



## Press Releases: How to Get Media Coverage for Your Business

By: Evan Mangan

If you are a small business owner looking to market and grow your business, at the top of your wish list will be media coverage. The cost of PR and issuing a press release is just a fraction of the cost of placing an advert. Of course, there are no guarantees that PR will generate media coverage, but if it does, the benefits can far outweigh advertising.

- **Instant credibility**  
Your business earns instant credibility in the eyes of consumers if the media thinks it is a good story, then it must be worth looking at.
- **Improved search engine performance**  
How your site performs on search engines is related to the number of quality links to your website. Online media coverage results in links back to your site, which pushes you further up the search ranking. (See our Marketing Small Business Guide to SEO).
- **Snowball effect**  
Many journalists notice a story only after there is existing media coverage.
- **Expert status**  
Media coverage can bestow you with “expert status” within your industry or your field. This can result in other journalists contacting you when they are looking for comments on a related news story, which further increases awareness and coverage for your business.

### Who do you send your press release to?

When considering who to send the release to, our advice is:

- Targeted – avoid sending everyone the same message. It will be perceived as spam. Decide which type of media owners would be most interested such as consumer radio and press or business editors or trade magazines, etc. Even with consumer press, decide whether it is retail or sports journalists who will be interested in your story.
- Pragmatic – consider who is likely to give you coverage. Are you a new start-up in a relatively unglamorous sector or is your story in the consumer mainstream containing lots of human interest?

The choice will depend on

- Your market – are you a consumer business or in the B2B market? If B2B, then it is most likely that you are targeting business editors and trade.
- Your news – is it likely to appeal to broadcast media or simply trade media?
- Your coverage – are you targeting media in the UK or the UK and US? The US should receive a separate press release written in US English and might require a different angle.

## Journalists are Customers

- Once you have decided who you are targeting, think of the journalists as a group of customers that you need to sell to. Put yourself in their shoes and ask a few questions
  - **Volume.** They receive hundreds of press releases a day. Why will your release cut through the crowd? What can you do to tailor your release to the journalist and perhaps offer an exclusive?
  - **When is their deadline?** Is it a daily deadline by 3PM, a weekly local newspaper with a print deadline of Monday evening or are you targeting monthly magazines? If you want coverage in a Christmas edition of a magazine, then you will need to issue the press release in September for a Christmas issue that goes on sale in November.
  - **Frequency.** When did you last send a press release? If you have sent a number over a short period of time, it will be seen as spam by journalists and they won't take future releases seriously.
  - **The audience.** Who is their audience? They are only interested in a story that serves their needs. Ensure you have looked at what type of stories they tend to cover and what the

demographic profile of their audience is. Use this information when shaping the press release.

### Tips on Writing a Press Release

- **Make their job easy:** If you have thought about the journalist's audience and what is likely to make an interesting story, your job in writing the press release is to make it easy for them to tell the story. In theory, they should only have to do minor editing to your press release.
- **Brevity:** Your release should be circa 400 words and rarely more than a page.
- **Get to the point:** At the end of the first paragraph, the journalist should know what your story is and why it is newsworthy. If it takes longer, few will bother reading to the end.
- **Jargon and exaggeration free zone:** Journalists don't like business jargon. Phrase your story in consumer terms and avoid exaggerated claims like "incredible product" or "absolutely unique". When you do make a claim, substantiate it.
- **Quotes:** Include quotes from the MD or a senior executive in the press release. Ideally, also include a quote from a customer or supplier.
- **Quality of writing:** Ensure there are no spelling mistakes, typos or instances of poor grammar or your release will be seen as amateurish and discarded.
- **Contact details:** Ensure there is a web address and both telephone and email contact details at the end of the release for the media to follow up.

### How to Distribute the Release?

How you distribute the release will depend on who you are targeting. The options are:

1. Create a targeted list
  - Identify media owners and journalists who you think would be interested in covering your story.
  - Send your press release and a media pack to these journalists, conveying that this is not a widely distributed press release. Suggest opportunities for an exclusive slant on your story or exclusive follow up material.
2. Access a wider email list

- A marketing agency can provide an up to date list of named journalists across all media in the UK. Your press release can be emailed to these journalists. The advantages of that is you are hitting many relevant and targeted named journalists. The drawback is that these journalists receive a lot of email and yours will need to stand out.
3. Direct feed Newswire service
- A marketing agency can arrange for your press release to be sent directly onto the screens of editors and journalists in the UK and US via a newswire. This guarantees that your press release will be seen by editors.
4. Online distribution
- There are a number of online press release distribution services, which ensure that your release is distributed across a wide range of sites that journalists access for stories. It will also be picked up by Google News and Yahoo News.

#### **After the release ... What next?**

- If you are picked up by the media, be prepared to do interviews with press, radio and perhaps TV journalists, often at short notice.
- Consider the questions the journalists might ask you and prepare answers. Think about the top two points you would like the reporter to cover and ensure you get those across.
- Be prepared to provide follow up material such as product photographs and directors bios.
- If you didn't receive any coverage, prepare to follow-up, particularly if you have created a targeted list. Your objective is to create a relationship with the journalists so send a follow up email or letter and be prepared to resend the materials as they might not remember receiving them.

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#### **About The Author**

Evan Mangan is a former Head of European Marketing for Yahoo! Mobile and was Head of International Operational Marketing for Orange. He is founder and Managing Director of The Marketing Crowd ([www.TheMarketingCrowd.com](http://www.TheMarketingCrowd.com)), a full service marketing agency which

makes the marketing techniques employed by major brands available and affordable to smaller companies.

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