

Part 2 of 3

Start Cashing In On Thousands of Dollars Worth of FREE Publicity By Sending Out Your Own News Releases

Writing And Formatting

In [Part 1](#) we discussed how you could gain thousands of dollars worth of free publicity for your business and potentially drive millions of visitors to your web site by sending out news releases. We also talked about the increased credibility and exposure of having your message as part of the "news" rather than as an advertisement.

In this article, you'll learn how to know in advance that you are sending "news they can use." You'll also **learn how to correctly write and format a news release** to guarantee it gets into the "right" reporters' and producers' hands for maximum media exposure.

Most news releases don't get used because they are irrelevant and boring. They are written from the company and not the audience perspective. Information should be angled to "what's in it for the reader."

There is always a hot topic of the day or week, and in this article you will learn how take the reader on a fast ride, surfing the wave of interest before the readers' notoriously short attention spans cause them to lose interest and move on to the next topic.

If your business is one of the Fortune 500 companies, then you can send out anything and newspapers will use it. However, if you operate a smaller enterprise, you will need to write:

- An e-mail subject line that will get your news release opened.
- A headline that will demand attention and make the reader want to learn more.
- The body of the news release that will provide who/what/where information in an easy-to-read format that retains reader interest from first word to last.

The main reason you are sending out your news release is to use it as a "door opener" leading the reporter to contact you for more information for an article or an interview on radio or television. Your press release is not the end of your media campaign -- it is the beginning. That's why it is so important to have a great subject line in your e-mail message to each reporter.

A) Writing E-mail Subject Lines that Sizzle:

Your subject line is the key to whether your e-mailed news release will be opened or deleted when you send it to the media. Be clear, to the point, and explain the contents of your news release in just a few words. Take your time to write a subject line that will **entice reporters to read more**.

Your e-mail subject line must indicate that the message contents are relevant to **their** readers, listeners, or viewers, important to **their community**, or tied in to a major story that **they** are currently focussing on. Write a subject line that their audience will find interesting, informative, provocative, controversial, or attention grabbing.

Forget about writing exaggerated claims like:

"ABC Company launches revolutionary pencil holder that will forever change how business is done."

You don't want to simply say "news release" (which tells the reporter nothing), or have wording so "clever" that the reader may or may not "get it," or make wild-sounding claims. Remember... it's called a "news" release, not a "hype" release.

Avoid boring subject lines like:

"Mary Widget promoted to VP, sales."

Even if a release like this does get published, it will not have much of an effect on driving new business to your site, unless Mary Widget is already a local celebrity. You will increase the odds of having your news releases opened by rewriting the subject lines as:

"ABC Company will be creating 20 new jobs in the community."

'New 'Golden Pencil Holder Contest' open to all.'

"Mary Widget speaks for the first time about the XYZ controversy."

"First woman in ABC Company history to achieve top VP, sales position."

Send the e-mail from your web site address and not from a free service such as Hotmail. Otherwise, you do not **look like a real business**. It's also a good idea to add your full contact information to the signature file at the bottom of your e-mail.

B) Drawing the Reader In with Your Headline:

After reading the subject line of your e-mail, each reporter's decision to even scan your news release is going to be based on the headline you write. It is critically important that your headline be clear and "eye catching." Here's where you can be more creative than the subject line of your e-mail. The difference is that the subject line is written for reporters and the

headline is written for their readers. **Your headline gives the reader the "why" -- the reason they should read the news item.**

You can also provide additional information in a subheading to draw the reader into scanning the remainder of your news release.

In Hollywood lore, the greatest headline ever written in *Variety* magazine was "Hix Nix Stix Pix." Translated, it means that rural people do not like going to motion pictures about country life. That headline captured the show-business audience's attention immediately. The headline itself became a topic of conversation because it so cleverly summarized the entire article in four words!

Another great example of a book title, which is comparable to a headline, is "Think and Grow Rich." Again, in a few words the author (Napoleon Hill) summarized the entire concept of the book. Use these examples of writing headlines targeted to your market that will grab attention and create the desire to read more.

C) Retaining Reader Interest Throughout the Body of Your News Release:

Every word **must** be written from the "**what's in it for the audience**" point of view. How will it help, inform, influence, anger, amuse, excite, or motivate THEM? It's not about you, your company, or your offer. It is entirely about the people reading, watching, or listening.

Make the body of your news release so interesting and content-rich that the reader will want to read every word after giving it a fast, simple scan. Put the most important "who, what, why, when, and where" information in the opening paragraph. **Tell it fast or it might never get told at all.** Even if it's inserted into a newspaper, it could still be "cut off" before the end due to space limitations.

Be sure all your statistics and quotes are completely accurate. Double check with the original sources instead of relying on someone else's research or opinion. Also, ensure that there are no spelling or grammatical errors. Have someone else proofread it for you to get a second pair of eyes looking for clarity and punctuation, etc.

