



Anatomy of a Press Release

Apart from Pseudo Press Releases, there are essentially TWO types:

MEDIA

First, those aimed at members of the media - editors, bloggers, journalists, information-portals. Our objective there is to get COVERAGE. We want our press release to become the spur to a more comprehensive article... quoted or used within a feature... or simply copied and pasted into a journal or blog. This type of press release is sent to INDIVIDUALS. It's all about focus.

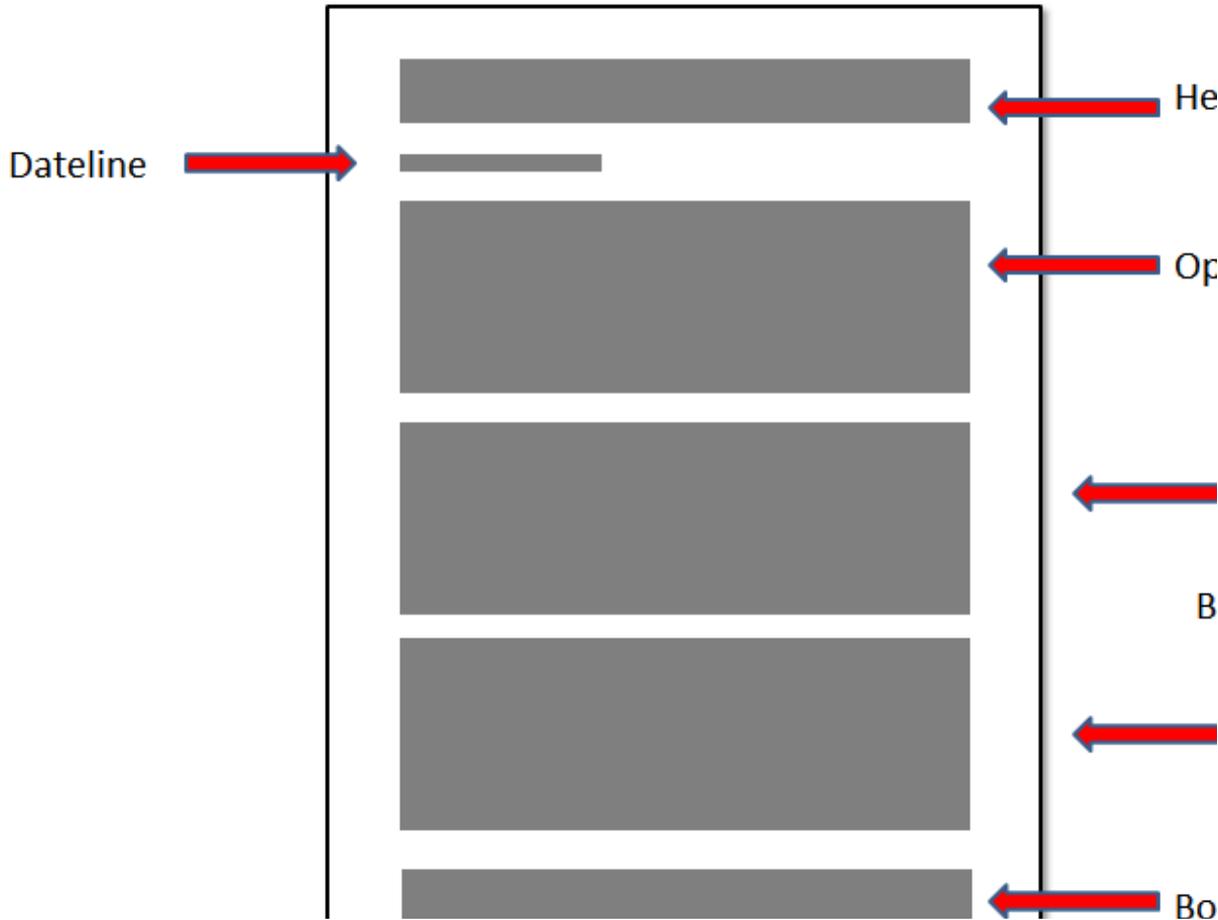
WEB PRESENCE

Second, those aimed at getting volume coverage across the web. No focus there, but the aim is to boost our search engine rankings. These are usually distributed for us by Newswires like PRNewswire.

Press Releases for both categories look remarkably similar. In fact, they haven't changed much since the very first one. Journalists, editors and big-time bloggers feel COMFORTABLE with it. It gets to the point QUICKLY.

Overleaf, you will see is what it looks like. The grey panels represent text:

The format isn't set in stone. It's not mandatory but – journalists, editors and bloggers feel comfortable with it. It gets to the point quickly



You can see why busy journalists and bloggers like it. It quickly gets to the point and contains all the essentials they need to decide – “Will I take it from here? Is it a story? Will my readers find it compelling/informative/interesting?”

THE HEADLINE

Our HEADLINE is the single most important part of the release



Editors want a simple, single sentence that tells them instantly what it's about, why their readers would be interested, and who it's from

We all skim newspaper-headlines, deciding which items we'll read and which ones we'll ignore – will it be 'Police have the strangler' or 'Details of big pony contest announced'.

