

The Ultimate Guide to Online Press Releases Today ... For Small Businesses



by the Editors of
Small Business Trends

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Introduction

If you search the Google News page, you'll find articles on a wide variety of news topics: from politics to new products for sale. Many of these news blurbs come from press releases. A **press release** is a formatted piece of communication designed to share news with the media.

You might find a press release (also called a news release) published on a press release distribution website like [PRWeb](#), shared on a blog or news site like Small Business Trends, or you might get the gist of the press release from a blog post or article where the journalist used the press release as a resource when writing.

History of the Press Release

The birth of modern public relations is said to date back to the early 20th century. Ivy Ledbetter Lee, one of the early public relations professionals in the United States, created the first press release in 1906 following a train wreck in Atlantic City. His philosophy was that his client, the railroad, had a responsibility to provide information to the media and the public.

For most of its history, the primary purpose of the release was to inform journalists and editors at newspapers, magazine and other outlets. The goal: get the media outlet to write a story about your company.

The press release went unchanged for about 100 years. Companies' PR reps (or secretaries, or whoever was in charge of writing them) would type out the release on a typewriter and send it -- by snail mail -- to any publication they hoped would cover their news.

Today: The Power of Taking Your News Direct to the Public

Fast forward to today. Businesses now publish their press releases directly online -- instead of going only through journalists and the media.

Press releases today typically are published on the business's own website. But the real leverage -- the power! -- comes through sending out your news through press release distribution services. Such services in turn make sure your news gets distributed widely.

Yes, you may still want to send press releases to selected journalists and editors, especially those in your local area or in your industry. When this technique pays off, it can pay off big.

However, convincing a journalist to write a story about your company is a long shot for most small businesses.

For instance, here at *Small Business Trends*, we will occasionally write a story based on a press release emailed to our editorial team. But we receive literally hundreds of releases every week - hundreds! No way could we write stories for each piece of news. All media outlets are in the same boat. Even huge publications like the Wall Street Journal have limits on the number of stories they can produce. They simply don't have the resources to cover all the news.

As a result, most small businesses are learning the advantages of publicizing their news directly to the world using the Web. Getting your press release into search engines gets you visibility.

Think about that. Your business is no longer at the mercy of a too-busy journalist or editor which doesn't have time to even read your press release, let alone write a story.

Today, by putting your press release online directly, visibility is within YOUR control. That is a powerful thing!

By going directly online with your news, you ensure that your news will get wide online exposure.

And that's why the press release distribution services are such valuable tools today. Simply put: they help you spread your news around widely.

When your press release does get "covered" in a media outlet today, quite often it is simply republished as a straight press release -- not used as material for a journalist to write a story. It gets published automatically. Why? Because you've used a press release distribution service. The distribution service syndicates your release via technology. We will be talking more about these distribution services, later on in this ebook.

But Why Does My Small Business Need Press Releases?

If you're reading this guide, you're trying to determine whether creating press releases is something you need to do to get more business. You do. Combined with a solid marketing strategy, press releases can introduce more customers to your business, drive traffic to your website, lead to blogs covering your business, and yes, sometimes result in that big win when a journalist writes about your company in a major media outlet.

Now, if you or your boss are expecting your press releases to help you get on the cover of the Wall Street Journal, the truth is they probably won't.

So it's best to set your goals more realistically. Look at the broader picture of what press releases can do directly -- and indirectly -- for your business.

What should your goals be?

Increasing awareness of your brand is another reasonable goal for your PR strategy. With every media channel your brand gets mentioned in, with every blog you're covered on, more people will discover your company.

Small businesses tend to spend less on marketing and PR than larger corporations, so press releases fit in with smaller budgets, especially if you write and distribute them yourself.

Setting Your Goals

Let's get back to those goals. It's important that you define what you hope to achieve with your press release strategy. Your goals may be different than any other small business'. You may want:

- To be found online more easily by those searching.
- Reinforced brand awareness, through increased brand references and citations online that press releases help create.
- Coverage by local, national and industry media who directly receive your press release and decide to write an article based on it.
- Coverage by media, including blogs, that results indirectly because they found references to your business online because your press releases have percolated throughout the Web.

Take time to assess what's important to you, as well as what's reasonable. Simply identifying your goals can make them easier to meet, as well as make it simple to assess whether your strategy is working after several months.

Worksheet: My PR Strategy Goals

My goals for writing press releases include:

I would like my online press releases to generate ___ more new visitors to our website a month.

I would like my PR efforts to increase sales by ___% within ___ months.

Part 1: How to Write a Press Release

The secret that PR consultants don't want you to know is how easy it is to write a press release. Once you become familiar with the format, they're a breeze!

Start with what you learned in grammar school:

- **Who** is the news about?
- **What** is the news?
- **When** will it/did it occur?
- **Where** will it/did it occur?
- **Why** is it important to readers?
- **How** can people learn more?

Worksheet: Topic Ideas

Stumped for a press release topic? Here's a list of ideas to get your creative juices churning.

