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If you think that press releases are dead, think again. A well-written media release can strengthen your credibility, announce your latest products and services, showcase your company as a leader in your industry, plus provide the media a well-crafted story that you've written, highlighting your accomplishments.

You can host press releases on your media page or on a site like Medium.com for the world to find you – but don't just stop at that. Share links on social media, and with your clients and prospects too. For a more powerful punch, be sure to include relevant keywords for SEO, video, hashtags, and contact information to reach you 24/7.

HOW TO WRITE A WINNING PRESS RELEASE

Before getting started, go through this checklist:

	YES	NO
▶ Is this "newsworthy"?	___	___
▶ Does this fit my overall brand message?	___	___
▶ Do I want this to "live forever" on the web?	___	___
▶ Do I have my 2 keywords?	___	___
▶ Do I have professional press release writing talent & experience OR am I prepared to hire the help I need?	___	___

If you have 5 YES's, then proceed!

A winning media release is one that achieves three key goals at the same time, and through the same document:

1. It connects you to your target market.
2. It conveys a message to media, journalists, reporters, bloggers and others who are part of your distribution network.
3. It highlights the uniqueness of your brand and business.

Equipped with this awareness, the following template will help you write a winning press release. On the next page, let's take a look at the headline.

Interesting and Catchy – but not "Over-Hyped"– Headline that Announces Your News in Title Case

> *Compelling summary of your release that highlights your news and pulls the reader in so that they want to read more. Limit this to two sentences and use normal sentence structure (first letter of sentence capitalized).*

City, State. Date – Your first paragraph is where you need to achieve two critical goals: you must grab attention, and at the same time, express the core importance of your news. Don't focus on details here. Instead, capture the WHAT of your news. If there's some overlap between what you write here and what appears in your summary (above), then that's fine. The first paragraph is also where you want to insert your most important keyword and link it to your website or some other appropriate page.

Your second paragraph is where you fill in the details, and focus on the WHY, WHEN, HOW, WHO and WHERE. Depending on the complexity of your news, you may want to break this up into two paragraphs. Ultimately, you want to ensure that readers have a basic awareness of the facts "behind" your news announcement. If appropriate, you can insert your second keyword here (if it doesn't "fit" then move it to the third paragraph).

Your third paragraph is where you provide some additional background information to help add context and depth to your news. For example, if your news is linked to a broader industry trend or represents a milestone in your business, make that connection here.

Your fourth paragraph is where you introduce a quote from someone in your business (most likely, you). The quote should align with the third paragraph and help put the news in context. A quote is the only place in a press release where you can "step outside" the more formal, professional tone and add some extra emotion and enthusiasm (or if your news is a warning or some kind, then here's where you can be more dramatic). A quote is also the ideal place to highlight your business's brand and connect it to the news.

For example: "At [YourBusiness], a defining aspect of our vision is to give our customers a completely personalized experience that they can't find anywhere else.

This development allows us to fulfill that commitment and, quite frankly, elevate it to a whole new level."

The fifth paragraph is optional and is where you'd add any additional information that is relevant to the news, but not directly related to the announcement. For example, if you plan on doing something in the future based on this news, then highlight that here.

The sixth paragraph is where you provide a call to action. What do you want readers to do? Do you want them to visit your website? Download a report? Give you a call? If you don't have a specific action, then you can simply invite readers to "learn more by visiting [YourBusiness.com] or something to that effect.

The seventh paragraph isn't really a paragraph – it's a sentence that provides contact information for the release. In the past, this information was typically kept "outside" of the release (above the headline or after the release itself). However, that convention was developed before the Internet. Now, it's wise to include it within the body of the release itself to ensure that it's part of the redistribution (often, various websites will simply copy/paste your release; this is not plagiarism – you are still getting full credit for the release, and in fact, you want as many websites as possible to "pick up" your release this way). The contact line typically looks like this: For more information about [Your Business Name], contact [First Name Last Name] at [Phone Number] or [email address].

About [Your Business]

This is a space where [Your Business] gets to tell its story, after the main story is over. Use your company bio and describe who you are, what you've done, the benefits of working with you, how long you've been in business, and so on. Also, include a link to your website and video.

Key Things to Keep in Mind when Writing your Winning Press Release

- Never address readers directly with "you" and "your," or refer to your business as "we" and "us." Only write in the third person, and this includes the "About" section at the end of the release. The exception to this rule is in quotes, which is where it's OK (when necessary) to speak in the first ("I") or second ("you") person.

- The core criteria for whether a press release is newsworthy or not can be determined based on this question: Why are you communicating this now instead of 6 months from now? A press release is always topical and timely and refers to something that has recently happened, is happening now, or will happen soon. If your news doesn't fit any of these criteria, then don't write a news release – write an article.

- Typically, a press release is anywhere from 400-650 words, with the majority coming in at about 450 words. It's fine to go to the higher end of that scale if the news justifies it. If you're sending a joint press release and need two quotes and/or two "About the Company" sections at the end, this will naturally increase the word count – which is fine.

- Even if you're an experienced writer and have written articles, website content, blogs and other professional pieces, you'll do yourself a huge favor by working with a professional who can at the very least review and edit your press release before it goes out. As you can see, press releases are different animals than other documents (especially articles – although they can look the same from a distance), and you don't want to waste your time and money – or risk damaging your reputation and brand – by sending something out with the label "press release" when it's something else.

Marketing/PR expert and speaker, Robin Samora teaches small business owners how to rev up their brand online and offline to attract new clients, connect with customers, get media exposure, and increase sales. Contact Robin at (617) 921-3448 or email her at Robin@RobinSamora.com to help you create a stronger marketing program or train your team on how to grow your business with social media, writing, speaking, and seizing PR and referral opportunities.