

### Write press releases that get noticed - publicity is priceless!

It has been proven to be more effective than advertising, and very inexpensive - if you know how to write a release in a format that will be read by journalists. Here are some questions to ask your self when preparing to write a release:

### What results are you looking to achieve with your media release?

Outlining your goals will help you assess if the release is newsworthy and will give you direction when it comes time to prepare to write the release. Below are some newsworthy topics:

- Recent speech in front of a newsworthy audience.
- Business award, contest or ISO 9000 certification.
- Company, or personal recognition, in a recent book or article.
- A unique product or service.
- Free consulting or low-cost service to the public.
- Opening of a new physical building location or a new branch office.
- Launching or re-design of a web site.
- Involvement in legislation.
- Testimony as an expert witness at a trial.
- Running for office for a civic or business organization (i.e. local Chamber of Commerce, an association board member, governor or state representative).

### Are you looking at this from a journalist's perspective?

In today's world, everyone is inundated with e-mails, faxes and phone calls on a daily basis. Journalists receive hundreds of press releases each day by people who want to have news written about their products or services. The business person usually has their company at the front of their mind when considering a news release. On the other hand, journalists will have the interests of their audience at the top of their considerations. If you want to grab the attention of the journalists and get your press release noticed, ask yourself the following questions from a journalist's perspective:

- 1) Is the release newsworthy to the public?
- 2) If you were the journalist, would you see a value to your readers?
- 3) Will the readers be interested in this topic?
- 4) In a stack of press releases, will your release catch the attention of the journalist?
- 5) Can the key points of your release be found by quickly skimming the headline and body?

### Is your release a "sales pitch" or does it have "news value"?

An experienced journalist can easily identify if your release is intended to sell the reader. While the end result may be to increase product awareness and sell your product or service, your release cannot sound like a television or radio commercial. Distributing a press release that has the look and feel of a "sales pitch" can do more harm than good – and on a permanent basis. Future releases will tend to be ignored – even if it is written in the proper context and is a newsworthy release.

### How will you distribute the release once it is written?

You will have invested a lot of time and research into writing your press release. You need to have a solid media distribution list, and you need to make sure you are sending to the media that would have a genuine interest in your release. Don't distribute your release to every newspaper and industry journal nationwide if the release is targeted to a local or regional audience. If your product and/or service is specific to certain industries, only target the magazines and journals that have an audience targeted to your niche market.

### It's about credibility

Credibility will gain the customers confidence and can very easily convince them to purchase your product and/or service at the same time. A well-written press release that is picked up by the media will build credibility for your business.

Traditional advertising manages the message while press releases are, typically, reviews. Readers see an advertisement and know that what they are reading is overstated publicity. Readers, in many instances, trust reviewers, columnists, reporters or broadcasters and value their opinions. These very same authorities are, unequivocally, influenced by good public relations and, more distinctively, a well-written press release.

A well-written release can dramatically increase your sales, expose your company to the masses, and greatly enhance the image of your business or products.

## Guidelines for Writing a Press Release

The key to a successful press release is writing it to have an impact on the journalist – you need to set yourself apart from your competition. Your release must be well written and presented properly. See our press release format example. It must:

- Answer the questions: who, what, when, where and how.
- Have clear, concise writing – don't use terminology that the reader won't be familiar with.
- Have an opening paragraph that will "pack a punch" and grab the reader's attention.
- Have factual information – and be able to back up the facts.
- Always talk about yourself in the third person.
- Have information that is relative to the recipient.

## Headlines

A news release headline is one of the most critical components of a press release. It must be written in a creative and captivating way to capture the attention of the reader and entice them to read the remainder of the release. Your headline and first paragraph should convey the story – you need to grab the attention of the reader. The remainder of your press release should provide the detail.

## Release Content

1. Write for your target audience.
2. Present the facts and back them up!
3. Look for ways to market your story without it being a sales pitch.
4. Use quotes that substantiate the information you're conveying.
5. Bring a different viewpoint to your story.

