

How to Write a Press Release

(adapted from a talk I gave in 2013 for an Iowa City Chamber of Commerce event)

Where media finds stories

- City council agendas
- While covering other stories and events
- Local e-newsletters
- Social media
- Expert/trusted sources
- Press releases

What is newsworthy?

- Would it interest you as a reader, listener, viewer?
- Is it relevant to readers, listeners, viewers?

Newsworthy Topics for Businesses

- New product/service
- Upcoming events
- Awards
- Partnership
- Moves/relocation
- Expansion, new hire
- Being featured at a national event or on a list

In media, every story should include these two items

Lede:

- A lede is the introductory paragraph of a news story
- It's meant to entice the reader to continue reading
- It should contain the Who, What, When, Where and Why of a story

Nut graph:

- A nut graph is a paragraph explains the news value of the story

Introduction to the basic press release

Press releases should also include a lede and a nut graph.

A press release should be outlined as follows:

-Contact Information

-Headline

-Body

+Lede paragraph: Should include the Who, What, When, Where and Why of the proposed story. Should not include excessive adjectives or marketing language. Keep it to the point.

+Additional information.

+Company boilerplate information: a description of your company that can be used verbatim in a news story.

Why the newspaper picked up a story:

-Timely

-Strong local connection

Why the newspaper did not pick up a story

-Press release too difficult to read, such as an e-newsletter that distorts the text

- Colored fonts
- All capital letters
- Sent the day of the event
- Too much marketing language
- Requires too much editing

Sending a press release

- Copy and paste into an email, as well as attach it
- Do not follow up with a phone call right away to see if the news person received it
- Send event-related press releases at least six weeks in advance, if possible
- If no action is taken on the press release after a few days, then call