Editors and bloggers do just the same with Press Releases. For that reason, our HEADLINE is the single most important part of the release.

The BIG mistake, is trying to be sensational. What editors REALLY want is a simple, single sentence that tells them instantly what it's about, why their readers would be interested, and who it's from.

You CAN add a sub-head (an extra headline), but that's REALLY the purpose of the opening paragraph.

This is an example of a good headline – aimed at editors of trade magazines specializing in employment and personnel.

Latest figures show that Labor Market continues to generate jobs without triggering worries about inflation

Not SENSATIONAL, but RELEVANT. It's offering editors the very LATEST statistics (editors love statistics) and gives them a 'news-angle' around 'inflation'.

Overleaf, you will find another example, this time from UDEMY:

Udemy targets international students with support for 10 foreign languages

And they used a sub-head:

Online learning platform Udemy announced today that its site will support ten foreign languages and hit the milestone of one million students.

As for the DATELINE, it follows the headline and tells editors when and – often - where the release came from. Usually the city, followed by the state.

By the way – when sending out your Press Release – make sure the ‘subject line’ on your email is the same as your headline – never just PRESS RELEASE

Email to editor:



OPENING AND BODY PARAS

The opening paragraph – sometimes called the ‘lead’ - is a bit like a ‘management summary’. And, like the headline, it needs to capture ATTENTION It also needs to develop INTEREST. This is the section that editors and bloggers will skip-read to decide whether to read-on..... or whether to bin it.

In Alice in Wonderland, the White Rabbit puts on his spectacles and asks:

“Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?”

“Begin at the beginning,” answered the King gravely,
“and go on until you come to the end. Then stop.”

A Press Release isn’t like that. Instead of writing *sequentially*, we start with the most interesting material at the beginning – the Opening Para – followed by the next most interesting and so on. As to length, keep paragraphs to five lines maximum.

**Write your
Opening Para
(and headline)
last of all**

BUT – when it comes to CRAFTING the press release, I recommend you write the main ‘BODY paragraphs’ FIRST – then go BACK and write the Opening Para afterwards. In fact, I suggest you do exactly the same with your HEADLINE. Write it AFTER you’ve written the main part of the release. That helps to overcome ‘writer’s block’. Sitting for hours at a blank screen, unable to come up with a headline.

BOILERPLATE

The 'boilerplate' is just a short paragraph that tells editors a little more about the company or individual who has compiled the press release. It often includes any special credentials, awards and so on.

A few moments ago, I showed you a press release headline from Udemy. THIS was their boilerplate:

Udemy was founded in 2010 and has raised a total of \$16 million. Investors include Insight Venture Partners, Lightbank, MHS Capital, and Learn Capital.

The boilerplate is NOT essential. While most very large companies assume they are already well known – so they're happy to keep it to the end - smaller companies often prefer to add a very brief description in the Opening Para.

Udemy used THIS in a recent release (instead of a Boilerplate at the end), making it the second sentence in the opening para:

Udemy is a well-known provider of massive open online courses, otherwise known as MOOCs. It offers videos and live lectures from hundreds of expert instructors, giving people opportunities to expand their knowledge-base and skill sets.

The boilerplate is NOT essential. Smaller companies often prefer to add a very brief description in the Opening Para.

CONTACT

This is the final part of the release – offering contact details (live links) for editors, bloggers and so on to find out more.

Always, of course, include your company website as a live link.

SOME GENERAL POINTS

Press Releases should be written in what's known as the 'third person'. So, for example it might say

"XYZ was the first company in America to....."

NOT

"WE were the first company in America to..."

Only direct comments from company executives or customers, in quotation marks, should ever use 'we' or 'I'.

BULLETS

If you use bullet points within your text, limit them to a total of three or four and use a single sentence per bullet.

PRESS ROOM

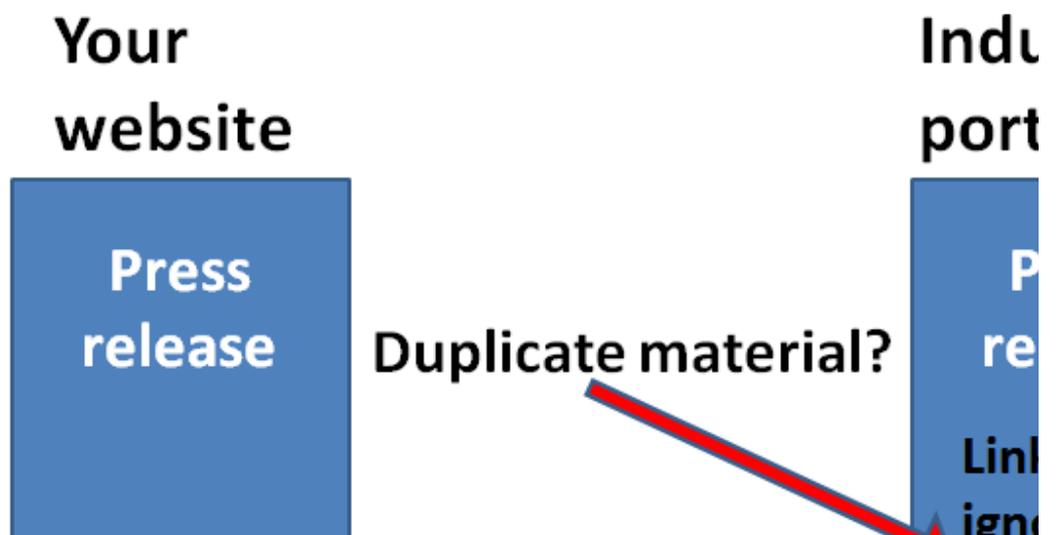
In this course, I recommend that you include a 'Press Room' or 'News Room' section within your website – mainly to make you look like the big hitter you are going to become. This is