## Write to be Published

In most cases, journalists will use your press release as a catalyst for a feature story. Write your release as you want to have it told. Focus on aspects of your product or service that set you apart from your competitors. Everyone offers "great customer service" and "low prices". Focus on the aspects of your product or service that distinguish you from your competition.

## State the Facts

A sure way to send your release to the trash is to use fluff, embellishments and exaggerations. If your story sounds too good to be true, you will damage your own credibility. Use real life examples to effectively communicate the benefits of using your product or service. Give examples of how your service or product satisfies the need. What are the features and benefits? If you are reporting on a corporate achievement, back up your success with one or more events. If your company has experienced significant growth, give a brief synopsis on how you accomplished it. Show the cause and effect.

## Choose Your Words Carefully

Avoid the first person perspective. News organizations never use nouns like "I", "we", or "us" while relaying news stories, and neither should your press release, except within quoted text.

## Use Strong Verbs

For example, "The committee exhibited severe hostility over the incident." reads better if changed to "The committee was enraged over the incident." Writing in this manner, helps guarantee that your press release will be read. Verbs in the active voice bring your press release to life. Rather than writing "entered into a partnership" use "partnered" instead.

## Make Each Word Count

Keep it concise. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, flowery language, or redundant expressions such as "added bonus" or "first time ever". If you can tell your story with fewer words, do it.

## Get Permission On Your Quotes

Be sure that you have written permission before including information or quotes from employees or affiliates of other companies. Any dispute resolution will favor the other company, and your press release may get pulled.

## About Your Company

End with a brief paragraph describing your company, products, service along with a short company history. If you are filing a joint press release with another company, include information on both companies.

**Press Release Format Notes**

There is a standard format for submitting press releases that all journalists require; presentation is key to having your release read. Use the following format:

- Use one-inch margins on each side of the page.
- Left-align, double space, and vertically center the text body
- Use block formatting – double space between paragraphs and do not indent.
- Try to keep your release to one page, two pages maximum.
- Don't split a paragraph between two pages; finish it on one page.
- Make sure your contact information is at the top of the press release.
- Always include the city, state and date of the release.
- Use acronyms when making a reference to a company to keep it short.
- Speak plainly with ordinary language.
- Avoid first person perspective and the passive voice.
- Don't abbreviate words or use industry jargon the general public would not understand.
- The exclamation point is your enemy – avoid it at all costs.
- Proofread, proofread, and proofread!
- Use upper and lower case characters; never submit a release in all upper case lettering.
- Always use proper grammar; errors will compromise your credibility.
- Use multiple paragraphs to get your point across and allow easy skimming.
- Never imbed hyperlinks in your release or use bold, italic, or colored type.
- Always include a summary paragraph about your company at the end of release.
- If the release is two pages in length, use two separate pieces of paper.
- Type “ --MORE-- ” at the bottom of the first page if it is a two page release.
- Type “ --END-- ” after the last paragraph to indicate the release has ended.

## Press Release Template

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

#### **CONTACT:**

Contact Person  
Company Name  
Voice Phone Number  
FAX Number  
Email Address  
Website URL

**<HEADLINE>** This is one of the most important components of the press release as this needs to "grab the attention" of the editor. It should be in bold type and a font that is larger than the body text. Preferred type fonts are Arial, Times New Roman, or Verdana. Keep the headline to 80-125 characters maximum. Capitalize every word with the exception of "a", "the" "an" or any word that is three characters or less.

**<City>, <State>, <Date>** - Your first paragraph of the release should be written in a clear and concise manner. The opening sentence contains the most important information; keep it to 25 words or less. Never take for granted that the reader has read your headline. It needs contain information that will "entice" the reader. Remember, your story must be newsworthy and factual; don't make it a sales pitch or it will end up in the trash.

