

## **SPREAD THE GOOD WORD WITH A PRESS RELEASE**

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Some companies suffer from the “shadow” syndrome. They don’t see the point in “going public” with news about their companies. They are content to stay in the shadows and avoid telling a broader story about who they are and what they have to offer.

But every day, newsworthy things happen in companies. Perhaps a new person has joined your staff, or you’re about to add a new product to your line. These are the kinds of items that interest trade magazine editors who are always on the lookout for information on behalf of their readers. These editors rely on press releases from companies like yours to keep your industry abreast of news and developments.

The press release is usually one page (or less) and fits into four simple categories:

1. **General News and Information**—You may be moving into a new market or acquiring a new company. Or, you made a change to your web site and you want to tell your customers.
2. **Personnel Addition/Change**—A new person is starting in your organization or maybe someone is getting promoted. Let people know about the person’s qualifications and what job they will be doing. Emphasize how this function/role will be beneficial to your customer. (Be sure to include a photo.)
3. **New Product/Process Introduction**—Are you offering a new product? Will a change in order processing save your customers time? Submit a press release including a photo of the new product. If your improving a service or process, show a graphic of the revised form, computer screen, etc.
4. **Company Event**—A group of employees entered a marathon that benefited a local charity. Or, you are being honored by the local chamber of commerce or your trade association. Provide details of the event and include photos. Tell what you accomplished, “X dollars raised for our favorite charity as a result of our participation,” etc.

Now that you have your topic, you’re ready to write the release. Let’s start with what information you should include. “News Release” should be prominent either

centered at the top or flush left on the page. In the top left hand corner consider listing the date, the words “For Immediate Release” (this tells the editor he/she is free to use it at any time), Company Name, Contact Name and E-mail address of the person who can provide additional information, a release number (optional, usually a way to keep track of releases) and your company’s URL.

The first paragraph of the release should begin with one or two sentences clearly stating the topic. For example, “Bantam Company, a global stocking distributor of a complete line of widgets, announces the appointment of Niles Oberlin as Director of Warehouse Systems. Mr. Oberlin will be setting new procedures to reduce lead times to our customers.”

The next two paragraphs should give us more details about what Mr. Oberlin will be doing as well as his background. It should finish with a summary of the company and a call for some type of action: “For more information, visit our website at \_\_\_\_\_.”

A quick tip: stick to the facts. Avoid extra adjectives and flowery language that is better suited for advertisements.

I have listed four pdf templates on our Livingston Associates website, one for each category described above. You are welcomed to download these templates and fill in your specific information to produce a press release on any topic ([www.livingstoncorp.com](http://www.livingstoncorp.com)).

You also need to compile a press list. This should contain the names and contact information of editors for the publications (and online web sites) that cover your industry. If you’re not sure which ones to include, check with your customers to see what magazines they receive on a regular basis.

Once you’ve compiled your list, e-mail your press release (including a high resolution photo, in jpeg or tif format, 300 dpi) to all the editors. It’s best to copy and paste the press release into the body of the e-mail to eliminate concerns about opening at risk files.

Don’t expect the editor to get back to you with a date when your press release will run. You’ll have to monitor the magazines (and corresponding web sites) to find out when and where it appears.

Your company has information that potential customers want to read. Start a monthly press release program now and make it part of your overall marketing efforts.

It’s time to step out of the shadows.