



7 Signs That Your Press Release Stinks

I'm constantly asked to give basic feedback on press releases, and hired to edit from scratch. When I look at releases written by non-professionals, I keep seeing the same things that will positively, absolutely keep your piece from being read and being published.

These seven signs are pretty common indicators of a lousy press release. Make sure yours aren't violating these press release sins:

- 1. Your press release headline is so "cutesy" that no one could possibly tell what the hell your news is by looking at it.** Remember that headlines need to be descriptive... think keyword-rich, and lightly embellished to make it catchy. Catchy does not equal cutesy!
- 2. You neglect to leave your full contact information.** Journalists don't give a fat rat's behind that you're worried about spam. If you want significant news coverage, you'd better include an email address and phone number. If spam is that big of an issue, then create an address or number reserved only for press releases, or find a better distribution method.
- 3. You don't say why your story is newsworthy until the conclusion of the press release.** If you do this, no journalist is going to bother reading that far to begin with. You need to get their attention early.
- 4. Any fifth grader could tell you were too lazy to proofread your press release.** If your release is littered with spelling and grammatical errors, don't count on it being read. If you want someone to take the time to consider your story, respect them enough to take the time to proofread before your press release distribution.

5. Your news release resembles a novel. Huge blocks of text and multiple-page press releases just aren't practical for a busy journalist, especially on top of the dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of other press releases waiting for them.

6. It reads like a testimonial. Despite what a lot of webmasters and small business owners seem to think, a press release is not an advertising / marketing tactic; it's a publicity tool. Journalists don't give a damn about what your customers say, or how great you think you are. If you want to run an advertisement, then buy ad space.

7. Your mommy thinks you deserve a front page story. Hey, you might think you have the best thing since sliced bread. So does the guy down the street... and the guy across town... and the guy across the country... and all of their brothers. You might think you have a high quality, solid news angle that journalists should be fighting over to break. They might think your news is a total yawn. Always run your news angle by unbiased parties when possible, and be able to come up with at least one good reason why your story should appeal to a wide enough audience (even with a niche publication) to justify a journalist spending their time on you.

It's amazing what a solid news angle, a carefully written and edited release, and something as basic as contact info can do. Yet, you'd be surprised at how many press releases are distributed every day violating these and other press release writing sins. Don't be a sinner if you want to be a winner... at least in the PR game.

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