



THE PRESS RELEASE FORMULA

**A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO
PRESS RELEASE SUCCESS**

[TIPSHEET]



INTRODUCTION



Writing a press release in the digital era can be a daunting and futile task for PRs who are constantly competing for space in the real-time news environment. Moreover, with the rise and rise of smartphones, journalists have access to information wherever they are, whenever they want, often making the traditional press release a text-heavy, wifi-dependent exercise.

But the good news is that, if done right, there is no better time than now for PRs to use a press release to break through the clutter and noise online and give journalists' perspective and validation that is so often lacking on digital platforms where just about anyone with internet access can be a publisher.

This white paper will show you how to get it right by breaking down the anatomy of a press release, giving you a step-by-step approach in understanding the key points every press release must address to ensure its success. This is followed by practical tips and advice from the PR Coach, Debbie Leven to make sure every section of your copy is pitch-perfect.



ANATOMY OF A PRESS RELEASE



DATE

For immediate release: Tuesday 23rd April 2016
Top Forbes Listings for Business Woman

NEWSY HEADLINE

Lilach Bullock, a member of Radlett & Bushey Reform Synagogue, is celebrating in style after being featured in two Forbes.com listings: The Top 20 Women Social Media Power Influencers 2013; and The Top 50 Social Media Influencers 2013. The annual listings were compiled after assessing which social media experts have the strongest and most active followings, highlighting the real power influencers.

2nd Paragraph:

Forbes.com is the website for Forbes, the well-known American business magazine which features articles on finance, industry, investing and marketing topics as well as related subjects. It is known for regularly featuring lists, including those of powerful and influential people.

Background Information

3rd Paragraph:

Speaking about the achievement, Lilach Bullock, said: "Forbes is a huge name and I'm absolutely delighted, and honoured, to be in such good company on these lists. I help businesses open up the social media opportunities available to them and that work is incredibly rewarding but it's great too to receive such prominent recognition. Social media can feel daunting, and overwhelming too, but you have to keep at it and that is exactly what I have done."

Quote

Contact information

Lilach Bullock runs Socialable, a social media consultancy based in London, which helps businesses plan, and execute, social media strategies to generate profile, build connections and drive website traffic.

Additional information

Ends
For more information, please contact: Debbie Leven 07918 680051 (mobile)
debbie@prcoach.co.uk

Notes to editors:

1. Lilach Bullock has profile on a number of social media channels, including:
Twitter: @lilachbullock

PUBLISH NOW

1st Paragraph:

**WHO
WHAT
WHERE
WHEN
WHY
HOW**

4th Paragraph:

Wrap it up!

SIGNAL END

THE HEADLINE



THE HOOK

Your headline is absolutely key. It is the first thing you use to hook your journalist in. If the headline fails to grab the attention of the journalist, chances are your press release is binned right there. The news you are sharing may be exciting to your brand but for the journalist it has to be news worthy and that needs to be conveyed in the headline.

OBJECTIVE

Before writing the headline, try and understand what the objective of the press release is and understand who it is that you are actually targeting.

CHOICE OF WORDS

Chances are that the words you use in the headline will be changed when it appears in print, but choose words/ phrases that journalists in your particular industry often use in similar stories. Understand the difference between conveying information and making news – ask yourself what’s new and different about this headline. If it reads as news, it will make news. Avoid corporate jargon and brand flattery – it’s a no-no. Journalists want stories that are of human interest, something new, and something big – they should want to be the one to report it first.

PARAGRAPHS

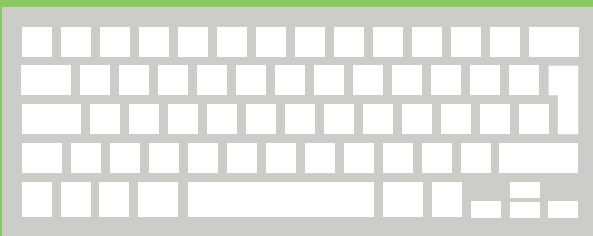


Editors and journalists spend between 3-5 seconds on a press release before deciding whether it makes news or not. It is crucial that all the information is presented in the very first paragraph.

Think of a press release as an inverted pyramid with all the news on the top and additional facts and quotes to support it as it narrows down.

Each paragraph should not exceed four to five sentences and each sentence should be approximately 20 words. The tone should be informative, factual. Cut out the fluff – your news loses credibility with exaggeration of facts.