- Launch of new company
- New contract with a new client
- Commencement or completion of a project (popular for construction companies)
- Participation in community event
- Being quoted in a book or article
- Being interviewed
- Winning an award
- Event: webinar, presentation or speaking engagement
- New product launch
- Promotion or sale
- Company's participation in a holiday (this [site](#) gives you ideas on weird ones like Cereal Day)
- Partnerships with other companies
- Acquisitions or mergers of your company
- Receiving an award, or being nominated for one

What About Newsjacking? Should You Do It?

If you don't have news of your own, consider looking at breaking news and how your company ties in. Commonly called **newsjacking**, this is a way of getting a bit more press thanks to the high visibility of the news topic.

David Meerman Scott calls it "owning the second paragraph." The initial news is the first paragraph. An epidemic of mad cow disease is reported, for example. But you have the unique opportunity to create a slant or new story with your own input. Maybe you've launched a proven line of mad cow disease-free meats. That's your own tie-in to breaking news.

Press Release Templates

Remember that format I mentioned? This is what it looks like:

Title

Subtitle

Summary 2-3 sentences: overview of the news.

City, State -- Date -- Introduction paragraph. Include all the who, what, when, where, why and how here. If they read no further, this paragraph should give readers an idea of your news.

2-3 paragraphs supporting intro.

"Include a quote by someone involved in the news," said Company X President Ted Wolff, "Aim for a quote that adds spice and interest."

For more information, include event details, company website, etc. here.

About Company

Here, insert your boilerplate.

Contact

Person in charge of news or PR person's name

Phone number

Email

Website

For examples of real press releases, see Appendix A.

The Importance of a Good Title

Like so many things, press releases are often judged by their titles. If they're too boring, people won't click the link to read more. But if they're well-written and intriguing, you'll get more readers, and then more visitors to your website.

The key to a good title is simplicity. Say what the release is about, then be done with it. Avoid overinflated language and keep it casual. Here are more [tips](#):

- Keep the title short; if it's 23 words or less, it won't get cut off in Google News or other channels.
- Use everyday language.
- Avoid the word "announces" if you can help it. It's overused.
- If you're writing about a product, focus on its benefits.
- Keep it newsy, rather than opinionated.
- Lists (10 Reasons, Top 5 List) get higher clickthroughs.

Looking at PRNewswire, here are a few of the better headings I found:

For Two-thirds of Business Travelers, Work Trips Can Turn Into Guilt Trips Finds Best Western

Put Your Tax Refund to Work for Your Future
MIPIM 2012 Features Asia as a Growth Market for Real Estate
Every Dog has its Day

Each of these is intriguing enough that you want to click on it (what's "Every Dog has its Day" about, I wonder?) and reading the titles doesn't require a PhD.

Using Keywords

An important component to press releases is keywords. These are the magic tools that help people who are searching online find your press release, which will lead them to your website.

You want to sprinkle in keywords that target your news or your company product, keeping in mind what people are searching for. If you're already using keywords for your website, you've got it easy, as you can use some of the same ones.

If not, try using Google's Adwords Keyword Tool or other keyword research tool to find the words in your industry that people are searching for.

Find one [keyword or keyword phrase](#) you really want to be known for, such as “organic cupcakes” and use it in:

- The title
- Release overview
- hyperlinks
- paragraphs

Keep it natural sounding, and don't overstuff your press release with the keyword.

What About Videos and Images?

Let's discuss ways to enhance your press release.

Most distribution services like [PRNewswire's iReach](#) and PRWeb offer you the ability to add images and video to your release.

At a bare minimum, you should include your company logo or image of your product. If you have a video that relates to your news, embed that so that readers can easily view it online.

Worksheet: Putting the Pieces Together

Now that you know about the different components of a press release, let's work on the title, keywords, body, about and contact sections of your press release.

Title

1. Boil down what your press release is about.
2. Tweak it for better wording.
3. Review for ease of reading and grammar.

Keywords

Once you've researched the keywords your target is searching for, list a few of them here.

Body

You've identified the who, what, when, where, why and how of your release. Now craft it into the body paragraphs. Use your keyword.

About

Don't have a boilerplate? Write a few sentences that describe what your company does. You might include the year it was founded and location.

Why Quotes Work

Your press release recipe is almost done. But first we need to add a good, juicy quote. Quotes liven up a press release and give a human element to it. The person quoted in the release should be related to the news. That may be the CEO, the PR manager or someone else on your team.

Avoid quotes that start: “We are excited...” Of course you are excited about your news! Tell us something new, such as your motivation for making the decision to [insert action here.] Or get an opinion about something. Whatever it is, keep it to just a few sentences.

Sometimes it’s hard to pin down an employee for a quote, and sometimes he doesn’t feel comfortable coming up with one. In these cases, suggest that you write one and he modify it if needed. This can save you time and guide the quote in the direction you want.

Worksheet: Getting a Good Quote

List the people involved in the news you’re covering in your press release.

Choose the best candidate for a quote and ask for a quote related to the news.

Suggest something specific - numbers and concrete imagery make for the best quotes.

Add in the quote in the middle of your press release and it’s just about ready to be distributed!

Part 2: Press Release Distribution

There are a few methods for distributing your press release:

- Distribute via wire services
- Pitch journalists
- Pitch bloggers

You may choose to use a combination -- or all -- of these methods in your PR strategy.

