

## Five More Types of Announcement Releases

### *Additional tips for generating news about your client organization*

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News releases are used most frequently to announce *personnel changes* and to promote *events, speeches and presentations, new products, and awards and honors*. Here are common five other types of announcements:

#### **Facilities Announcements**

Plans to open, remodel, relocate or close facilities generate news because facilities are important to organizations, their industries, their employees and their communities.

- New facilities can be publicized at each stage of development: announcement of plans, selection of an architect or design (if later), approval by regulatory officials (local zoning board, etc.), ground breaking, topping off (placing top girder on a tall structure), leasing arrangements, occupation of the facility, and the “official” grand opening. Separate releases at each step can sustain interest and keep important publics informed about the progress of the project. The larger the project, the more this type of phased publicity works.
- Key information of includes: name of project, street location, names of the owner and major tenants, timetable for construction and opening date, square footage, nature/purpose of facility, predominant architectural features, environmental friendly features, the number of people to occupy the facility, and cost. At different stages of construction, include the names of key people or firms involved in the project -- the architects, general contractors, key subcontractors, consultants, mechanical engineers, leasing agents, and managers of the facility.

#### **Marketing/Promotional Announcements**

Many marketers use news releases to build interest in their promotional activities. These efforts are extensions of basic product announcements and can include publicity about advertising campaigns, trade promotions, consumer contests/sweepstakes, and media coverage.

- Releases announcing advertising campaigns are usually directed to industry and advertising trade publications and columnists. Focus on the campaign itself – the creative elements (theme, slogan, celebrity spokespersons, etc.) as well as the strategy, media to be used, timing, and budget. Mention both the client and responsible agency or agencies, and personnel as appropriate.
- Trade promotions generate coverage by trade media because these are legitimate developments of interest to distributors, retailers and sales staffs. Examples range from new or temporary volume discounts to sales contests for distributors, retailers or sales staffs. Trade releases also are distributed to announce the availability of special merchandising displays, brochures and sales aids. Explain the name and nature of the promotion and describe the creative elements, purpose, rules, applicable dates, and incentives available to distributors and/or retailers.
- Consumer contest news often targets hobby and other special interest consumer publications and web sites that cater to enthusiasts with high levels of involvement in a particular product category. Established contests, such as Pillsbury’s Bake-Off, gain extensive consumer media attention. Contests are appealing because they encourage public participation, competition and the demonstration of skill. Releases announcing a contest should include the name and sponsor of the contest, content rules, criteria for winning, judging, eligibility restrictions (if any), entry fees, and prizes. After the contest, use releases to announce and profile winners, especially by

targeting announcements to hometowns. Note: Contests are generally more newsworthy (and easier to publicize) than sweepstakes, which merely involve chances to win a prize in a drawing. A notable exception is the when the sweepstakes prize is extraordinary.

- Use news releases to encourage key audiences to tune-in to TV appearances, interviews or news reports scheduled in advance. Include the name of the show, date and time of airing, network or channel, and briefly describe who will be interviewed and the topic. Brief news releases also can be issued to point out favorable coverage in a major national publication, web site or blog.

## **Research Announcements**

Announcements about research take two forms:

- *Organization-conducted* research stories are written by organizations about findings they have made. For example, a biogenetics firm might issue a news release revealing a breakthrough in curing the common cold. Similarly, a client might conduct a poll to ascertain public opinion about a current issue, then issue a release to report and comment on the results. Both types of announcements can enhance an organization's reputation and position as a leader in their field.
- *Organization-related research* involves research conducted by an outside organization about an organization's financial or operational performance or other activities. Examples include customer satisfaction surveys that compare companies, polls about the best place to work in America, or recommendations about companies in a particular industry by financial analysts. These kinds of independent evaluations are newsworthy and represent a valuable endorsement from a third party.
- Releases announcing an organization's own research should focus on the findings or discovery. Prominently feature the researcher or other organization personnel who are subject-matter experts. Explain the findings and their impact--especially for the public at large. Acknowledge any possible positive implications for the organization, but avoid self-praise or touting the organization in a way that might diminish the report's veracity or importance.
- Whenever possible, research news about an organization should be issued initially by the outside research organization that conducted the study. Thereafter, a client organization mentioned in the report can simply forward copies to potentially interested media outlets and other people. Sometimes, however, a client organization might wish to issue its own release – such as when organization-specific information was simply overshadowed by other findings in a study. Avoid distorting the findings; allow the findings in the report to speak for themselves. Always obtain prior approval from the outside research source before releasing your own announcement.
- Here are some general guidelines for news releases reporting research findings: Specify who conducted the research, the procedures used, the number of observations (phenomena observed or people interviewed), the research questions asked, and key statistical findings. Use easy-to-understand terms appropriate to the target audience for the release (general public, business leaders or technical experts). Be precise – don't play loose with facts or definitions of terms. Be sure that highlighted results highlighted are substantiated by the actual data. The language in the release should closely match the verbiage in the research report.

