

8 Tips for Writing a Great Rotary Press Release

1. Grab attention with a good headline.

The beginning of a press release — just as with a magazine article, book or promotional pamphlet — is the most important. A strong headline (and, for that matter, email subject line when you send out the pitch) will pull in journalists seeking good stories. Your headline should be as engaging as it is accurate.

2. Get right to the point in the first paragraph.

Because reporters are busy people, you must assume that they will only read the first sentence and then scan the rest — and even that's a generous assumption. Get the message of your press release out quickly. Every important point should be addressed in the first few sentences. The subsequent paragraphs should be for supporting information.

3. Include hard numbers.

It's easy to fill up a page with a creative, colorful narrative. Leave the artistry to the writers — pack your press release with hard numbers that support the significance of your product or announcement. If you're claiming a trend, you need proof to back it up. Quantify your argument and it will become much more compelling.

4. Make it grammatically flawless.

Proofread your press release — and let a few other people proofread it as well — before sending it out. Even a single mistake can dissuade a reporter from taking you seriously.

5. Include quotes whenever possible.

There is a source of natural color that cannot be replicated: quotes. Including a good quote from someone in the company or close to the product/event can give a human element to the press release, as well as being a source of information.

6. Include your contact information.

A common oversight that can render a press release ineffectual is a lack of contact information for reporters to follow up with. Whether you or someone else at the company is the point of contact, don't forget to include an email address and phone number on the release (preferably at the top of the page).

7. One page is best — and two is the maximum.

As with most good writing, shorter is usually better. Limit yourself to one page, though two pages is acceptable. This will also force you to condense your most salient information into a more readable document — something journalists are always looking for.

8. Provide access to more information.

You must limit your press release to one page (or two, if you must), but that doesn't mean you can't show people how to learn more. Providing relevant links to your company's website, where prospective writers can learn more about your mission and what you've already accomplished, is a crucial element to the release. Don't make writers search on their own for more information — guide them as quickly as possible to your website, and keep their interest piqued.