Wire Service

There are press release distribution sites, both paid and free, that take your release and send it to dozens of news and industry websites. Many people have a preference of one service over another, however they all offer the same basic services.

If you plan to put out a lot of press releases, you may be able to work out a special deal on pricing. PR agencies often get discounts on bulk packages, and you may be able to get one too if your volume is high enough. Reach out to an account executive and discuss options based on the number of press releases you expect to put out.

Free Press Release Sites

Not all press release distribution sites charge for their services. There are many that are free, but keep in mind that their reach won't be as good as the popular paid wire services. If you've got zero budget for press releases, or just want to see how distribution works, give some of the free sites a try.

It may be a good idea to submit your press release to multiple free wire services, as they all reach a slightly different audience. The more places your release is found online, the better.

Resource: Free Press Release Sites

www.prfree.com
<http://www.pr.com/press-releases>
<http://www.1888pressrelease.com>
<http://www.prurgent.com>
<http://www.theopenpress.com/>
<http://www.free-press-release.com>
<http://www.sanepr.com>
<http://www.pressabout.com>
<http://ecommwire.com>
<http://express-press-release.com>
<http://www.newswiretoday.com/index.php>
<http://www.pr9.net>
<http://www.prlog.org/>
<http://www.pressmethod.com>
<http://www.bizeurope.com/pressrelease.htm>
<http://www.afly.com>
<http://www.downloadjunction.com>
<http://www.openpr.com>
<http://www.pressreleasespider.com>

Pitching Journalists

If you can get your news covered in a newspaper, magazine, tv, radio or online, you can increase the reach of your company. The way to do this is to pitch a journalist who might be interested in covering your news.

The key to pitching is to identify the journalists who cover your space. Locally, that might be the small business writer at your local paper. Online and in magazines, it might be a journalist who focuses on your industry. It's important to read the journalists' writing so you know you're a good fit, and so that you know her style.

Follow journalists that cover your topic BEFORE you want to pitch. There's nothing more insulting to a journalist than a brand or PR person reaching out who clearly has never paid

attention to the journalist. Connect through social media channels. Retweet her content. Start conversations with her. Leave comments on her writing online. Show that you're paying attention.

After you've built relationship, reach out. Offer yourself as expert source for future articles. Ask if you can send occasional news.

Worksheet: Building Your Journalist List

As you research journalists you want to pitch, record them in this worksheet. create a spreadsheet type grid with the following columns:

News source

Website

Journalist Name

Email

Phone

Subjects covered

Notes

The Email Pitch

There are a few tips to keep in mind when sending a pitch email. First off, customize your letter for every journalist you pitch. You can start with a template letter, but adapt it for each, mentioning the media source each writes for, and tweak your angle slightly so each recipient has something unique.

Don't send your press release as an attachment; link to release from an online source. Only include it in the body of the email if they ask for it.

Focus on how your news benefits their readers. Sure, your company is great, but everyone thinks that about their business. Why should this journalist's readers care about your news?

If you have news that can't publicly be announced until a certain date, mention in your letter that your news is [embargoed](#). Most journalists will respect this, but make it clear that you do not want the news published until a specified date.

If you don't hear back (and very often, you won't), follow up a week later. Email is certainly less invasive, but you might try to reach the journalist by phone to get a definite yes or no. Ask to make sure she received your email and that her spam filter didn't trash it. A strategy to increase open rates on your followup email is to use "Re: previous email" as the subject!

See a sample pitch letter in Appendix B.

Preparing for a Press Interview

If you get called for a radio or television interview, prepare in advance.

- Go over key points you'd like to work into the interview
- Practice soundbites (short phrases or sentences that serve to represent you in the interview)
- Practice speaking slowly and clearly in front of the mirror
- Pick out a professional outfit for TV that doesn't have patterns that will clash on screen

Pitching Bloggers

The third method of getting press coverage is through blogs. Bloggers are often easier to connect with than many journalists, and there may be opportunity for you to work together longer term. May have other ideas on how you can work together rather than just publishing your release:

- product reviews
- giveaways
- partnerships

Follow the same process you used in the Pitching Journalists section. Find bloggers who have an audience you'd like to reach with your news.

Worksheet: Building Your Blogger List

As you research bloggers you want to pitch, record them in this worksheet. create a spreadsheet type grid with the following columns:

Blog URL
Blogger Name
Email
Phone
Subjects covered
Notes

Pre-Launch Checklist

Before you release your press release into the wild, use this checklist to make sure you're ready.

- Is my press release newsworthy?
- Am I targeting the right audience?
- Am I distributing it in the right place for my goals?
- Scheduled to publish during the right day/time?
- Included keywords?
- Included quote?
- Contact info?

Sharing Your Release

Whether you've distributed your press release through wire services or gotten coverage through traditional media or blogs, you will want to share it with others. Post your links through all social channels, such as Twitter, Facebook, Google + and LinkedIn. Some distribution sites like PRWeb offer this as an auto option when scheduling distribution. Share through social bookmarking tools like [BizSugar](#).

Share the links on blog and on your company's News page. The more media links you have, the more successful you appear!

Share in an email to your contact list. Mention that you were covered in the media and link to the post or article.

