



**Get the Word Out
With
Press Releases**

The Press Release

- The press release is a tried-and-true public relations tool, and has been one of the most popular communication formats for PR pros for many years, even today with so many online options.
- A press release that is actually picked up and printed in a national publication reaching your target market can pay off big time.

Divide your press release into sections:

- a. Contact information
- b. For immediate release
- c. Press release headline
- d. Subhead (can be used to further explain headline)
- e. Dateline and lead paragraph
- f. Press release body
 - i. Address the Who, What, Why, When, How in more detail
 - ii. Human interest quote
- g. Call to action
- h. Boilerplate

The Press Release Headline

- If your headline fails, your press release will never see the light of day.
- If the headline is appealing, the editor then scans the first paragraph (also known as the lead paragraph) to see if the press release bears further reading.
- If the headline is vague the editor usually passes on the press release rather than taking the time to determine if the press release is worth pursuing.

Sample Headline:

AMVETS to host Veteran Job Fair Set for August 13 in Memphis,
More than 40 Employers to Attend
(word count 18, characters 94)



The Headline

A good online news release headline:

- Provides information—not a marketing pitch or advertisement
- Contains the keywords people are likely to search to get information like this
- Gets a reader's attention quickly
- Makes the reader want to learn more

LENGTH: New/search engines have very specific headline limits (what they will display).

Google:
60 characters



Yahoo!:
120 characters



PRWeb:
170 characters

EXAMPLE:

ResortQuest Expands Vacation Rental Operations into the Alabama Gulf Coast Area

FORMAT: Title Case. Capitalize every word except for prepositions and articles of three characters or less.

TIP: Write your headline and summary last to be sure you include the most important keywords and information captured in the release.



The Lead

First Paragraph- The Lead

- The lead summarizes the information found in the release, answering the Who, What, When, Where and Why (in particular for a calendar or event based release.) The following paragraphs will give additional details. The lead, like all paragraphs in your release, shouldn't be more than a couple of sentences, or contain any unattributed opinions or quotes.

Examples:

- ▶ **Lanham, MD** – Veterans service organization AMVETS (American Veterans) will host a Veteran Job Fair, a hiring event for veterans, military and spouses, at the Memphis Cook Convention Center on Wednesday, August 13, 2016. Call of Duty Endowment and the Greater Memphis Chamber will co-sponsor the event, which will run from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m.
- ▶ **LANHAM, MD, Sept 9, 2015** – Veterans must come first. The AMVETS (American Veterans) support viable plans and initiatives that provide veterans with real choice and that ensure the VA is held accountable for the services it provides to our veterans and their families.



The Body Copy

- ▶ Now's your chance to tell your story. And, like any news story, the purpose is to provide your reader with information. Remember to keep your tone neutral and objective—like a newscaster vs. an advertisement.
- ▶ The main body copy is typically two to three paragraphs, however can be as brief as one paragraph. Don't add irrelevant information if it's not significant. The paragraphs below can be flipped, depending on the material.

Body Copy

Opening paragraph (body copy)

- ▶ Elaborate on who, what, when, where, why and how in more detail, if you didn't cover this information in its entirety in the lead paragraph or have additional important details to add.

Next paragraph

- ▶ Add details to your press release that support your claim, add interest, or reinforce what you are trying to say. Examples include quotes from yourself or other key people, customers, experts in the particular subject matter, statistics, charts, etc.

Summary or more details paragraph

- ▶ Traditionally, the final paragraph of a news release contains the least important information. It could be used to summarize the key points of the overall release, or is the section where you can add even more details, depending on the nature of your release.

Call to Action & Additional Information

- ▶ The final paragraph may be as little as 1 or 2 sentences, providing members of your community with, for example, a phone number to call to register for an event, an address to drop off canned goods for a food drive, or info on how to make a donation/join your post, etc..

EXAMPLES:

Individuals with specific benefit questions related to herbicide exposure on C-123s may call VA's special C-123 Hotline at 1-800-749-8387 (available 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. EST) or e-mail VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov.

Proceeds from the sweepstakes will help support AMVETS' continuing mission to deliver quality of life programs for veterans and their families. Be sure to look for the next AMVETS Sweepstakes entry form in the mail in September 2015.



Boilerplate

- ▶ The boilerplate is the "about us" section.

EXAMPLE:

About AMVETS:

A leader since 1944 in preserving the freedoms secured by America's armed forces, AMVETS provides support for veterans and the active military in procuring their earned entitlements, as well as community service and legislative reform that enhances the quality of life for this nation's citizens and veterans alike.

AMVETS is one of the largest congressionally-chartered veterans' service organizations in the United States, and includes members from each branch of the military, including the National Guard and Reserves. To learn more visit www.amvets.org.

