straight.

**Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4**

Include more details, but don't feel obligated to include a quote from your CEO or yourself. If the media want a quote, they will call you. If you can, try to paint a visual picture with your words.

**The ending**

If you want readers to do something specific, like call a number, write for a free booklet, register for a class, go to a website for more information, or whatever, say so. Put --END-- on the last line of the news release and center it so they know they are at the end of the release.

**Invite them to call on you**

At the end of the release, just after the "END" mark, you have the option of including more information about your expertise and invite reporters to call on you. Example:

Editors: Mary Smith is an expert in employee recruitment and retention, and executive compensation. Please call on her day or night for background, story ideas or commentary on those topics.

You can see examples of the two kinds of news releases at <http://www.PublicityHound.com/publicity/newsreleases.htm> If you want to subscribe to my weekly "Publicity Hound's Tips of the Week" ezine, delivered by email every Tuesday, send an email to [JStewart@PublicityHound.com](mailto:JStewart@PublicityHound.com) with the word "Subscribe" in the subject line.