Tracking Your Release

The way to determine whether your PR strategy is working is tracking what sites hosting your press release sent traffic to your own website. The goal is to get additional web traffic from sites and media sources where your news and company URL is hosted.

Immediately after distributing your press release or pitching a journalist, use [Google Alerts](#) to track results. Input one alert for your company name, and another for the press release title or keywords from the release. Each time you have an alert that another site picked it up, save this link to a list.

If you used one of the paid press release distribution channels, you should have access to a

report a few days or week after it's released that show you where the release was published, how many reads it got, and what countries published the release. You can use these metrics to compare against future press releases to see what topics got the most attention online.

[Google Analytics](#) is another useful and free tool to track press release results. A few weeks after your news appears online, look back to see which sites sent the most traffic to your site. This will probably continue to grow, as the press release or media mention will live online indefinitely. For future releases, target the sources that sent you the most traffic.

Get Your Site PR Friendly

Your website should proudly display all your press releases and media mentions. It's easiest if you set up a page for all news. Make sure to keep this page updated.

Make your company media-friendly: make sure you list contact info prominently on your site, aim for fast response to media inquiries, and create a press kit that journalists and bloggers can easily download. Link to your site/media kit in your pitch.

Conclusion

Now that you know the basics, you are ready to start writing press releases, distributing them and pitching them to journalists and bloggers! You'll find an increase in web traffic, inquiries and sales with your PR efforts over time.

Appendix

Appendix A: Press Release Examples

Technology:

Emerson Network Power Announces Winners of 2011 U.S. Partner Awards

Columbus, Ohio (Press Release – March 2, 2012) - To recognize the performance of its top partners in 2011, Emerson Network Power, a business of Emerson (NYSE:EMR) and a global leader in maximizing availability, capacity and efficiency of critical infrastructure, announced the U.S. winners of the Emerson Network Power Partner Awards today. The five award-winning companies were selected based on their commitment to business management and leadership, personal and professional integrity and responsiveness to customer needs.

The Emerson Network Power U.S. Partner Award winners are:

- Solution Provider of the Year – awarded to the partner who demonstrates complete competence in selling the breadth of Emerson Network Power solutions offerings and provides full service to customers. The Solution Provider of the Year for 2011 is ePlus.
- Regional Partner of the Year – awarded to data center partner who is the leader in their region. The Regional Partner of the Year for 2011 is Kelly Communications Systems.
- Technology Partner of the Year – awarded to the partner who displays the most innovation and use of a new technology or solution. The Technology Partner of the Year for 2011 is Mirapath, Inc.
- Opportunity Maker of the Year – awarded to the data center partner who is most active in driving demand for Emerson Network Power solutions. The Opportunity Maker of the Year for 2011 is Alexander Open Systems.
- Federal Government Partner of the Year – awarded to the partner who has best positioned Emerson Network Power solutions with their government customers. The Federal Government Partner of the Year for 2011 is Cybercore.

The winners are nominated by their Emerson Network Power channel account managers. Nominations are reviewed by a group of Emerson Network Power channel executives. The selection committee looks for partners that share several common values, such as continued investment in Emerson Network Power, solving customer problems in innovative ways, consistent engagement of the sales and support teams and improving the bottom line for all parties in the supply chain.

“We are pleased to recognize our valued partners who invest their time and resources in training and have committed to becoming experts in Emerson Network Power solutions,” said Tracy Collins, director of channel sales and marketing for Emerson Network Power in North

America. “Our partners demonstrate a superior level of expertise and we’re proud to work with them to deliver innovative solutions and services that meet customer needs and drive down costs. It is paramount that we recognize and invest in our most dedicated partners to provide customers an extensive network of expertise in the data center and build our business going forward.”

For more information on technologies and services from Emerson Network Power, visit www.EmersonNetworkPower.com.

About Emerson Network Power

Emerson Network Power, a business of Emerson (NYSE:EMR), delivers software, hardware and services that maximize availability, capacity and efficiency for data centers, healthcare and industrial facilities. A trusted industry leader in smart infrastructure technologies, Emerson Network Power provides innovative data center infrastructure management solutions that bridge the gap between IT and facility management and deliver efficiency and uncompromised availability regardless of capacity demands. Our solutions are supported globally by local Emerson Network Power service technicians. Learn more about Emerson Network Power products and services at www.EmersonNetworkPower.com.

About Emerson

Emerson (NYSE: EMR), based in St. Louis, Missouri (USA), is a global leader in bringing technology and engineering together to provide innovative solutions for customers in industrial, commercial, and consumer markets around the world. The company is comprised of five business segments: Process Management, Industrial Automation, Network Power, Climate Technologies, and Commercial & Residential Solutions. Sales in fiscal 2011 were \$24.2 billion. For more information, visit www.Emerson.com.

Medical

Physicians Invited to Bioidentical Hormone Therapy Age Management Seminar

Complimentary passes available for qualified physicians to learn about bioidentical hormone therapy (BHRT) and cancer, menopause, andropause, weightloss and diet are invited to Ask The Experts: Age Management Series. Ageology is an anti-aging social network offering the latest news, educational training and services designed to prevent chronic disease and promote overall wellness.