INVERTED PYRAMID MODEL



Editors edit from the bottom of a press release upwards! So make sure you have the who, what, where, when and how answered in the very first paragraph. The first paragraph should communicate the news and capture the entire essence of the story.

Build on the information that you have provided in the first paragraph with more detail. Flesh out what the press release is all about and provide that background information and build on the story. Don't lose sight of the news element but push the company name up as high as possible, without it coming across as a plug.

The third paragraph should usually provide a quote. It's a good way to reinstate the company name. Make sure the quote adds value to the news you are communicating. Company quotes that just repeat what the release is saying are often disregarded. If you want to get the company's name published, the quote should provide additional information and insight that complements the story.

PRs should aim to wrap up the story by the fourth paragraph. It should include forward looking facts on what this news means to the company or industry at large. Information on other products and services or future plans can also be included



TOP TIP

Editors edit from the bottom of the press release upwards.

ENDING THE PRESS RELEASE

A vertical stack of five yellow circles of varying sizes. The top circle is the smallest, followed by a medium-sized circle, then a large circle containing the text "CONTACT INFORMATION", then another medium-sized circle, and finally the largest circle at the bottom containing the text "NOTES TO EDITORS".

ENDS

You have to signal to the journalist that your press release has come to an end. You need the word **Ends** in bold where the story finishes but before the contact information.

CONTACT INFORMATION

You need to provide journalists with an opportunity to contact you. You can have social media channels, but you need a telephone number and an email address to make it as easy as possible for journalists to follow up on the story with you. You want the press release to give journalists a taster of the story – a shout out about the news that's there. But the contact information gives you a better chance to take the story further.

NOTES TO EDITORS

This section should have any additional information that you can provide about the company and what it does, its products and services. If you've referenced any research or made any claims in the survey then you need to signal to journalists where that information was sourced. You can also put social media information in there so journalists can do their own research on the company profile and social influence.

DOS AND DON'T'S WITH PR COACH DEBBIE LEVEN



Should we attach photos to press releases?

If you've had success with attaching images then great but go with the rule of not attaching anything as you could risk putting someone off and what you don't want to do is damage your relationship rather than enhance it. The way around it is call up the journalist and ask them if they would be happy with images and find out specifically what they want. If they want low-res just to check out what the image is, then you can send it to them and it is a much more productive way of building a relationship than to go with the assumption because that assumption can damage the relationship and just put the journalist off.

Should you include web links in the text of a press release?

Web links are great but you have to make sure you're providing information to the journalist and making the story as accessible to them as possible. You must get the balance right - recent changes to the way search engines work means Google doesn't look kindly on blatant plugs and link building. Keep in mind that the journalist is your key audience and understand what is helpful for them.

What should you put in the subject title of an email with a press release?

The subject line should be as attention grabbing as possible so that it will make them stop and read. Put News Story; before the title which makes them know what is actually in their inbox and helps to flag up the news relevance.

Does the inverted pyramid model work for features too?

Pitching a feature story is a whole different kind of beast which has to be very very targeted. For features, what you're typically doing is pitching to individual journalists directly, introducing yourself and presenting a theme or an idea for an article and positioning it in a way that communicated how you can actually help them.

You might in your email start by referencing something they've already run that was interesting and then suggest your idea for a feature article, outlining why it is relevant to their audience. You could outline how you propose to contribute to that feature article. That may well include examples, case studies, research, comment etc.

Unlike news stories you can't go out with the same pitch to several journalists. It is targeting specific journalists unless you get a yes or a no.

DOS AND DON'T'S WITH PR COACH DEBBIE LEVEN



Should PRs follow up on a press release with a call?

When you follow up with a call and don't really know the journalist, it's tough to get through to them because sometimes they don't want to be bothered with a call, they're not at their desk, they're on deadline etc. It really depends on the press and media that you are actually targeting.