Answer the questions "who", "what", "when", "where", "why" and "how". Your text should include pertinent information about your product, service or event. If writing about a product, make sure to include details on when the product is available, where it can be purchased and the cost. If you're writing about an event, include the date, location of the event and any other pertinent information. You should include a quote from someone that is a credible source of information; include their title or position with the company, and why they are considered a credible source. Always include information on any awards they have won, articles they've published or interviews they have given.

Keep your sentences and paragraphs short; a paragraph should be no more than 3-4 sentences. Your release should be between 300 to 800 words, written in a word processing program, and spell checked for errors. Don't forget to proofread for grammatical errors. The mood of the release should be factual, not hyped; don't use a sales pitch as it will ruin your credibility with the reader.

The last paragraph before the company information should read: For additional information on (put in the subject of this release), contact "name" or visit [www.yoururl.com](http://www.yoururl.com). If you offer a sample, copy or demo, put the information in here. You can also include details on product availability, trademark acknowledgment, etc. in this area of the release.

**ABOUT <COMPANY>** - Include a brief description of your company along with the products and services it provides.

## Sample Press Release

Press Release  
Concept Marketing Group Inc.  
8655 E. Via de Ventura, Suite G200  
Scottsdale, AZ 85258

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
Barbara Spagnola  
E-mail: [concept@marketingsource.com](mailto:concept@marketingsource.com)  
Phone: 800-575-5369 Fax: 866-858-7488

### For Immediate Release

#### **Flexible Online Solutions For Businesses of all Sizes Marketing to Non-Profits High Quality Data that Focus' on a "Quality not Quantity" Approach**

**Scottsdale, AZ -- April 12, 2006** -- Concept Marketing Group Inc., publishers of the Directory of Associations, is now offering their database of over 35,000 associations to the entire spectrum of businesses looking for high quality non-profit data with access to fresh and verified information. Contact information changes on a daily basis, and this marketing firm has established relationships with the associations to gather updated information when it happens – not months later. Taking it one step farther, the company offers consulting and marketing services to market successfully to this business sector.

The directory offers complete and verified information for successful targeted "one-to-one" communications and contains the information companies need for a qualified lead: organization name, address, phone, fax, key contact person and title, e-mail, url, conventions, publications, member size, staff size, SIC code, non-profit or for-profit status and more. The comprehensive information is obtained by going directly to the source; each association is contacted on a quarterly basis to update their organization's information. The data is updated on a daily basis in giving subscribers the most accurate information available – it's called "The Personal Approach".

The database is offered in three on-line versions and gives users the ability to identify and target organizations that need their products and/or services. The Directory of Associations is designed for businesses that want to import the database into their own software and have multiple users in an office environment. This feature allows companies to market and track prospects within their existing contact management software, and is ideal for professionals who travel. The service provides an intuitive search interface, data downloads, and daily updates for all new records created.

-- MORE --

*Concept Marketing Group, Inc - Flexible Online Solutions For Businesses of all Sizes Marketing to Non-Profits High Quality Data that Focus' on a "Quality not Quantity" Approach – Page 2*

The online subscription gives full access to the entire database and is offered on a monthly or annual basis. Subscribers can search the data by choosing multiple criteria then download their search results in a text database format. This gives users the ability to have unlimited use of the information. The monthly access requires no contract; subscribers can cancel after the first 30 days – the only limitation is the daily and monthly download limits. It is a perfect solution for companies who need a small amount of targeted data or companies on a limited budget. The annual online subscription is offered in two formats: 1) Annual Account which offers a 500 record daily download limit with no monthly limit and allows subscribers to search by choosing multiple criteria. 2) Unlimited Annual is ideal for large search downloading, direct mail, and large offices; it offers a one user license with unlimited downloading/viewing with the option of adding additional site licenses. 3) The By-the-Slice Online Annual account offers businesses the flexibility to purchase the data by individual states or regions and have access to any updated or new information for one year.