Chicago, IL (PRWEB) March 08, 2012 -- Qualified anti-aging physicians, OB/GYNs, internal medicine, functional and preventive medicine, regenerative medicine, metabolic medicine and holistic MDs are invited to attend an age management lecture series addressing the role of bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT) and cancer. The two-day seminar is set for March 31-April 1, 2012 at the Hilton Rosemont Chicago O’Hare in Chicago and is hosted by Ageology, the premier anti-aging physician network specializing in the science of BHRT, health, nutrition and fitness.

“The featured topic of our first educational series is hormones and cancer,” said Ageology Chief Medical Director Dr. Paul Savage, a leading bioidentical hormone therapy physician and anti-aging expert specializing in age management. “We’ve gathered some of the nation’s leading experts to share the latest findings and best practices for physicians focusing on age management and anti-aging health care, with an emphasis on bioidentical hormone therapy, cancer prevention and treatment using hormone replacement therapy.”

The bioidentical hormone therapy and age management expert panel includes: Thomas Guilliams, PhD, an orthomolecular, microbiologist and nutrition expert; Paul Savage, MD, Ageology, an expert in hormone replacement; Edward Friedman, PhD, University of Chicago, Department of Biophysics and Theoretical Biology, Joseph Raffaele, M.D. of PhysioAge, Biomarkers, and George Yu, MD, from the Department of Urology at George Washington University Medical Center.

The first day of the age management seminar focuses on male issues. Yu will offer a prostate cancer review, Savage will discuss treatments for Andropause, and Guilliams will discuss nutrition, weight loss and diets. The second day of the age management seminar focuses on women. Friedman will discuss hormone receptors and breast cancer, Savage will discuss menopause treatments, Raffaele will present the biomarkers of aging and Telomeres and TA65. At the end of each day, presenters will take part in a panel discussion on hormone replacement therapy and related issues.

Age management seminar sponsors include Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy, the country’s largest privately held Specialty Pharmacy; OrthoMolecular, helping doctors become well-equipped in evidence-based, lifestyle and nutritional therapies we believe we can help transform the practice of medicine. , and LabCorp, which provides services including genomic testing, clinical trials and DNA identification.

Qualified physicians are invited to contact Paul Schweet for a complimentary pass to the lecture series. The Hilton Rosemont Chicago O’Hare is located at 5550 N. River Rd. in Rosemont. You can RSVP via email at [pschweet\(at\)ageology\(dot\)com](mailto:pschweet@ageology.com) or call 312.981.4020.

About Ageology

Ageology is an anti-aging news and physician network with a mission to bring Chicago patients fresh alternatives to wellness that promotes longer and healthier living. Ageology physicians take a holistic approach to health, combining nutrition, exercise and balanced hormones to drive optimal wellness. Our anti-aging physician directory and social network equips men and women with the information to make smart wellness decisions. You can visit ageology online at ageology.com or visit us at [Facebook.com/ageology](https://www.facebook.com/ageology).

Professional Services

Travis Lulay Honours "International Women's Day" With \$10,000 Donation

SURREY, BRITISH COLUMBIA--(Marketwire - March 8, 2012) - BC Lions Quarterback and Grey Cup Champion, Travis Lulay gave back to his community today, providing Source's Women's Place with a \$10,000 donation. As the recipient of the 2011 Gibson's Finest CFL Most Outstanding Player Award, Lulay received a \$10,000 donation to the charity of his choice. Already an active member in the British Columbia community, Lulay presented Source's Women's Place with this honour in celebration of International Women's Day.

Formally known as the South Fraser Women's Services Society, Sources Women's Place provides free resources, support and counseling for women. The community supported event marked the launch of the official merger between Sources Community Resource Centres Society and South Fraser Women's Services Society.

"My wife, Kim has volunteered at South Fraser Women's Services since last July and I've learned a lot about the incredible support system they provide," says Lulay, Gibson's Finest CFL Most Outstanding Player. "Bringing awareness is what is really most important and I hope making this donation today on International Women's Day will help do that."

Lulay and the BC Lions are also involved with the Ending Violence Association of BC through their "Be More Than a Bystander" project. The campaign focuses on breaking the silence on violence against women.

"We are so pleased to honour our Most Outstanding Player of the Year with a donation to his chosen charity" says Carolyn McFarlane, International Marketing Manager of Gibson's Finest Canadian Whisky. "Travis and his wife have a close relationship with Sources Women's Place and we are truly proud to support them on International Women's Day."

Denise Darrell, Executive Director of Sources Women's Place commented on the significance of the donation, stating "We are so incredibly thankful for this contribution from Mr. Lulay. Our organization has over 24,000 contacts with women every year through our counseling, daily hot lunches, legal advocacy and community services and we're so grateful that Travis has recognized our efforts."

The donation will allow Sources Women's Place to move forward with plans for a capital project that will create affordable housing for vulnerable seniors in the area.

About Sources Women's Place

South Fraser Women's Services Society offers a safe and confidential environment in which to connect with other women and access direct services, crisis peer support, professional

counselling, legal information and advocacy, professional referrals and resources, facilitated support groups and educational opportunities. Support for South Fraser Women's Services is derived from memberships, donations, fundraising, service clubs, government funding, Gaming and the United Way of Lower Mainland.

