



MARKETING ON TAP

**THE MARKETING
SOCIETY**

SCOTLAND

TOP 10 TIPS: WRITING PRESS RELEASES

If you've got a great story about your brand or business and want to share it with media, the easiest way to do that is with a well-written press release. But if you're new to this, or just need a little refresher on how to do it best, here's a 10-step guide to help you write press releases to get you noticed.

1. Who are you writing for?

Before you even start, think about who you are writing this release for - is it a local paper, a trade magazine, national press or are you trying to attract local radio to pay a visit? Each media title has a different style and while there's a temptation to write things your way, if you can reflect their style, you'll have a better chance of engaging the journalist and appealing to their readers and listeners. Think about how your story would be covered by The Scottish Sun, and how the same story would be written up in The Herald and you get the idea.

2. Why is this interesting?

We know everything about your business is interesting and important to you, but what makes this stand out to the man in the street and why is it important to others? Are you creating jobs, are you launching something new and truly unique, is this innovative, is someone famous involved, or is it a first for Scotland / your town / the industry? Whatever makes it stand out as different is your news hook, and it's the point and purpose of the story so you need to make that clear from the start.

3. What's the story in one line? Now make that the headline!

Think about that news hook, now strip everything away and tell me the core facts of the story in one sentence. If you can do that in 10 words or less, you've probably got your headline! Journalists are busy and you need to be able to get the story over quickly and easily. The headline needs to grab attention (without being ridiculous) and make the journalist want to read on and find out more.

4. Who, What, Why, When, Where?

Once you've got your headline, now explain the story again including the 5 W's - who, what, why, when, where - in the first, opening paragraph, ideally across two sentences. For example: A HOTEL in Edinburgh, officially opens its doors this week (Monday 12 July) and to celebrate is launching One

Night Stand-Up, offering free hotel rooms to Edinburgh Festival Fringe performers throughout the festival.

5. Now build on it

Over the next couple of paragraphs, you can put a bit more meat on the bone, expanding the story to give more details. Here you might want to explain aims and objectives, how things will work, how a concept or idea evolved or what you hope to achieve. Here's how that looks with a short example below:

The 276-room property will offer 10 complimentary rooms per night, with a total of 240 throughout August. A HOTEL will give both up-and-coming and established Fringe performers looking for much needed accommodation, the chance to enjoy a night in Edinburgh's newest and smartest hotel.

The initiative invites accredited Fringe performers to take part in a series of open-mic sessions, from 12 noon – 1pm each day for the entire Festival (2 – 26 August), for a chance to win a free night's accommodation.

Those who receive the best reception from hotel guests will be rewarded with a complimentary stay that night in A HOTEL, becoming some of the first guests to stay in the new venue.

Once you have explained the story, you can now think about including a quote from a key spokesperson....

6. Be interesting – media hates bland

When you're thinking about a quote, be bold, media hates bland. You don't need to go crazy but think about what you would really say. The phrase 'We're delighted to...' should be banned in all releases. Instead think about how you can get your personality over, or what the key issue is and start with that.

Instead of saying 'we're delighted to be doing X', it's far more interesting to say something like 'We saw a gap in the market and decided to....' or 'Pubgoers in Scotland have been crying out for....' or 'We hated the lack of choice, so we decided to...'

Whatever it is have some fun with the quote but don't go OTT or be sensationalist for the sake of it!

7. Plain English and facts only please

A good press release is simple and easy to understand. Even if you're tackling a difficult topic, talk in lay terms and use short, easy to read sentences. Don't use jargon if you can avoid it, and don't be overly wordy – keep it short and snappy. Try to avoid gilding the lily with terms like 'incredible', 'amazing', 'fantastic' too as these will usually be cut by media. Stick to the facts – no speculation or assumptions. If you use data or statistics, reference it.

8. Stick to one page and check spelling & grammar

Ideally a press release should fit on one page of A4, so try to keep things simple, factual and concise. ALWAYS do a spell check and if you can, get someone else to proof it for you too – a second pair of eyes can spot mistakes you just can't see any more.

9. Notes to Editors – Key points about you

When you've finished writing the release, there may be some information about you / your business that would be handy for the media to know – when you were established, number of outlets, awards or industry recognition, vision and purpose etc. You can drop this in at the end of the release in a short bullet list under a 'Notes to Editors' subheading.

10. Don't forget contact details

Finally, make sure put your details at the end of the release – mobile and email to make sure the journalist can get back in touch if they want to know more, have questions or want to set up an interview with you.

