

FREE



**GUIDE 2019**

**How to write a  
press release...  
the media will  
want to use**

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# Process for writing a press release...the media will want to use

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathy Hayward is managing director of Magenta Associates, and a communications specialist with more than 18 years' experience in a range of journalistic, publishing and marketing roles. She founded Magenta in 2011 after a journalistic career spanning a number of different titles including *FM World*, the award-winning magazine for the British Institute of Facilities Management, *Marketing Week*, *Financial Management*, *Soccer Analyst*, *Supply Management*, *Unions Today*, *People Management* and *Director*. She holds a Masters degree in journalism, as well as the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' post-graduate diploma in PR.

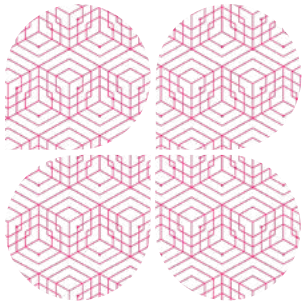
## Introduction

The technology titles at a large publishing firm used to hold regular 'meet the press' briefings when the assembled journalists would explain to attendees from the tech companies that press releases with phrases such as 'paradigm shifts' were NOT interesting and were very unlikely to be picked up by any publication worth its salt.

These events proved very successful, particularly among the public relations people, who brought their clients along to help convince them why those press releases they kept insisting they write, were practically a waste of time.

What most of the PRs understood and unfortunately, many of their clients did not, was that technology and marketing speak does not make for an eye-catching press release that journalists will a. read and b. go on to use.





# This short guide takes you through the process.

Below we outline the top tips for writing a press release that the media will want to use.

1

Decide the topic for the release. If your organisation has just released a new product, what does it do that is worth reporting? Or if a company has just produced some research, has something new and interesting emerged from the data, for instance a salary survey that shows average pay has risen for professionals working within a certain sector?

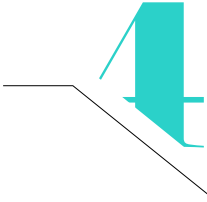
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Once you've established there is a story to report, confirm the key person to speak to within your business to get the details. Remember, like those tech clients I mentioned earlier, they might be so enthusiastic about a product or service they may need steering to stick to the story not the technical or sales details. Less is most definitely more.

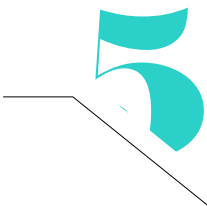
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Begin the press release with an eye catching headline: remember that journalists plough through numerous press releases a day, so you need an interesting headline that encourages them to read the rest of the release. Be careful with the headline content though; the editor of a computer title warned the tech companies in those press briefings that bad language filters in the US meant that a reference to a new facility in Scunthorpe was blocked! While the headline should catch their attention, be careful of being so oblique it doesn't make sense. For example, research which shows facilities management salaries have increased should say just that, not 'FMs have cause to celebrate' which could mean celebrate anything.

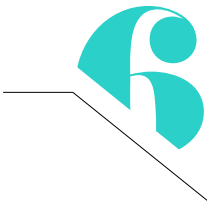




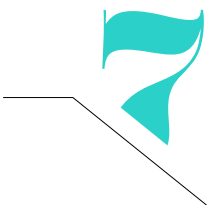
**Set out your story:** Once you've got your headline your introductory paragraph should include all of the key information you want to communicate. This means it should include the five Ws (who, what, where, when and why) that convey the basic facts required to develop a news story and increase the chances of the story being reported. The rest of the release should include any additional information that supports the main fact and direct quotes from the client and other relevant people (e.g. the person who carried out the research).



**Provide a good finish:** the conclusion of the release should incorporate any further details, and very importantly, a 'Notes to Editors' section with background information on your company and if required, a brief biography. Ensure that the 'contact/s for further enquires' for more information or interview requests is clear and accurate. Also, double check that any statistics quoted and logo used is correct and up to date.



**Checklist:** ensure you agree the date that the release will be distributed, especially if it's time sensitive. Check what image would work best with the release; does your organisation already have a suitable image, or does one need to be sourced? If so, ensure any image is hi-resolution; the copyright is owned by your organisation, or you have written permission to use the photograph. Include any photo credit on the press release. If possible, send a low-res image to the press explaining that a hi-res version is available if required. Journalists (especially in the business-to-business press) are always after good imagery. Ascertain who needs to approve the release and seek written approval from the relevant people and keep a record of their written approval in case of any queries. Ensure that the internal audience is aware of the news before it goes to the press, particularly if it's a sensitive matter, such as an acquisition.



**Go live:** Before sending out the release, agree the target media audience; is it trade/ regional or is it going to different parts of the trade press to maximise coverage? If it is a mix, you may want to produce several versions of the release which emphasises certain points. Consider professional bodies as well as press and ensure you publish the press release on your own organisation's website and through social media feeds. Once the release has gone out, it's vitally important people are primed to respond to any enquiries. A journalist who fails to get a quick response to an enquiry to a press release is unlikely to call again.







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