About Gibson's Finest Canadian Whisky

Gibson's Finest Canadian Whisky is among the leading brands in the growing premium and deluxe Canadian whisky categories. The brand range consists of Gibson's Finest Sterling, a blend of award winning premium whiskies; Gibson's Finest 12 Year Old, 2011 IWSC Gold Award recipient; and, Gibson's Finest Rare 18 Year Old, Whisky Bibles' Liquid Gold Award winner and aged to perfection. For more information you can go to www.gibsonsfineest.ca. Gibson's Finest is a proud sponsor & supporter of the CFL, Title sponsor of Players of the Week, Players of The Month and the Gibson's Finest CFL Player Awards held during the Grey Cup Week. In addition, the Gibson's Finest Fan Competition awards trips to the Grey Cup to deserving fans as voted by their peers. Look it up at www.facebook.com/gibsonsfineest.

Tourism

Jekyll Island Club Hotel Sets the Stage for Your Landmark Experience With Anniversary Special

Celebrating 25 years of hospitality. Preserving 125 years of history.

JEKYLL ISLAND, Ga., March 8, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- The Jekyll Island Club Hotel is celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2012 and we'd like you to share in our celebration this spring with our special anniversary package - accommodations and dinner for just \$125* per person, double occupancy. This exclusive rate is available March 1 - May 24 and includes Traditional or Clubhouse Accommodations and dinner at your choice of the Grand Dining Room or the Courtyard at Crane.

"The hotel's year long celebration has been a great chance for guests, whether a seasoned traveler to the resort or experiencing it for the first time, to enjoy the history and ambience of the Jekyll Island Club Hotel," said Managing Partner, Kevin Runner. "We anticipate this special to be very popular. It's the perfect way to spend a getaway."

The hotel offers the key amenities travelers expect: Room Service, Day Spa and Salon, Concierge Services, Valet Parking, Swimming Pool (Outdoor), Croquet Lawn, Putting Green, Hotel Tours (Monday – Thursday), Fitness Room, and Free wireless Internet access. Dinner is a special treat at the Jekyll Island Club Hotel. Choose between the Grand Dining Room, featuring award-winning continental cuisine, specializing in fresh seafood and regional preparations. The glow of candlelight and piano music create an atmosphere of romance and anticipation of the gourmet meal to come. The Grand Dining Room also features a Sunday

Brunch and afternoon tea.

The Courtyard at Crane, offering casual fine dining, is located in the center courtyard and loggia of the historic Crane Cottage. The menu features Mediterranean and Northern California selections along with an extensive wine menu which may be paired with your meal. Guests are offered the option of dining inside or alfresco.

*Plus room tax, resort fee. Available Sunday-Thursday. Taxes and gratuities on food and beverage included. Space availability basis. Dinner reservations required. Alcohol extra. Deluxe and suite upgrades available for a fee. To book this special please call: 855-293-1436.

About the Jekyll Island Club Hotel

The Jekyll Island Club Hotel was originally built in 1886 as a hunting retreat for America's wealthy elite, including J.P. Morgan, William Rockefeller, Joseph Pulitzer, the Vanderbilts, Goulds and Astors. Restored to its original splendor in 1986, now a National Historic Landmark and a member of Historic Hotels of America. The Jekyll Island Club Hotel is Jekyll Island's only four-star resort, presenting 157 rooms and suites in five historical settings. For more information on the hotel, please visit jekyllclub.com or call 855-293-1436.

Appendix B: Pitch Letter Sample

Dear Sally--

I just read your post “How Nonprofits Picking Up the Pace,” and loved the tips you provided nonprofit organizations on surviving the economy. I’ve been following you on Twitter for a while, and also love your insightful updates there.

I’m emailing you because I have a story I think will appeal to your readers. I am the founder of Pets for Peeps, a nonprofit that connects homebound seniors with pets that will cheer them up and sometimes assist as service animals.

We recently partnered with the Humane Society and SCORE to train others on how to start a nonprofit. As you know, there aren’t a lot of resources for nonprofits in our region, and we are thrilled to provide this service to the community.

Your readers, because they are interested in either starting or better managing a nonprofit, would benefit from this free service. Is this something you’d be interested in covering? You can read the original press release on the news here, and I’m happy to send you a few photos if you’d like.

Sincerely,

Beth Arnold
CEO
Pets for Peeps

Appendix C: Ask the Experts

We asked the following questions to experts. Here's what they had to say about the importance of press releases.

Joan Stewart, [The Publicity Hound](#)

Joan Stewart is a publicity expert, speaker, trainer, consultant and former newspaper editor who shows small business owners how to use traditional and social media to establish credibility, enhance their reputations, position themselves as experts, and sell more products and services.

Vedran Tomic, [Tomic Internet Marketing](#)

Vedran Tomic is the co-founder and CEO of Tomic Internet Marketing, a boutique Internet marketing agency headquartered in Connecticut. Vedran spends his time creating strategies that deliver high ROI for small and medium sized businesses.

Jenny Finke, [Red Jeweled Media](#)

Jenny Finke is a media, PR and content development specialist and founder of the Denver-based PR & marketing agency, Red Jeweled Media. She has more than a decade of PR, marketing and writing experience. Jenny founded Red Jeweled Media in 2005 so she could help small business owners on a budget grow their businesses using the power of PR.

