



From Acorns...how to build your brilliant business from scratch

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

You should think of producing a press release as selling. You are trying to sell the journalist a story, and the normal rules of sales apply.

Start by asking 'what's in it for them'. What are the benefits rather than the features of your news-story? If it helps – use the 'benefit generator' tool. You have to put yourself in your customer's (or journalist's) shoes in this case. Think what is 'news' about your story;

- Does it have a novel spin on an old issue?
- Is it controversial?
- Is it surprising or funny?
- Does it involve someone or somewhere famous?
- In particular – you are selling your differences – the more different or unusual your story, the more chance it can have of being used.

Selling your story:

As we looked at in the chapter on promotion – just blanket mailing your offering to every publication you can think of will have little impact. Instead, you need a laser focus. Find out which are the most likely publications for your release – they might be industry specific, or local to your area.

You should then tailor the press release to their audience. If it is a general local paper, bring out the generally relevant facts of your release. If it is a trade publication, be prepared to go into greater technical detail.

Then, call the editor or journalist in advance. Outline your story to them and see if there are any aspects they are interested in. If not, ask them why not and use this information for future releases.

Then send the release through to them directly. Don't just blind mail them out to 'the Editor' and hope they won't end up in the waste-bin.

After you have sent it in, follow it up after a day or so. Ask if they've had the chance to read it, and if there is any further information they would like.

This might all seem like hard work, but it will greatly improve your chances of success.

Writing your release:

Your press release should be written in a 'pyramid' format. See the diagram over the page.

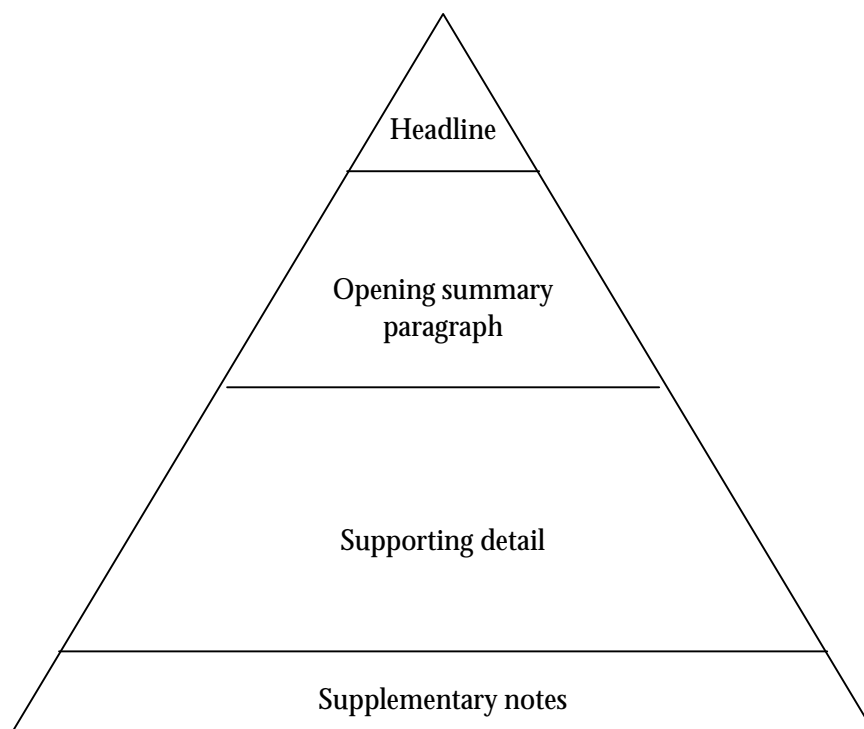
From Acorns...how to build your brilliant business from scratch

You must open with a strong headline. This should be eye-catching and unusual (but not too obscure). If you get the journalist's attention here, they will read further.

The opening paragraph must be your strongest. The opening sentence must be the main point of your story. The next sentences should summarise the other outline features of your story.

You can then put more detailed information in the latter paragraphs. Be aware – editors tend to cut stories from the bottom of an article up. If your most important features are in the last paragraph, they could well be cut out.

After the main body of the press release you can include supplementary 'Notes for editors'. This can include a brief background of your business and key individuals.



At the end of the release, you must include your contact information; name, email, phone and mobile. If they cannot get hold of you, they may not run the story.

Your release should be no more than 300 words. It should be written in short and pithy sentences with an active tone of voice (ie: 'we are delivering it' not 'it will be delivered').

Include good direct quotations in the text. Ideally, as well as from you, there should also be quotes from someone more independent.

A good photograph can also sell a story. The same rules apply – don't send in a boring shot of you at a computer or a row of staff. Make it different – include some unusual (but relevant) props or take it from an unusual angle.

Even if your release is not used in this instance, don't despair. If you cultivate a good relationship with a particular journalist or publication, they may well start coming to you for comments on other stories as you build your 'expert' status.