

Five Basic Types of Announcement Releases

Tips for generating news about your client organization

Personnel Announcements

News stories about people are the simplest and most common type of news release. These stories find ready outlets in “People in the News” columns of trade and business publications and local newspapers. Use news releases to announce hirings, promotions in rank, transfers, elections to professional offices, involvements in civic activities and retirements. Many of these announcements appear as one- or two-sentence items in columns or round-up stories. Nonetheless, they are valuable mentions of the employer organization, showcase the quality of the organization’s staff, and underscore the vitality of the organization.

- Personnel announcements can be simple and brief (as brief as 2-3 paragraphs) and should always focus on the *person* – not the organization or the official(s) making the announcement.
- Use the person’s professional name and exact title. Summarize his or her new duties and indicate the facility where the person will work. (For localized newspaper stories about new managers of local establishments, include the street address of the bank, branch office or store.)
- Include limited personal information relevant to the job: age (required by many business publications), experience, hometown where the person resides and college attended. (If the person graduated, indicate the degree earned and year; otherwise just say “attended...”). Exclude personal information about marital status, family, home address, hobbies, compensation or other personal information--*unless there is a reason to do so*.
- Compile information for the release by asking the individual to supply a current resume, to fill out a questionnaire created for this purpose, or to complete a brief interview. Always obtain approval of the release by the person prior to distribution. Some people might not wish to publicize their new job or whereabouts because of privacy concerns.
- Distribute personnel announcements to appropriate trade, professional and business publications. Also send copies to *hometown newspapers* in the community where the person resides, *college alumni publications* and any *other publications* the person might suggest or request.
- Most personnel announcements feature a single person. However, organizations can also announce multiple personnel changes in the same release.

Event Announcements

Organizations conduct meetings, seminars, clinics, health screenings, concerts, exhibitions, rallies and many other activities as part of their routine operations. Events taking place in a community represent legitimate news. Use news releases to encourage public participation as well as to create awareness of the organization and its mission. News releases can be used as *advance announcements* or *post-event reports* about an event.

- Pre-event announcement releases should be distributed to local media at least two weeks in advance. Allow a longer lead-time for national trade or business media. A typical pre-event announcement identifies the name of event, sponsor, date, start time, participants (dignitaries, speakers, entertainers, etc.), admission charge (if any), and information about how to register. Include a compelling explanation for why people should attend.

- Large regional or national events announced 2-4 months in advance are often promoted by issuing a series of supplemental announcements that contain additional important details not announced previously. If used judiciously, a series of carefully crafted supplemental announcements can serve as “teasers” to remind people about the event and/or reach people who might have missed earlier announcements.
- Issue a post-event release following an event. The release should be written in past tense and summarize what occurred -- key remarks, actions taken, winners of competitions, etc.
- Commercial or retail events (such as the opening or re-opening of a facility following remodeling) are more difficult to publicize than entertainment, educational, cultural, sports or fundraising events. Consider a strong news-generating angle or gimmick – invite a prominent personality, conduct an offbeat activity, or add a human-interest element that will attract attention. Feature these elements prominently in both pre- and post-event announcements.
- Releases about fundraising events should stress the societal benefits of the activity. Prominently feature name the name of the event and the benefiting organization, the need for support, the good works that the proceeds will make possible, and details about giving.

Speeches and Presentation Announcements

Speeches are a specific type of event that can be especially useful because the *speaker usually articulates key messages important to an organization or cause* in a legitimate news setting that is often held under the auspices of an outside organization (a professional society, civic organization or community club). Issue an advance news release to promote attendance at the speech, to raise awareness of an organization or cause among people not attending the talk, and to entice news media to attend. Use a speech summary release to recap the marks after presentation.