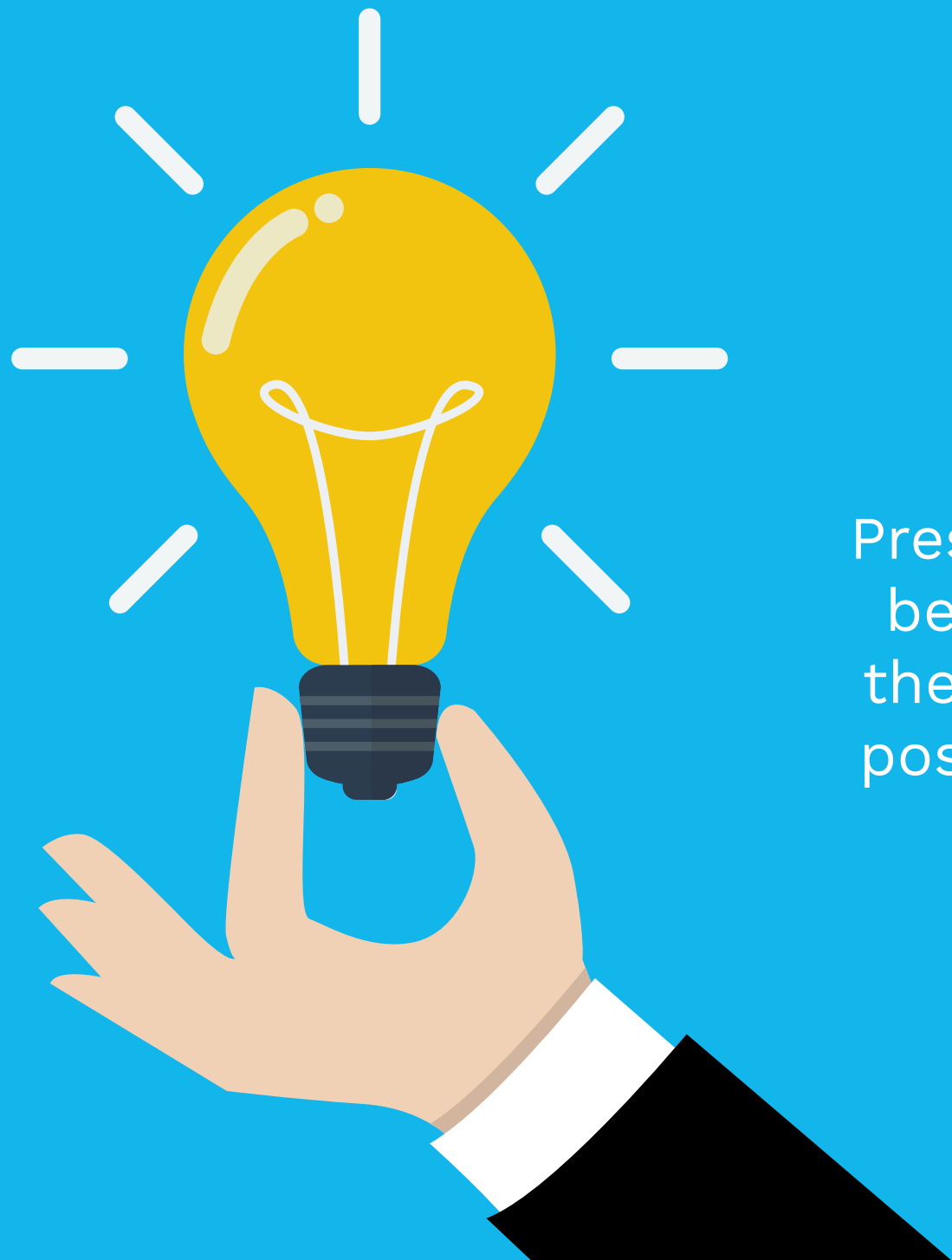
One thing you can do is contact the journalist in advance of sending the press release. That could mean following them on social media, engaging them there, getting on their radar, building an offline relationship with them so there is a better chance that when that email lands in their inbox they actually open it. And if you've made that connection before hand, you're able to gauge if that follow up call is relevant and useful. If you follow up with a call you have to do so with something additional to offer them, If you call up and say I've sent you a press release but I can also offer case-studies or pictures and I just wanted to check if that is useful to you then you're providing additional value for them. That's the approach to use because you're trying to be helpful to them rather than just chasing and nagging.

PRs have got a number of people to send their news release to so it's not always practical to be in touch with every single journalist on the list on a personal level. One of the things you want to avoid at any cost is follow up and say 'have you got my press release?'

PRs don't have time to tailor each press release. Should they target their most 'likely' contact for publication or send an identical release to several publications?