Stacey Acevero, [Vocus](#)

Stacey Acevero is the social media manager at Vocus. In addition to content creation, community engagement and analysis, Stacey also plays an active role in Vocus' PR team, writing press releases and creating strategies for Vocus' many properties, including PRWeb, HARO, North Social and iContact.

What is the most effective way to use a press release?

Joan Stewart: To pull traffic to your website or blog. It is NOT to get a big story from journalists. Press releases seldom result in big stories. Customized pitches do. I have a free press release writing course at <http://www.89PressReleaseTips.com>.

Vedran Tomic: Nowadays, journalists in the US look elsewhere for stories. Some people would even go as far as to say that the concept of press release distribution is dying off. While press releases are not as effective in getting press as they once were, they can still bring good results if used for newsworthy stories.

Jenny Finke: The press release has evolved. The Internet has changed that. In the "olden" days, PR specialists would use the press release to quickly disseminate news about their clients' interests to reporters nationwide through the newswire.

A well written press release can help boost a company's ranking for specific topics and make a record on the Internet that such news happened. When a reporter is working on a story, they may use Google to research a topic and your release may come up and they may contact you months or even years later.

Stacey Acevero: The most effective way to use a press release is to disseminate news that not only pertains to you, but to many other people. Relating this news to current trends increases its relevance and therefore its effectiveness within the news sphere. Ensuring your news leaves a lasting impression on the Internet with the use of social media gives the greatest benefit to your business, while clever writing and news angles ensure a lasting impression on the media who read it.

What would make the media pick up a press release?

Joan Stewart: The promise of a good story--or a good story that's told within the release.

Vedran Tomic: Targeted press releases with remarkable or newsworthy stories to tell have the biggest chance of getting picked up by the media.

Jenny Finke: This is a difficult question to answer. Rarely are press motivated to write a story based on a press release. For the most part, press releases and personal, high-quality pitches are accepted by journalists for any number of reasons. Journalists will ask these questions to determine whether a press release or pitch is something they would like to cover: Is it newsworthy? Is it unique? Is it timely? Is it relevant? Is it local?

Stacey Acevero: Relevance and relation to current trends are the two main reasons the media pick up press releases to use them in a news story. Your news absolutely has to be timely and explain the significance to everyone – not just your company or client. After you hook the media, you need to make it as easy as possible for them to write their story – So I recommend writing press releases the way reporters write their news stories – it's a format they understand the most. Including photos, logos, and video is important because that's what they'll ask for next. Providing them with resources so they don't have to do the work makes their job a lot easier and much more inclined to use your information.

What is the single most important component of a press release?

Joan Stewart: Keywords. The same words people are typing into the search engines to find the kind of information that your release includes.

Vedran Tomic: If I have to single out the most important component of a press release, I would have to say the headline. Without a great headline no other part of the press release is going to be interesting to journalists and your press release might not going to get picked up.

Jenny Finke: It's a tie between two:

- 1) The Headline: A well written, concise, keyword optimized headline will entice someone to want to read more.
- 2) The Call to Action: It is crucial that every press release and pitch have a call to action. Tell your readers exactly what you want them to do as a result of the press release. Never assume they'll figure it out on their own or that it's obvious.

Stacey Acevero: The title, hands down, is the single most important component of a press release. The title hooks the reader and draws them in. If your title is lackluster, they'll never make it to the rest of your release, no matter how dynamite it is. So make your title short, catchy and informative.

What are the best ways to increase visibility of a press release?

Joan Stewart: Tweet it. Share it on Facebook. Share it on LinkedIn. Use one of the paid press release distribution sites like PRWeb.

Vedran Tomic: Choose a very wide distribution option. Send it to journalists. Promote in social media channels.

Jenny Finke: Distribution over a newswire is always the best way to make sure a press release is properly indexed on news sites. Also, it behooves a company to have press releases stored in their company's online press room. Doing so creates more indexed pages for a website (which is great for SEO), as well as shows visitors that the company is constantly making news (shows relevancy).

Stacey Acevero: The best ways to increase the visibility of a press release center on its visual components and where you distribute it to. So include multimedia like photos and videos that are rich with targeted keywords and tags so they are more likely to show up in search and direct to your release. When it comes to distribution, choose a service that gives you the widest reach – news outlets, industries and regions are the first things to consider. Then, consider your relevant contacts and getting it in front of their eyes next with more targeted pitching.

Appendix D: Press Release Case Study

Here's a case study provided by Margie Zable Fisher, president of [Zable Fisher Public Relations](#).

Press Release: [Just in Time for St. Patrick's Day - Free Sample of Celtic Cream Helps Fix Celtic Skin Problems](#)

Release Date: March 9, 2011

Appeared on: more than 40 websites

Mainstream media story coverage: [Help for Celtic complexions, just in time for St. Patrick's Day](#) on SFGate.com (San Francisco Chronicle)

Secret to its success: "I used keywords to enhance pickup," said Zable Fisher.