- Advance announcements about a speech should include the name, position and affiliation of the speaker, title or topic of the speech, venue/location, time, date, place, and information on admission (if applicable). A note at the end of the release should provide relevant information about how reporters can attend, obtain a transcript and/or interview the speaker. Be sure to mention the name of the organization sponsoring the speech – and include a telephone number or e-mail/web address where people can obtain more information or register.
- Post-speech releases should summarize key points of the remarks in the same way a reporter would cover the speech. Include the name, position and affiliation of the speaker, the venue and date. If desired, describe the nature and size of the audience. (No need to include details commonly included in an advance story, such as the title of the talk, venue or time.) Summarize the main idea in a hard-hitting lede and feature three-four provocative quotes from the speech. Provide background about the speaker and cause, as appropriate. Send the full transcript or selected excerpts to key media; offer the transcript or excerpts to others through a note at the bottom of the release.

Product Announcements

Manufacturers and retailers routinely issue news releases to announce new products and services. Although highly commercial in nature, product announcements about new products and services provide valuable material to editors and readers of many trade publications, hobby and special interest consumer magazines and product-related web sites and blogs. Product information is also of interest to syndicated columnists assigned to particular business or consumer product topics, and to editors of the “soft” sections of newspapers: food, fashion, travel, automotive and entertainment. Successful product announcements must provide *legitimate, factual news*--not advertising fluff.

- New product announcements can include *pre-announcements* about plans to market a product available (“soft launch”) or news releases announcing a product’s availability (“hard launch”).
- New product announcement releases vary in length depending on the complexity of the product. Focus on the new or unusual features and benefits of the product. Editors run new product stories based on facts about the *inherent qualities* of the product—not hype. Include the product’s name, a brief physical description, uses and benefits, manufacturer’s name and headquarters city, and the price (or price range). Furnish additional details, as appropriate: technical specifications; supplemental uses or applications; rollout or distribution plans; certifications, endorsements or recommendations from third parties; and background on the inventor or manufacturer.
- Following a successful product introduction, marketers often strive to issue a series of product-related news releases to generate a continuing flow of favorable news to sustain the product’s visibility. Examples of possible story topics: appointment of new distributors, contracts to sell the product through major retailers, availability in new regions of the country or world, endorsements or favorable recommendations by experts, and preliminary sales or performance figures.
- Trade publications often devote major stories to new products expected to reshape the marketplace. However, the trades also use product releases as part of round-up or trend stories and as new product briefs (compilations of product news in the “back-of-the-book”).
- Among consumer media, hobby and special interest publications publish straight product announcements as-is and in staff-written articles. Columnists who cover specific product categories for hobby or special interest publications often use product announcements to identify products to feature. Editors for magazines, syndicates or newspapers might choose interesting products to feature in their seasonal gift-giving guides or reviews of best products of the year.

Awards and Honors Announcements

Awards received and *awards presented* routinely generate positive media exposure. Awards received by a client organization are an implicit or explicit recommendation from a third-party organization. Awards bestowed by an organization on others – customers, distributors, sales staffs, employees, members, students — can be used to underscore values important to the organization (service, ingenuity, hard work, scholarship, etc.) and position the presenting organization as a leader in the field.

- Releases announcing awards received should focus on the award – including the exact name of the award, a brief description of the award’s purpose and the reason that the client was cited. Include the exact name, a brief description, and the headquarters city of the award’s presenter. Quote the presenting organization—not the client recipient. Avoid self-serving or trite quotes in response. As appropriate, explain the implications of the award for the organization and mention new activities in which the client is engaged that illustrate why the honor was won. (Where possible, ask the presenting organization to issue the release. Offer to review the release for accuracy and assist in the distribution of the release by supplying list of media and other people who receive the information. Alternatively, the PR representatives for the honored organization can simply forward the announcement to other after the release is issued.)
- When announcing the presentation of awards, always focus on the *recipients*, not the client presenting them. Cite the reasons each person or organization received the award. Stated accolades should be individualized and should resonate with people familiar with the recipients. Avoid inauthentic boilerplate. If multiple recipients are named, issue a wrap-up release. Then, if practicable, issue an individual release for each honoree and distribute it to appropriate trade, business, hometown and alumni publications. Key point: Organizations should bestow honors selectively—a flood of too many or too frequent awards will deplete an announcement’s impact.

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