



# **Introduction to the Basics of Writing a Press Release**

**By Jarrett Smith**

# The Press Release

- **The Press Release is about the most simple and cheap way of getting news coverage for any organisation.**
- **Every day the newsrooms of newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations are inundated with them - the good, the bad, the inappropriate and the boring.**
- **Yet, properly used, the press release can be a highly effective means of getting your message across to the public.**
- **Journalists decry the torrent of releases that land on their desks every morning but never the less still scan them for newsworthy topics. In amongst the dross, you are going to need something good to grab their attention.**

# Basics of a Press Release-

To write a press release you will require the following:

- A story to write
- A computer, electronic typewriter or simple word processor
- Letter headed paper or logos
- A list of newspapers to send the story to
- And finally, two contact phone numbers

# Logos & Headers

Logos Should Appear in the Top Right Hand Corner of your Press Release



*THE NATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF 18 PLUS GROUPS*



Banner Logos can go across the top of your Press Release and help to highlight your organisations brand image

## National Federation of 18 plus Groups

Headers should appear at the top of your Press release bearing the name of your organisation.

# Strapline



## **Coventry Club Wins national Success**

The Strapline highlights the topic of your Press Release

- **To be successful you need the right story, something that will capture media and public interest.**
- **Pick a topic - an achievement, an ethnic or gender imbalance in the group, an event, or a cry for help, a call for ex-members, highlight community or charitable work, membership increase or decrease.**
- **Your release cannot cart on about everything, pick a topic, stick to it and give it a spin.**

# Timing

- **When was your group last in that particular newspaper, or announced by that particular presenter?**
- **Are there any dates that need to be born in mind. For an event, you will need to prepare and send the release, at least three weeks to a month in advance. It's best to prepare, it well in advance to give you time to contact monthly and weekly publications.**
- **Another reason for timing is a particular time of year, Christmas, Easter, summer, and winter, General or local elections - there are certain times of the year when it is worth tailoring your topic and press release to and others when you may feel like holding it over.**
- **Watch out for deadlines and always leave room for flexibility.**

# Content – Who, What, Where, Why, When, How?

The following facts will be required in (nearly) all cases:

- Who – Who are you?
- What – What is going on?
- Where – Where is it happening?
- Why – Why it is happening?
- When – The date and time of the event (this often gets missed).
- How/Contact – How to get in-touch or who to contact if you want to take part.

# The Story

**The story that you wish to be published in your local newspaper is only prevented by your imagination. A typical story could be one of the following:**

- **New members Night/Open Evening**
- **New group programme or committee**
- **A charity event**
- **An up and coming competition or holiday**
- **A review of a recent event**
- **Part of a publicity campaign**
- **Change of venue**
- **Winning a competition**
- **Increase in membership**
- **A request for volunteers**

**The list of press release stories is endless.**

# Main Requirements 1

## \* Relevant -

What ever you sent it has to be relevant to that publication or that show or radio station. Don't bother sending a press release to a local TV station unless it's got impact. There are a lot of local rags and magazines that are just geared to advertising, some will give you coverage but read them first and judge for yourself.

## \* Focused -

In many cases the topic or strap line of a release will arouse a journalist's interest which will be dashed because he can't find the information he needs or loses the drift when the release goes off the subject.

# Main Requirements 2

## **\*Timely -**

**Often organisations send press releases in too late that could have got into print on a slow news day. Sometimes they leave it so close to a date or deadline that it would be pointless using.**

## **\*Readable -**

**Even the hottest story will flop if it's poorly written, hidden in a mass of verbiage or tied up in jargon. The main facts need to be clearly presented.**

**Above all the press release needs to be *news*.**

# What is News Worthy?

Harold Evan's, former campaigning editor of the *Sunday Times*, states in his book *The Practice of Journalism*: ' News is people. It is people talking and people doing...Always, always, always, tell the story through people.'

People read news, news is about people or what affects them. Too often, the writers of press releases fail to stress the people aspect of their story. Yet if you dig deep enough there is always a ' people angle' and almost every press release is strengthened in finding it.

A social and activities organisation is by its very nature about people we cannot or should not be able to avoid a '*people*' story.

- **Use quotes from your members to add life and Caricature to your Press Release.**

**LOGO HERE 2**

**BANNER HERE**

**LOGO HERE 1**

## **National Federation of 18 Plus Groups**

8-10 CHURCH STREET

NEWENT

GLOS. GL18 1PP

TEL: (01531) 821210

FAX: (01531) 821474

### **NOW GET OUT OF THAT (NGOOT) –**

The National Federation of 18 Plus Groups (18 Plus), a social and activities organisation for young adults aged 18 to 35, is holding its annual Now Get Out Of That (NGOOT) Challenge, during the August Bank Holiday Weekend, in the Ashdown Forest, Sussex.

NGOOT is a weekend of outdoor physical and mental challenges for teams of four, intended to test your team skills to the limit, where you're with a team of people you know or one made up from scratch. This year's event will take place at the country's largest Scout Camp, situated in the heart of the Ashdown Forest. The theme of this year's event is "Winnie the Pooh", whose fictional home was based in the Ashdown Forest. Activities and events will feature around some of the most central features of the Pooh stories.

Activities start on Saturday morning and this year include a Treasure Hunt, Pot Holing Team Challenge, Swimming Pool Challenge, Orienteering, Forest Trek and much more. On the Saturday evening teams will provide entertainment over a BBQ and Bonfire and each produce a presentation.

Accommodation is indoors and breakfast and evening meals will be available at a small additional fee. The cost of the entire weekend is just £35 and represents just one of the bargain break and activity weekends available through membership of 18 Plus, the country's leading Activity and Social Organisation for people 18 to 35.

**For further information on 18 Plus please write to The National Federation of 18 Plus Groups, 8 - 10 Church Street Chambers, NEWENT, Gloucestershire. GL18-1PP. Phone 01531 821210 (24 hr. answer phone) Fax 01531 821474 or Email: [office@18plus.org.uk](mailto:office@18plus.org.uk)**