**How To Write a Press Release, with Examples**

A press release is the quickest and easiest way to get free publicity. If well written, a press release can result in multiple published articles about your firm and its products. And that can mean new prospects contacting you asking you to sell to them. Talk about low-hanging fruit!

What's more, press releases are cost effective. If the release results in an article that (for instance) appears to recommend your firm or your product, that article is more likely to drive prospects to contact you than a comparable paid advertisement.

However, most press releases never accomplish that. Most press releases are just spray and pray. Nobody reads them, least of all the reporters and editors for whom they're intended. Worst case, a badly-written press release simply makes your firm look clueless and stupid.

For example, a while back I received a press release containing the following sentence: "Release 6.0 doubles the level of functionality available, providing organizations of all sizes with a fast-to-deploy, highly robust, and easy-to-use solution to better acquire, retain, and serve customers."

Translation: "The new release does more stuff." Why the extra verbiage? As I explained in the post "Why Marketers Speak Biz Blab", the BS words are simply a way to try to make something unimportant seem important. And, let's face it, a 6.0 release of a product probably isn't all that important.

As a reporter, my immediate response to that press release was that it's not important because it expended an entire sentence saying absolutely nothing. And I assumed (probably rightly) that the company's marketing team was a bunch of idiots.

With that in mind, here are five rules to make sure that your press release actually drives prospects to contact you:

* **RULE #1: Use the press release as a sales tool.** The idea is to communicate a message to customers and prospects, through the vehicle of a print or online article, hopefully adding the authority and credibility of the publication, website and/or reporter to the message.
* **RULE #2: Have a newsworthy story.**To get your message communicated through the publication, you need to convince the reporter/editor that your message (or the story surrounding it) is newsworthy. So it's got to have appeal to the entire readership of the publication.
* **RULE #3: Write it like a reporter would write it.** If your press release looks and feels like a real article, reporters will often just file it as a story with minimal editing. Therefore, it's up to you to make sure that your press release looks and feels like a real article. No biz blab!
* **RULE #4: Provide some good quotes.** Even if your CEO is a complete idiot, don't make him sound like one by providing a quote that's a series of business clichÃ©s. Have him say something memorable and personal, if possible.
* **RULE #5: Contact your top outlets personally.** In addition to sending a press release, personally contact the reporters that you really want to cover the story. Send them something personal. You might even want to rewrite the press release to fit their beat.

If all that sounds too difficult, you may want to spend the extra money to get a reporter to write the press release. Any good reporter will make the release look like a story, which means it's more likely to be picked up and republished. Luckily there are plenty out-of-work reporters out there right now.

What follows are three examples, pretty much picked randomly, which show how it's done. The first two have a little biz-blab in them, but are still reasonably effective. The third one (from Microsoft) is an excellent example of how to write a press release that will intrigue reporters and editors.