2021 PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS IT?
- A tool or document used to announce something newsworthy. Newsworthy as in for your brand/organization or the audience you serve.
- They are typically a form of statement (expanded on) that is delivered to people in the media or adjacent gatekeepers, for the purpose of disseminating out key information.
- Most include similar information/structures but can be highly customized to your exact needs or style
- While press releases, in the past, were for communicating information that has happened already, or about to happen. In the digital age they have expanded their use as being a vehicle for generating buzz on their own (thanks to the digital age of sharing and “spreadability”)

WHY YOU MUST HAVE ONE?
- Establishing a relationship with key media “players” in your space can be challenging especially without prior connections. A good PR can be your way into that elusive network.
- Thanks to the digital age, press releases are not just for journalists anymore. Consumers have taken on some role in the media (thanks to things like Social Media), and so they can also be used as a tool to spread key information across the internet via sharing and searching.
- Credibility can be hard to come by. For Investors, stake holders, and potential partners, trust and credibility are even more crucial. Press releases can be a great and relatively cheap way to indirectly establish some credibility
- Thanks to Search Engine Optimization press releases have taken on even more value. Since they must be hosted and “live” somewhere, they are typically searchable. If they are searchable, they have a chance to show up in Google’s results, giving you even more reach and exposure, without any additional work.
- They can help you to get out in front of a potential story and better control the way it is told and who it is told to.
- They can be reused or repurposed as additional content

MYTHS
- Only big companies do Press Releases
- I need to have connections in the media for my Press Release to get traction
- Everyone I need to see my Press Release will, all I must do is put it out there
• Press Releases should be earth shattering, game changing, critical news only
• Press Releases must be long and boring
• Press Releases should be written with minimal emotion or personality

GENERAL STRUCTURE

HEADLINE
Tease what they should expect to get in the rest of the document. This is your chance to create some intrigue from the start so hit them right over the head with it.

TIP: Your headline should directly speak to the primary audience you are looking to reach/capture and create a little bit of mystery/intrigue to draw the reader in

TIP: Keep your headline to less than 100 words if possible and try to mix in some “action verbs”

TIP: Keep your headline (and Lead) in as close to everyday easy to understand language as possible

LEAD
A brief overview of the “story” that should always answer the questions of Who? What? When? Where? And Why? Many people will not read past this point, so be sure to give them a reason to.

TIP: Think of this as your “elevator pitch” for getting your article seen and read. Thousands of press releases are sent out every day and people tend to scan them. The ones that are read have catchy, succinct and well put together leads.

TIP: Your opening paragraph is one of the most important by far. If you cannot win them over here, the rest will be a tough sell. Save your most impactful but succinct messaging for this specific spot and try to compliment it with additional white space to stand out.

BODY
A much more detailed explanation of the info provided in the Lead. Start with the most newsworthy and noteworthy information and slowly elaborate more from there. The second half of your body should be expanding on more details, but the less crucial ones, focusing more on supporting points to pay off earlier sections.

TIP: Use the “inverted pyramid” model making the tip of the pyramid your most important info and expanding down from there.

TIP: Your overall ideal length for the PR should be between 300-500 words. Your headline should be 100 or less so your body should be no more than 200-300.
**TIP:** As much as your body is not meant to be the ‘impact’ section, try to end via the last paragraph, with something that will stand out or linger in their minds. It’s your last chance to leave an impression. Do not rehash all the info you have covered, but instead give them a succinct final statement based on that info.

**TIP:** Mix in key links as they become relevant throughout you body. Do not overdo it, but adding some context and a direct way for people to take action can be very effective for added value/engagement

**VISUALS**
Humans process and retain imagery much faster than text/words. Visuals are also proven to be much more effective at both capturing attention and retaining it. Although a more recent staple of good press releases, visuals can make or break the documents ability to keep readers engaged.

**TIP:** Only use visuals within the context of the PR and in ways that seem natural/organic

**TIP:** Visuals should always add value to the audience whether engagement or additional context

**TIP:** Infographics, key stats, photographs, or even video are all acceptable visual formats for press releases and if you are going to use multiple visuals, it is recommended you use some variation

**DATELINE**
Always include the full dateline to give the reader context on how current/up to date the info is. Use the date you plan to first release/publish it and not the date you created it or date of any event or specific item mentioned within.

**TIP:** Press Releases can now “live” on forever because of the internet so you must assume some people may be coming across the document in the future. This is especially true when releasing through popular sources like PRWire since there is an SEO component as well (people can find them through organic search)

**COMPANY/ORG**
A short paragraph describing your company to better help readers understand the nature of the organization, what you stand for, and why people should care.

**TIP:** Think of this in a similar way to your website’s “about page” in terms of making sure you deliver the most important company info, but in a well put together and succinct way (use the best of the best)

**MEDIA CONTACT INFO**
Author of the release or key go to contact for your organization’s external communications. This will be the person majority of follow ups are directed.

