

**BAM Enterprises**



**Your Time to Shine!**

## Writing an Effective Press Release

Newsroom Editors receive tons of Press Releases daily. What you may be surprised to learn is more than half of those releases are tossed. Some of them are never even read. Why? There are a number of reasons. Often times the release is poorly written. Sometimes people use the release to sell their products and then there are those releases that say nothing at all.

Here are some tips to help you as you prepare to write your next press release:

**Is your news "newsworthy?"** The purpose of a press release is to inform the world of your news item. Do not use your press release to try and make a sale. A good press release answers all of the "W" questions (who, what, where, when and why), providing the media with useful information about your organization, product, service or event. If your press release reads like an advertisement, rewrite it.

**Start strong.** Your headline and first paragraph should tell the story. The rest of your press release should provide the detail. You have a few seconds to grab your readers' attention. If the headline and first sentence doesn't grab them, chances are the rest of the release won't be read.

**Write for the Media.** On occasion, media outlets, especially online media, will pick up your press release and run it in their publications with little or no modification. More commonly, journalists will use your press release as a springboard for a larger feature story. In either case, try to develop a story as you would like to have it told. Even if your news is not reprinted verbatim, it may provide an acceptable amount of exposure.

**Not everything is news.** Your excitement about something does not necessarily mean that you have a newsworthy story. Think about your audience. Will someone else find your story interesting? For example, let's say you want to announce your new online business. This may be exciting news to you but the media is used to receiving these types of releases so what makes yours so special? Instead of just focusing on the grand opening, why not talk about the "uniqueness" of your business. What makes it so different from other online businesses? Do you have any special products or services to offer? Answer the question, "Why should anyone care?" and make sure your announcement has some news values such as timeliness, uniqueness or something truly unusual. Avoid clichés such as "customers save money" or "great customer service." Focus on the aspects of your news item that truly set you apart from everyone else.

**Does your press release illustrate?** Give examples of how your service or product fulfills needs or satisfies desires. What benefits can be expected? Use real life examples to powerfully communicate the benefits of using your product or service.

If your company has experienced significant growth, tell the world what you did right. Show the cause and effect.

**Stick to the facts.** Tell the truth. Avoid fluff, embellishments and exaggerations. If you feel that your press release contains embellishments, perhaps it would be a good idea to set your press release aside until you have more exciting news to share. Journalists are naturally skeptical. If your story sounds too good to be true, you are probably hurting your own credibility. Even if it is true, you may want to tone it down a bit.

**Pick an angle.** Try to make your press release timely. Tie your news to current events or social issues if possible. Make sure that your story has a good news hook.

**Use active, not passive, voice.** Verbs in the active voice bring your press release to life. Rather than writing "entered into a partnership" use "partnered" instead. Do not be afraid to use strong verbs as well. 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.

**Choose your words carefully.** Use only enough words to tell your story. 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. Wordiness distracts from your story. Keep it concise. Make each word count.

**Beware of jargon.** While a limited amount of jargon will be required if your goal is to optimize your news release for online search engines, the best way to communicate your news is to speak plainly, using ordinary language. Jargon is language specific to certain professions or groups and is not appropriate for general readership. Avoid such terms as "capacity planning techniques" "extrapolate" and "prioritized evaluative procedures."

**Avoid the hype.** The exclamation point (!) is your enemy. There is no better way to destroy your credibility than to include a bunch of hype. If you must use an exclamation point, use one. Never do this!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**About your company.** Your press release should end with a short paragraph that describes your company, products, service and a short company history.

If you are unsure how your press release sounds after you've written it, send it to the Press Release Grader and see how it stacks up: <http://www.pressreleasegrader.com/>

There is no need to pay someone hundreds of dollars to create your press releases if you follow the basic guidelines. Good Luck and Happy Press Release Writing!



**BAM Enterprises** is a media consulting firm owned by Beverly Mahone. The company specializes in coaching speech and media interviewing techniques and also offers marketing and promotional assistance. Mahone is a veteran journalist who spent more than 25 years in radio and television news. She is also an author and motivational speaker who has been classified as a baby boomer expert by the media. She has appeared on and been quoted by numerous media outlets including MSNBC-TV and the New York Times Newspaper. To learn more, go to: <http://www.talk2bev.com> or contact her at: [Beverly@talk2bev.com](mailto:Beverly@talk2bev.com)