About Concept Marketing Group Inc. - With over 29 years of experience, Concept Marketing Group Inc. assists in developing and implementing effective sales and marketing strategies for businesses through targeted, managed, strategic marketing campaigns. CMG understands that each client has individual needs and works with them, on a personal basis, in developing marketing strategies with a growth plan tailored to their specific industries. Custom marketing solutions direct marketing lists, printing/mailhouse services, and press release/media services. For more information, visit <http://www.marketingsource.com/associations> or call 800-575-5369.

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## Top 100 Newspapers Nationwide

Akron Beacon Journal	New York Post
Albuquerque Journal	New York Times
Arizona Republic	News Journal
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette	News & Observer
Asbury Park Press	Newsday
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Omaha World-Herald
Austin American-Statesman	Orange County Register
Birmingham Post-Herald	Oregonian
Boston Globe	Orlando Sentinel
Boston Herald	Palm Beach Post
Buffalo News	Philadelphia Daily News
Charlotte Observer	Philadelphia Inquirer
Chicago Sun-Times	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Chicago Tribune	Plain Dealer
Cincinnati Enquirer	Post and Courier
Columbus Dispatch	Press-Enterprise
Commercial Appeal	Record
Contra Costa Times	Richmond Times-Dispatch
Courier-Journal	Rocky Mountain News
Daily Herald	Sacramento Bee
Daily Oklahoman	Salt Lake Tribune
Dallas Morning News	San Antonio Express News
Dayton Daily News	San Diego Union-Tribune
Denver Post	San Francisco Chronicle
Des Moines Register	San Francisco Examiner
Detroit Free Press	San Jose Mercury News
Detroit News	Seattle Times
Florida Times-Union	Spokesman-Review
Fort Worth Star-Telegram	St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Fresno Bee	St. Paul Pioneer Press
Grand Rapids Press	St. Petersburg Times
Hartford Courant	Star Tribune
Houston Chronicle	State
Indianapolis Star	Tacoma News Tribune
Journal News	Tampa Tribune
Kansas City Star	Telegram & Gazette
Knoxville News-Sentinel	Tennessean
La Opinion	Times-Picayune
Las Vegas Review-Journal	Toledo Blade
Lexington Herald-Leader	Tulsa World
Los Angeles Daily News	USA Today
Los Angeles Times	Virginian-Pilot
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	Wall Street Journal
Morning Call	Washington Post
New York Daily News	

## Tracking Media Coverage

Listed below are online clipping services. You can monitor coverage of your company through these services; these are fee based services.

### **Luce Online, [www.luceonline.com](http://www.luceonline.com)**

Offers a clipping service tracking what is published in more than 5000 print publications and wire services. Luce offers a choice of e-mail or web delivery.

### **Luce Press Clippings, [www.burrellesluce.com](http://www.burrellesluce.com)**

Monitors thousands of U.S. and International print publications, as well as broadcast news, electronic media, blogs and other Internet sources – then delivers them to you in full-text, as they appeared in the media, complete with photos and graphics.

### **Northern Light Search. [www.northernlight.com](http://www.northernlight.com)**

Offers a news engine that lets you stay on top of the news affecting your company with comprehensive reporting from 70 newswires covering every business event around the world with a full-text index updated every two minutes.

### **LEXIS-NEXIS, [www.lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com)**

Provides access to 5,000+ regional, U.S. and international news sources including newspapers, magazines, newswires, broadcast transcripts, and industry newsletters. An electronic clipping service is also available.

## Media Search Engines

### **Google News, [news.google.com](http://news.google.com)**

Search and browse 4,500 worldwide news sources; updated continuously.

### **Associated Press, [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)**

Serves more than 1,500 newspapers and 5,000 broadcast outlets in the United States. AP Newswire services are printed and broadcast in over 100 countries.

### **U.S. News Online, [news.aol.com](http://news.aol.com)**

News stories from around the world; includes local business news to the latest political and international news.

### **PR Newswire, [www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com)**

Access breaking news from tens of thousands of organizations around the globe.