**TIP:** Always make the primary contact aware they are being used in the document and give them the precise day/time it will be published. Things can heat up quickly and you would not want them caught off guard.
TIPS FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF COMMON PRESS RELEASES

EVENT
- Accuracy is especially important as well as including as many specific details about the event as possible and making sure they stand out within the document itself
- Key Info: i.e., Name, venue/location, organizer/contact, day/time
- Additional info to include:
  - Any speakers/guests/performers with a brief description and link to any relevant bio, social presence
  - RSVP info if required
  - “What to expect”
  - Any historical/prior event info that may be relevant (i.e., last year’s same event)

NEW HIRE
- Include the person’s name in the headline (i.e., John Smith joins XYZ org vs XYZ org hires new ABC)
  - Include an image of the person if possible
- Answer the following:
  - Why is this person being hired or promoted? What will be their primary function? What was their previous job/role? How many years’ experience? Is it a new position or are they replacing someone?
- Let them know what the immediate and long-term impact of this move will be

NEW LOCATION
- Specific day/time of opening (even if in the past)
- Include any compelling imagery or video that highlights the new location (can also use it to demonstrate the “making of” or some of the behind the scenes i.e., a virtual tour)
- If applicable include a map visual or link to directions
- Include any new/updated hours of operation

NEW PARTNERSHIP
- Focus on mutual commitments, beliefs and purpose
- Describe or highlight any specific projects or activity resulting from the partnership
- Include the logos of all partners as well as their key contact person
- Include short background/description of the partners
- Include why this partnership is happening and why it should/will matter
- If the partnership is temporary include the timeline
REBRAND

- Step one should always be to revisit the question of who your primary audience is and what your goal is for the rebrand and then use that as the “lens”
- Eye catching headline (people need to care that you are doing it)
- Brief description of the rebrand including some of the specific changes, the date the changes did/will take effect, reason for undergoing the process, the impact (i.e., packaging, logos, ads, website); any updates to your mission, operations, products or services directly related to the rebrand
- A quote from someone internally on the change can help to humanize it (make anyone adverse to change a little more sympathetic)

AWARD

- Include what type of award it is, what category it is in, the level of the award, and why you are receiving it
- Who is presenting/presented it (person and/or organization)?
- Date received and period its tied to (i.e., 2020 award received Feb.2021)
- Any relevant imagery from the ceremony, of the award itself or the recipient
- A “thankful” message
- Maintain confident, excited and humble tone
- Include why the win is so important to the org and any resulting impact

STATEMENT

- Can be more robotic and “stoic” than the other PR types
- Can be written more from a personal/organizational position or belief
- Keep these short and to the point (no credit for over stylizing or creativity)
- Should let people know where they can learn more
- Should give people the “reason” for the statement right off the bat

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

- Use multimedia when applicable such as links and imagery
- Do not overdo it on the “extras” and when you do use them, make it hyper relevant
- If using an email list to send out, have your list checked and cleaned ahead of time
- Confirm the contact info being used prior to sending (and make sure they are aware)
- Do not send on a day or just before a day your organization will not be available (i.e., Friday afternoon)
• Post this press releases to as many of your “owned” properties as possible. Social media, website, resource center, have internal employees share, submit to local/free publications, etc. The more exposure for these the better so do not put too many eggs in any one basket.
• Do not overdo it. Too many or too frequent, and they quickly lose their effect. Try to save these for the 1-2 things per year that matter the most.
• Keep an eye on what other organizations in your space are doing. Do not copy what they do per say, but if they seem to be having success or there are some obvious wins to pull out from looking at them, absolutely “borrow” those lessons.
• Every industry is unique in terms of Press Releases, but Public Relations is a field of specialists. Try to get to know some specific outlets or contacts in the most niche version/category your organization is in and then expand out from there. Better to get high-quality traction from a smaller pool than “spray and pray” with little impact anywhere.
• Put yourself in the shoes of a media journalist and read it from their perspective before finalizing it.
• Be consistent with who your brand is and its guidelines. If there’s language you would typically use, do not change that just for a press release. Put your best foot forward but authenticity can be the most powerful weapon for driving engagement.
• Include quotes to add impact/value (just do not overdo it)
• Make sure you use clear and strong Calls To Action where applicable

MISTKES TO AVOID

• Your news/story is not important enough (at least somewhat important)
• Stuffing your Press Release with links (people will find you without you needing to constantly try to pull them out of the Press Release to your website or other property)
• Too long. Hit the important beats. Support your big statements. But do not drag on.
• Grammar mistakes. Almost everyone checks for spelling, but we have gotten lazy or weak at grammar checking. Have a new set of eyes read it over first and do not just rely on the little red squiggles to tell you it is spelled wrong (reading out loud can also help with this)
• Awkward or distracting formatting. There is no one right way to format a Press Release but if you stray too far from at least the somewhat norm, readers may be more distracted by the layout then enthralled by the content it contains.
• A bland headline. If you cannot pull them in right away, the rest will not matter. Avoid formulaic headlines and make them catchy but concise.
• Change it up. Try not to use the exact same version for every audience or placement you will be using it. While some can repeat, if there is an opportunity to customize, then seize it.

ONLINE DISTRIBUTUION SERVICES

The below list is distribution services that can help get your Press Release out to the right people. They are great alternatives or complements to the more traditional route of going directly through media.
members and journalists. Most if not all the below services offer both a free and “pay to play” component.

- PR Newswire
- Business Wire
- PRWeb
- eReleases
- 1888PressRelease
- PR.com
- OnlinePRNews.com
- NewswireToday.com
- PRLog
- Send2Press