Testimonial from her client:

"For the launch of my new business, I needed a press release. As promised, I received the release in one business day, and it was perfect. I didn't need any changes! Margie recommended a great press release distribution option, and the release was picked up in the first two weeks by over 40 media outlets, which resulted in increased Website traffic and sales. I even got a call from the San Francisco Chronicle, who interviewed me for a story. That resulted in immediate orders of my product. This was one of the most effective uses of my marketing dollars, and worth far more than I paid for it!"

-Jennifer Devlin, CEO, [Celtic Complexion Beauty Society](#), Treasure Island, FL

Appendix E: Top 10 Pitch Mistakes

Here at Small Business Trends, because we are a news organization, we get pitched by PR pros and companies every single day -- literally. Even on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, we receive pitches from around the world.

We've learned a lot about what gets our attention, and what doesn't. Here are the top 10 mistakes we see:

10. A pitch email that is too long.

Someone getting dozens of pitches each day will simply scan. Keep it short. Anything beyond 4 paragraphs loses the reader. Keep the paragraphs and sentences short, also, as long intimidating text that is hard to read will also lose the reader.

9. A subject line lacking the "what's in it for me" for the reader.

Put yourself in the shoes of the recipient of a pitch email. He or she wants to know what this email offers to him or her. If possible, offer a special benefit to the recipient. Example: advance notice of upcoming news (so the recipient can get a "scoop"). Or a set of "exclusive" tips by a source connected to a timely news event. Journalists, editors and bloggers are busy. If they think they can get advance notice of breaking news so that they can get a head start, or that you can present a fresh angle for a timely item in the news, they are more likely to jump at it.

Never offer monetary bribes, however. That would compromise the writer's ethics. And it will just backfire on you when your bribe attempt is made public!

8. Not having good images or screenshots available immediately.

Publishing today is highly visual. A great image, or lack of one, can make or break a news piece. Readers are attracted by the image before they will click to read.

Editors and writers need good product images, screenshots if it's a software product, images of executives if they are key to story, or other elements. Have those ready at hand. If you make the writer or editor wait, or don't have good images, they are less likely to want to do with you next time. In the news business, time is crucial.

Some releases put the images or a link to them right in the press release.

7. A press release that the recipient has to set up an account to download.

Just because you find it convenient to use Dropbox or Box or some other type of file storage, doesn't mean that journalists or bloggers want to. If you force them to set up a new account in order to download a press release or accompanying materials, they will probably skip it and move on to something easier.

6. Talking about all the other news outlets that have already written about it.

Stop and think about this a moment. What you're saying is that you went to larger news outlets first, so that means you don't think much of the smaller news outlet or blog. It also says that you expect them to publish "leftovers." Avoid talking about all the others, and come up with a new angle geared toward the outlet you are addressing your email to.

5. Neglecting to share the story afterwards.

Amazingly enough, most writers appreciate knowing their story made an impact. One way to convey that you appreciated the effort is to make sure you or your client shares the news on social media, on the press coverage page of their site, and so on. Some writers today are compensated by pageviews and social shares in part, so they love it when their stories get lots of readers. Of course, if the piece is negative, certainly it's understandable that you wouldn't want to spread it far and wide. But for those that are not negative ... share!

4. Not respecting the professional relationship.

PR pros and brand managers: don't think of writers, editors and serious bloggers in it for the long haul, as the enemy. Develop relationships over time with them. These are not relationships in the sense of money passing hands or bribes taking place. Think of it as a business relationship between professionals, where each side has a role to play and respects the other side. That means operating with professionalism at every step of the way. If the writer or blogger doesn't write about your news this month -- for whatever reason -- don't burn your bridges. Take the response with grace. You don't know what their schedule is or other things they may be working on. Next month could be a different story.

3. Not knowing blogger attitudes toward PR before pitching them.

Some blogs are run as small news organizations. Others are run as personal journals. Of the two, which do you think is more likely to welcome a publicity pitch?

The simple fact is, some bloggers are PR friendly and some aren't. Take some time to read the blog and understand it. Get a sense for whether it covers news. By pitching a blogger who doesn't WANT news pitches, you risk being held up to public ridicule for your client. Focus on the bloggers (and there are many!) who want to receive news. Hint: see if they have a 'tip' email address or speak about media pitches on the site's contact form. Do a fast Google search to see if the blogger publicly criticizes PR pros for pitches.

2. Failing to target your news.

"Spray and pray" never works. Don't send irrelevant news. If the news outlet or blog you approach covers only business topics, sending consumer goods story pitches just wastes everyone's time. Make an effort to tailor your pitch to the outlet, and only approach those where the news would be a good fit.

1. Not responding right away.

So, you've made an initial email pitch, and amazingly, the recipient responds with interest. If it takes you days to get back to that person, not only have you squandered an opportunity, but you will probably offend the writer or blogger. He or she will get the feeling that this was part of a mass pitch and that you had more important fish to fry. Always respond fast.

Appendix F: Special PRNewswire Discount

Please use the following discount code with our compliments, [using PRNewswire's iReach service through our special portal](#). You will get 30% off.

Discount code: SBT30

If you have any questions using the discount, please email us at: sbtips@gmail.com

Thank you!

**Anita Campbell,
Publisher and CEO
Small Business Trends**

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