

**The press release is dead  
long live the press release**





# How to achieve success with your press releases

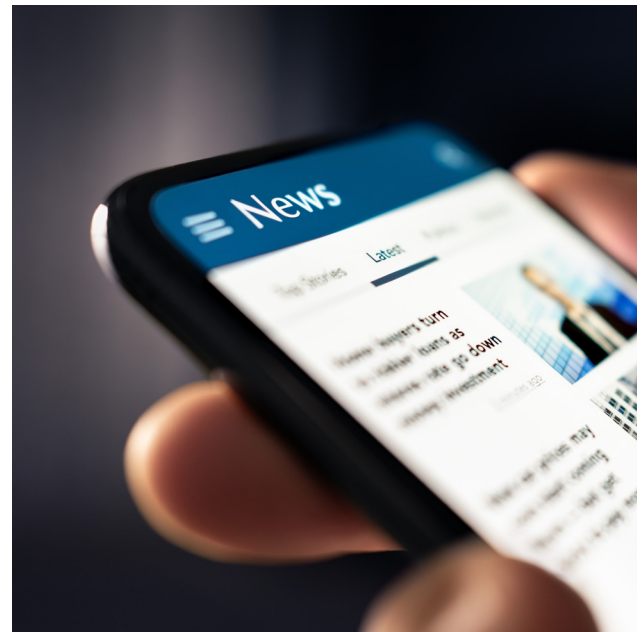
The press release has long been the bedrock of organisations' PR activities.

As the name suggests, a press release is typically a written statement that an organisation issues to the press or media, usually announcing some sort of news.

Whether it's the hiring or promotion of a new senior figure within the organisation, raising investment, winning a new high-profile client or launching a new product or service, the press release has long been the go-to method for how this news is communicated. But should this be the case?

Should you still rely on press releases to shout about your news, or have they become obsolete in the age of digital PR, social media and evolving demands from journalists and their audiences?

Some would answer an emphatic 'no!' to that question. There are plenty of press release naysayers in the public relations sector – those who would argue that this is an old-fashioned, lazy or ineffective way to get your news out there.



However, we should not be too quick to dismiss the enduring importance of a good press release. At City Road Comms, we generate meaningful media coverage for our clients every week using the old, trusty press release.

Done correctly, with the right expectations and as part of a coherent communications plan, and the press release still has a key role to play in organisations getting their brands, and their latest news, seen by the people that matter. Here's how to use them successfully...



# 1. Save press releases for news that matters

First things first – if a press release is going to work (generate media coverage for your brand), it needs to be newsworthy.

Journalists are not interested in the fact an organisation has bought a new coffee machine, won an award, attended an event or updated the colour scheme on their website. The press release has to share information that is relevant, interesting or noteworthy.

Now, if you are a FTSE100, your announcements are more likely to be tick those boxes – the brand is better known, they have more employees and partners, and they have public investors. If a big company, say, chooses to mandate five days a week in the office, or launches a new customer-facing, AI-powered piece of technology, then it is likely to garner media interest in a way that a startup wouldn't if it did the same thing.

So, understand the opportunities and limitations you have with your press releases. Read relevant media outlets to see what sorts of news is shared. Be humble enough to accept that some news is better saved for your communication platforms – your social media, newsletter or blog, for instance – and use press releases sparingly when you have something that is genuinely worth shouting about.

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## 2. Press releases have to be well written

It sounds obvious, but press releases need to be well written. But as any journalist will tell you, it is staggering how many press releases are poorly put together.

Press releases are not pieces of marketing material. It is PR, and ultimately it should be a piece of news.

So, as a rule of thumb, the best press releases are written like news stories, with the key information – who, what, when, where and why – clearly set out. The language should be direct, free from adjectives and hyperbole. And the announcement should be concise; you can always provide contextual or additional information in the 'notes' section underneath your press release.

Journalists do not want to trawl through a three-page document to filter out the pertinent information. Nor do they want an organisation waxing lyrical about their new **'innovative, disruptive, next-generation mobile app'**.

Making sure the copy in your press release is to the point, grammatically correct and well written will make journalists' lives easier, in turn improving your chances that it gets read and, hopefully, translates into media coverage.





### 3. Target the right journalists at the right time

Ok, so you have a newsworthy announcement and it is detailed in a well-written press release. The next step is to make sure it goes to the right journalists.

In truth, this is a simple, fundamental part of any media relations campaigns. Even the best story is wasted if it's not arriving in the right inboxes.

Taking the time to build a great 'media list' (the list of journalists or outlets you want to share a pitch or press release with) is essential. And it does take time.

Once you have the right list of names, take time to share your press release with each one in turn, personalising your emails accordingly – not just changing the name, but perhaps offering additional context or pushing a different angle each time, making sure it piques that person's interest.

Timing is the next consideration. It is unwise to share a press release on a Friday afternoon, unless it is under embargo until the following week. Generally, it is best to share a press release early in the morning

so journalists can – if it is of interest to them – add it to their list of news stories for the day. Alternatively, sharing a press release a day or two in advance, placing it under embargo, can give the journalist enough time to assess the story and write up their piece ready for publication once the embargo is lifted.

**There is no set rule. Over time, you will come to understand how different publications and journalists like to function – when they want to receive press releases and whether using embargoes is effective. Then you can tailor the distribution of your press releases accordingly.**

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### 4. Make sure you have everything required to make the story work

A press release alone might not be enough for a journalist to cover your news. Make sure you include photos relevant to the announcement – that might be a photo of a person quoted within the press release, or an image that relates to the story at hand.

If a press release relates to a brand-new report based on some research an organisation has commissioned or carried out, then make sure that report (and perhaps the raw data in question) is attached or linked to.

At the bottom of a press release should be a 'notes to editors' section. This will include information about the organisations referenced in the announcement, as well as any other supplementary information that might be useful.

**Journalists are busy. They do not want to enter into an email exchange to ask for extra information, images or documents. Providing it all alongside the press release will improve your chances of success.**



## 5. Be sure to follow-up, but not too much

Again, journalists are busy. They might miss your original email, so there is no harm in sending a polite follow-up, either later that day or the next day.

At a push, you might follow-up a second time – but only if you can be absolutely sure that your press release is something that they would typically be interested in covering (based on their news output or previous exchanges you have had with them).

But don't pester. After two or three emails, if a journalist has not replied or covered your press release, it is safe to assume it is not of interest to them.

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## 6. Don't rely solely on your press release

Crucial final point: creating a great press release and sending it to the right people should be just one element of your comms plan.

If your organisation has important news to share – important enough to write up a press release and distribute it to media outlets – then it is important to develop an integrated communications strategy.

What does that mean? It means joining up various PR and comms activities to make sure your message is heard.

**Let's take a simple example: your business has just raised £5 million. How do you effectively shout about this news in a way that will reflect favourably on your brand?**



Communications is most effective when executed consistently, across multiple platforms and with a clear timeline in place. Merely sending out a press release on any given day will not be enough – instead, see a press release as a useful function within your comms strategy, whether that is for one particular piece of news, or indeed as an ongoing approach to building your brand.

If you need help getting your brand seen by the right people, cutting through the noise to get your message in the media, or managing your reputation with a well thought out PR and comms strategy, speak to City Road Comms.



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