## **Sponsorship/Charitable Contribution Announcements**

With increasing frequency, organizations partner with community, educational, cultural and other non-profit organization as part of social responsibility/community outreach programs.

Organizations frequently want to use news releases to generate positive coverage related to sponsorships of programs or events, longer-term involvements with community organizations, or major gifts. However, with the explosion in these kinds of activities, media are highly discerning about covering announcements of this kind. Always strive to report legitimate news—don't merely engage in a thinly veiled image-building attempt. Generally, the greater the size of a gift (or the number of people involved or impacted by a contributed), the greater the media attention.

- Whenever possible, the *recipient*—not the donor—should announce a sponsorship or gift. Donors should avoid appearing to grab publicity. However, recipient organizations also have to be selective about the gifts they announce in order to avoid flooding the media. Donors should work with recipient organizations to review announcements prior to distribution and can assist in the distribution by providing lists of media personnel and others to receive the announcement.
- Releases by organizations announcing major gifts or financial contributions should focus on the *recipient* and the *purpose* for which the gift will be used—not themselves. Specify the amount and explain whether the gift will be presented now or over a specified period of time. Quote a spokesperson for the recipient organization who emphasizes how the funds will be used and how the organization or people will be helped. Quote the appropriate representative of the contributing organization, who should explain how the gift reflects the values of the organization and/or a commitment to some larger philosophy or cause.
- Whenever possible, releases for *events* also should be issued by or in the name of the benefiting organization. Event sponsors or contributors frequently provide assistance to maximize media coverage of charitable and other co-sponsored event. Releases for sponsored events should follow the same guidelines that apply to announcements for other events, but need to acknowledge all sponsoring organizations in keeping with any commitments made as part of the sponsorship agreement. Tip: Obtaining exclusive naming rights or limiting co-sponsors as part of the sponsorship arrangements can enhance the chances of sponsoring contributors obtaining significant publicity coverage.

### **Financial/Operational Performance Announcements**

Organizations of all kinds can generate valuable exposure by publishing routine information or trends data related to their financial performance or activities. Examples include product sales, contributions received, attendance at events, arrivals and departures, enrollments in programs, claims received, requests received for assistance, or traffic figures. Routine factual releases provide a good way for an organization to position itself as a transparent and reliable source of information.

- Private businesses tend to use this strategy guardedly because they are under no obligation to release proprietary data. Not-for-profit organizations (such as charities) attempt to be more transparent and can use trend data as a way to draw attention to their needs and contributions to the community. Government agencies generate lots of data are that they are legally required to make available to the public under Freedom of Information laws – so they routinely make the data available through news releases. Publicly traded companies (larger corporations that issue stocks, bonds and other forms of equities) are *required* by law to disclose specific material events and information and must do so using procedure that guarantee prompt and full disclosure.
- Releases reporting financial or performance data should be sparsely written, focus on the latest trends, provide precise figures and define unfamiliar terms clearly. Don't bury bad news – journalists will find it quickly. For financial releases and other public disclosures, the Securities and Exchange Commission emphasizes the importance of “plain English.” SEC guidelines suggest that the language in financial disclosures should be understandable to the average investor and use short sentences, personal pronouns, and active verbs.
- Financial releases often include short, easy-to-read tables at the end of the text that make it easy to supply a detailed data that can be compared to previous time periods (prior months, quarters, semi-annual periods or years). Consistency of reporting is important. Once an organization begins to release financial or performance data, it needs make comparable information available on an ongoing basis.