Each one of your news releases needs to be so relevant, that eventually...

You become a recognized authority in your field and someone the media turns to for expert commentary on your topic.

Start building your reputation by always **quoting yourself**. After all, the eventual long-term goal is to promote "you" as an expert so that you become the focus of an in-depth article or are interviewed on radio or television, where you have a chance to really promote your offer.

Now that we have talked about getting your e-mailed news release opened by reporters and "wowing 'em" with a great headline... let's get into the nuts and bolts of the how to format your news release.

Formatting Tips to Make Your News Release Look Professional:

Every word of your news release is important and **formatting is critical**. The fewer words you can use to express the message, the better. You are providing information in an industry-standard way so reporters can quickly decide if your news is important to their audience. In literally a few second the decision will be made to run it, follow up with you, or trash it.

Here are the 14 formatting rules you must follow:

1. Include your **full contact information** in all your press releases, including your e-mail address, URL, telephone numbers, fax number, and mailing address.
2. Give the who/what/when/where/why as clearly as you can in the opening paragraph or two.
3. Stick to the facts.
4. Make it interesting, controversial, accurate, newsworthy, and **relevant** to their audience (readers/viewers) -- but never boring.
5. Don't brag, "I'm the greatest" **unless you're Muhammad Ali** and you **are** the greatest!
6. If relevant, give statistics that **tell your story in a graphic way** to further understanding.
7. **Forget the "techno-babble"** and buzzwords. Write so that everyone can understand your message.
8. NEVER go over one page.
9. Use a 12-point font.
10. 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper only (if sending it by fax or mail).
11. Print it on **plain white paper only** -- no letterhead, no borders, no photos.
12. DOUBLE-SPACE the body copy.
13. Do not have any background images, designs, or colors on the page.
14. End your news release with "###," which is the industry symbol for "that's all."

You accomplish two things following the formatting rules. It shows that you respect the needs of the industry and so have presented your information in the most helpful way for them, and it demonstrates that you are professional.

Following the rules is not an option if you want your news release to even be considered. If you don't follow them, you might as well not send a news release at all... the only place that message will be heading is the shredder.

Example of a news release:

For Immediate Release

For further information contact:

Jack Smith -- (888) 555-1212

SHOW ME THE ORIGAMI INC.

1234 Black Hole Ave.

Silicon Valley, CA

THIS BUSINESS IS FOLDING AND HAS NEVER DONE BETTER

SILICON VALLEY, CA: April 19, 2002. Now anyone from ages 10 and older can learn the Japanese paper folding art of Origami through a new teaching site on the Internet.

After 5 years of research, Jack Smith, Creative Director of Show Me the Origami Inc., has launched a web site at www.ShowMetheOrigami.com that teaches Origami in simple, step-by-step instructions.

"Until now, Origami has often been very challenging to learn," said Smith, "but after 5 years and

\$10 million in research, we believe that we have developed a system that anyone can follow and

make perfect paper folds every time."

The company plans to spend their entire advertising budget of \$2 million on one Super Bowl advertisement next year. Until then, the course is free for anyone to access and master this

ancient art.

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The "Real" Secret to Getting Your News Releases Published:

It's not how many press releases you send that counts... **it's how many get picked up by various media and printed or used on radio or television.**

If you have ever sent out news releases without success, and wondered what the real secret is, this is it...

Fit your news release into the "hot topic" of the day.

Constantly monitor both national and local events to see if you can offer a different twist to the story, additional background information, or insight into an item that is already headline news. Once you see the window of opportunity open a crack, submit your news release IMMEDIATELY.

Always be on the lookout for the chance to relate your service or product to a larger event. For example, you could tie in your local lawn-care service to the annual Easter egg hunt on the White House lawn. Sure it's a stretch, but maybe you could mention readers get "10 FREE Tips for Growing a Perfect Lawn" by visiting your web site. Tell the readers that you may not be able to help them move into the White House, but you CAN help them have a lawn that looks just like the president's grounds.

In Part 3 you'll read about some great resources that will give you the option of writing and distributing your own news releases or hiring a professional service to do it all for you.

You'll know that your efforts have been worth it when you get that first phone call from a radio station asking to arrange a time to interview you "live" on the air. That's publicity, exposure, and credibility that advertising dollars can't buy.

Get the skills without the spills...

Finest Regards,

Boris Chow
Internet Marketing Challenge

*Additional content provided by The IMC Content Research and Development Team.

About The Author

Boris Chow is a seasoned Internet marketer and member of the IMC Think Tank, the team of Internet marketing professionals who gather in the IMC Private Site to spill the beans about Web marketing breakthroughs -- as they happen!

To learn their profitable secrets (and avoid the costly mistakes) so you'll have more time to grow your business, visit <http://www.marketingchallenge.com> for instant access.