



## Press Release is a 4-Letter Word

### *The Good, The Bad and The Money Involved in Issuing Mass Distributed News*

**press release:** noun. An announcement of a *newsworthy* item that is issued to the press.

**The Bad News:** You've probably been told one sure way to spread the news and gain media interest in your company is through issuing a Press Release. In fact, there are several "Do It Yourself" PR books that recommend this clichéd tactic. 'Press Release' is usually a set of words that make Three Girls' cringe. It means companies are taking an old-fashioned, or uneducated, press approach that's often inappropriate, ineffective and a waste of marketing dollars. When we say Press Release is a 4-Letter Word, we mean that it *should* represent real **N-E-W-S!** Unfortunately, that's rarely the case.

Why do so many companies make the mistake of issuing Press Releases at the drop of a hat? Many let ego get in the way. They're so excited by the changes or achievements in their company that they assume the rest of the city, state or country will want to know about it. Others simply take the advice of misguided "Do It Yourself" PR books. Sadly, some are unwittingly duped by PR Agencies or Consultants who issue Press Releases simply to make it look like they're doing something productive; or worse, don't know any better.

There are plenty of examples of Press Releases gone wrong. The announcements are so commonly misused, in 2006 two fed-up members of the media started a blog to complain. The Bad Pitch Blog takes pleasure in posting media pitches and press releases that are an embarrassment to the PR Industry.

Does America need to know that in one state, a "*Youthful Hobby Turns into Bustling Jewelry Business?*" for two relatives who sell their average creations online? Yes, according a nationally distributed Press Release spotted recently. Unless the business is Tiffany or Cartier, the answer is definitely no; even then, the news is iffy. Will media outlets in the state of Texas carry the news from the small town of Humble: a "*New Generation to Take the Helm at [Shaw] Store?*" Not a chance. It's yet another inept example of a Release that wasn't newsworthy, or of interest to anyone but immediate friends and family.

Three Girls Media & Marketing Inc., a boutique PR firm in Silicon Valley specializing in Media Relations, rarely uses formal Press Releases to communicate with reporters. Instead, we believe in leveraging publicist's personal relationships, and contacting individual reporters and editors they feel

will be most interested in your business. The method has proven immensely effective and is a more strategic approach to securing press.

**The Good News:** There *are* times when companies have an important message worthy of a Press Release, or its sister notice, the Media Advisory (a release specifically formatted for events). It's determining which stories should be shared with the mass public, and which should be celebrated with friends and co-workers, that can be tricky.

Three Girls CEO, Erika Taylor, who had a 10-year award-winning career as a journalist, TV and radio host prior to her transition into Public Relations, advises Press Releases distributed through wire services meet three specific criteria:

**1. Press Releases should announce NEWS of interest to a large population and geographic area.** In order for a public announcement to be warranted, and effective, it should appeal to a *wide* audience. If you randomly surveyed 1000 people, how many of them would legitimately be interested in what your Release has to say? If your answer isn't at least 800, rethink issuing your announcement – fast. Other marketing options such as e-newsletters, a company blog or direct mail piece may be a better fit for your 'news.'

**2. Press Releases should be hard NEWS – just the facts please!** Releases aren't meant to be rambling feature stories. Designed for the media, the headline and first paragraph should sum up, in a nutshell, the most important points and *facts* of the story. Supporting paragraphs should provide the 5 W's the media looks for: Who, What, When, Where, Why & How. Leave the cute analogies and fluff aside. If the information doesn't directly support the primary facts in the first paragraph, leave it out.

**3. Follow Proper AP Style Book Formatting** –A properly written Release should follow Associated Press (AP) principals. Releases are *for the media*, and should follow the format the press has dictated for them. You wouldn't show up at a 'jackets required' restaurant in a sweatshirt; don't send a press release in the wrong format! Known as the 'Journalists Bible,' the AP Style Book sets specific standards for everything from font size to headlines. As a general rule of thumb, releases should be no more than one page in length. Find AP Guidelines online at [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com).

**The Money:** Considering a well written and timed announcement could garner widespread coverage in national media outlets, the costs of sending Press Releases over the wires are nominal. Major distributors such as MarketWire and PR Web have extremely competitive fees and services. Releasing news in one regional metro area can cost as little as \$115, and national distribution with add-ons like photos and RSS Feeds can run up to \$1,000\*.

Now that you'll be able to more easily determine when a Press Release is right for your business, your marketing can be more strategic and productive. You won't waste time, or money, on writing and distributing a release that's inappropriate and ineffective.

Three Girls' includes the writing and email circulation of Press Releases in the standard fees for our All-Inclusive, Nationwide Media Campaigns, and clients are invoiced only for the actual distribution on wire services. When it's time for a formal Press Release, Three Girls will ***Spread the Good News About You*** as far and wide as possible!

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\*See Attached Fee Schedule for specific press release distribution costs.