In terms of writing tailored releases, you should have one core release and what maybe change the title and something that is relevant in the first paragraph - not a huge rewrite and a completely different press release. If you haven't got time to do that and it's just one release then you go for what's most relevant and what fits with your overarching objectives. There's always a tendency to want to get the news out to as many people as possible but a more targeted approach is always better.





TOP TIP

Press releases should always be **pasted** into the body of the email to make it easy as possible for the journalist to **see** the story.

DOS AND DON'T'S WITH PR COACH DEBBIE LEVEN



How does one write an attention grabbing press release with good news that gets published. Journalists seem to only want 'bad news' stories.

'Bad news' is something that journalists will focus on but there are lots of other things they are interested in. You really have to get inside how the media think. They want human interest stories but there are other 'ingredients' of a news story they are interested in too - trends, research, new products/services, milestones, collaborations are just some to think about. It may be that you need to look at a range of ways to get profiled in the press and media and not just rely on press releases. For example, 'expert' articles where you can share your knowledge, expertise and insight.

Do press release styles differ between B2B and B2C formats?

The nuts and bolts of the press release will be the same in terms of answering the key questions who, what, why, where, when, and how? But the target groups and their motivations around buying are different and that is what needs to be reflected in a press release – businesses want products and services that save money and improve efficiency while consumer motives are more emotion based. Likewise, where those two groups go to get their information and their influencers will differ (consumers are more likely to go to friends, family etc while business buyers will look at comment and insight from industry experts, colleagues, peers).

Should the press release be copied into the body of an email? If so, should you introduce it with a normal email format above?

Press releases should always be pasted into the body of the email to make it as easy as possible for the journalist to see the story. It's a good idea to personalise your email by adding one or two lines before the pasted text to outline the story in a nutshell and give the contact details too.

Should we bother with logos?

Avoid logos because that just increases the memory of messages and clogs up email inboxes. Focus on what journalists want and how to make their jobs as easy as possible. Clients like logos because they feel it's an important part of getting their branding message across. But, journalists won't print the logos, they are interested in the news story not the logo (unless the logo itself is the story).

DOS AND DONT'S WITH PR COACH DEBBIE LEVEN



Is there an optimal time to send out a press release?

The timing is going to depend on the press and media you are targeting. The best way to pin this down is to do some research to find out the relevant deadlines. As an example, many local newspapers have a Tuesday deadline for Thursday publication. Sending it on a Tuesday is not so good because the editorial team will be putting the current publication 'to bed'.

How do you find most relevant journalists for your business?

There are many ways you can do this – using a media contacts database (such as Vuelio!), searching on Twitter and searching online are just three ways. In reality, it's best to do a combination.



Should we include social media info in the contacts section?

Stick with telephone number and email address for contact information. You don't need to give so many choices – the aim of the press release is to get the journalist interested enough to want to find out more. And, the best way for them to find out more is to contact you directly via telephone or email.

Is it a good idea to tweet press releases?

There is no reason why not to but you need to tailor your tweet so that it works for Twitter rather than just being the title of the press release. Remember, the press release is a tool to get your news to journalists in a format that makes it easy for them. Your tweet will probably need a different tone and style. You must also get your timing right so that the exclusivity of the news still appeals to the media. A journalist is less likely to cover a story that is already making the rounds on social media. You may want to feature your news story on your website in a way that is more suited to visitors to tweet that.

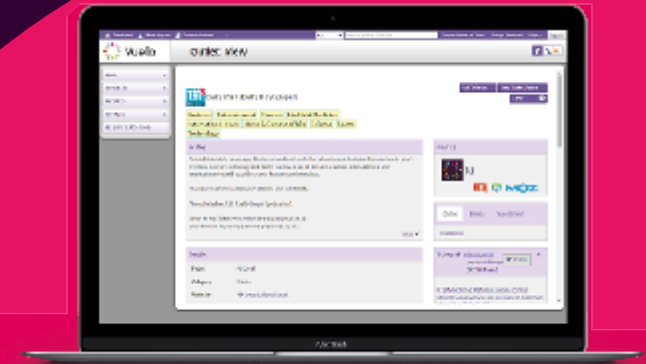
Reviewing PR software?

THE LARGEST DATABASE OF MEDIA CONTACTS

A good story is only half the PR challenge. The other 50%? Getting your brand heard. But if you have the story we have the platform to help you tell it.

WITH VUELIO'S #1 MEDIA DATABASE YOU WILL GET:

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- A comprehensive guide to both traditional and emerging media
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