Do NOT post your latest press release as a web page within the News Room – make it a downloadable pdf

where journalists and bloggers can download the latest press releases, images, logo and so on.

WARNING. Do NOT post your latest press release as a web page within the News Room – make it a downloadable pdf.

Why? If Google happens to find the release on your OWN site BEFORE finding it on, say, a trade portal or a key blogger, it may very well IGNORE the trade portal as ‘duplicate material’. You could LOSE any Google-juice you may otherwise have gained.



PHOTOS

In another session within this course, I describe the things that ‘turn on’ editors and bloggers. One of the things that really turns them on is photos.

Printed journals require high resolution photos which, by definition, are large files. Never include large files with your Press Release – clogging up their email is a sure way to get up a journalist’s nose. Instead, send small ‘thumbnail’ images,

with a link to your online 'Press Room', where they can choose which images to download.

OK, they were general points relating to BOTH types of release. Let's NOW look at.....

NEWSWIRE RELEASES

Newswire releases are all about Search Engine Optimization, or SEO. In our previous section we examined Keywords, or better still Key PHRASES and the role they play...

- First of all in Google searches and...
- Secondly the role they play in promoting your website.

We learned how to use Google's Keyword Planner to select the BEST key phrases. But how do we USE them within our press release? The key things to be aware of are:

1. Include your most important key phrase within your headline – but it MUST make sense to humans. They're your ultimate audience.
2. Avoid what's known as 'keyword stuffing'. Overdoing the use of keywords to a point where the text reads unnaturally. Personally, I would stick to just a couple of search phrases. It needs to look NATURAL.
3. Anchor Text is where you use a key phrase that is also a hyperlink to one of your web pages, like this...

I provide [brochure](#)
[copywriting services](#) to
pharmaceutical industr

I strongly recommend you use no more than one anchor text in your release. The web page it links to should have the same anchor phrase in its title and a couple of times more within the rest of the page.

Your web page:

Brochure Copywriting Services

I provide brochure copywriting services for IT companies, pharmaceutical companies and not-for-profit organisations.

For more generalised brochure copywriting services you may wish to contact my associate etc etc etc etc etc etc

Anchor link in your Release:

Len Smith also provides [brochure copywriting services](#) to etc etc etc etc

USEFUL LINKS

Newswire companies will each have their own slight variations to the layout I've described, and some will have word-count restrictions. PRNewswire have an excellent guide to writing releases when using their services. You can get a copy by using this link:

<http://service.prweb.com/learning/article/press-release-writing-fundamentals/>





Another useful link:

<http://onlineprnews.com/blog/2010/11/great-press-release-examples-our-pr-favorites-this-week/>

publishes a selection of the week's best press releases, complete with a critique. You will find this an invaluable aid.

I also give you a link to a website that analyses all the week's best press releases, with a critique. Check them out – it's the best way to learn.

QUICK CHECKLIST

- Is your HEADLINE brief? Does it convey the content and does it capture the attention of editors/bloggers?
- Does your opening para summarize the most important information?
- Is the release written in the 'Third Person'?
- Have you provided phone and email contact details (an individual, NOT sales@) and can you be confident that person will be available to talk to the press? Are they properly briefed?
- Has the release been proofread?
- Have you avoided the temptation to make your release sound like an advertisement?
- Does the release contain ONE anchor link to one of your web pages? Does the title on the web page include the anchor link phrase, and is it repeated again somewhere in the body of the web page?
- Do you have a boilerplate description, or have you included that in the opening para? (your choice).
- Do you have an eye-catching (but relevant) photo to support the release. Have you provided a link from your 'Press Room' for journalists to download the image?
- Has it been possible to incorporate statistics? If so, is there an accompanying data chart or infographic?

If the release announces the publication of a White Paper or a survey etc, can journalists access a copy from your Press Room?

Have I been able to include a quote from a customer/client or an expert (myself is a one-man-band)? If so, does it sound like the 'spoken word' (good) or does it sound like something written by the marketing department (bad)?

Does the release aid our objective to sound like a leader, be a Voice in the industry?

Now go back again, once more, and ask yourself – Is it News?
Is it a STORY? If I were an editor/blogger, would I be desperate to get this into my publication?