Boilerplate Examples Continued

About AMVETS: *(if your story is about a Program at your post)*

AMVETS is one of the country's premier veteran service organizations, with a proud history of assisting veterans and sponsoring numerous programs that serve our country and its citizens.

<http://www.ohamvets.org/>

About AMVETS: *(if your story is about advocacy/legislation)*

AMVETS (American Veterans), a leader since 1944 in preserving the freedoms secured by America's Armed Forces, has supported Veterans, Active & Reserve Component Service Members, their families and survivors, for more than a half a century. As a leading advocate for Veterans rights and benefits, AMVETS serves as one of the preeminent voices of Veterans on Capitol Hill. AMVETS seeks to enhance and defend the earned benefits of all Veterans & Service Members through leadership, advocacy and service. Learn more at www.ohamvets.org.

Press Release Recap

- Communicate the who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Write short, and easy-to-understand sentences. *On average*, a press release is approximately 400 words, with short paragraphs. The first paragraph should only be about three sentences.
- Don't directly address the Newspaper or your target audience (calling them “you”).
- Don't refer to your Post as “we”. Instead, write in third person. For example instead of saying “We will be offering a ham dinner...” write “AMVETS Post XXX will be offering a ham dinner...”



Tips

- ▶ Don't use exclamation points.
- ▶ Don't Create link spam. Include no more than one to three links your release.
- ▶ Stay Focused.
- ▶ Double, even triple check your spelling and grammar and make sure to use complete sentences – Have someone that's good with words proof your document and read it again after 24 hours (email maria@ohamvets.org).
- ▶ Don't use a lot of frivolous adjectives or opinions. Only use opinions if you are quoting someone, otherwise, stick to the facts!

Press Release Format

Date/Timing
Release Date

Title

Location

Paragraph 1/Intro

5 W's: Who, What,
Where, Why, When

About/Bio

Contact Details

PRESS RELEASE

6th January, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
33 TOP WEBSITE TIPS
Sydney, Australia

ORBITAL's follow-up to their first website and short single 'CHINE' is released on FREE music on 10th September.

Their name derives as much from the fact that they live on (well, we actually live) the NZ as from the orbital eye name.

Brothers Phil and Paul Harcourt are ORBITAL and have been experimenting on their 4-track tape machine at home for only about 12 months. No improvements were made to their first single 'CHINE' which really was almost purely made as it was simply a case of the best man involved plus the rest of the tape itself.

After the success of 'CHINE' the boys were able to buy better equipment, starting first following 'ORION' is of a higher technical quality, but the single was still made in their living room and their room at Sun Therapy Studios in Levin.

Unlike many other bands ORBITAL are quite active on the live scene, enjoying playing live so much that they often lose money (through playing venues that are off the beaten track).

Phil and Paul are themselves at being into a mix between a conventional band and a DJ - it isn't particularly interesting to watch but because they play their music in private and loops (rather than song books with a set structure) it leaves a real amount of room to improvise with song structure, being techniques and sound manipulation.

"We would prefer to be in the background playing, then release from the DJ (occasionally as people just love our music more than expect an interesting show" explained Phil, who with his brother Paul is currently experimenting with other visual mediums such as film and light that are complementary to their music.

ORBITAL are keeping a low profile just now as to give them time to work on the tapes and on their forthcoming debut album.

ORBITAL: Acid & Visual experiments

 buildawebsitetonight.com

Formatting a press release

Contact Info

For Immediate Release

Headline

Dateline and lead paragraph

Space so it's easy to read – 1.5 recommended or single space with double spacing between paragraphs

Logo

- Include logo on the top left
- <http://www.amvets.org/press-room/download-logos/>
- When re-sizing the logo, hold the shift key down to keep the proportions and prevent it from getting squished.

Formatting a Press Release

1. Contact information – Flush right, Single Space.
List contact/phone/email/web site; Logo is flush Left (or above left)
2. One or two Lines down: **For Immediate Release**, bolded, aligned left – Starting now, the remainder of the release is at 1.5 spaces
4. Next line, heading – Try to fit in one line; two is acceptable– Bolded & Centered – one or two fonts larger than text
5. Next – Dateline and lead paragraph – City is always capitalized, state is two letter abbreviation. Date is next in parenthesis, with year as well. This first paragraph is not tabbed
6. Start tabbing in on second paragraph, use tabs to separate paragraphs
7. Embed images and link to your website, for example or other significant information available on another site to support your release
8. Final step is to make sure the **body of the release is justified** (and make sure that all margins line up on the right side). Look for extra spaces and delete them – normally between sentences.

Links

- ▶ The simple act of embedding an anchor text link creates a call to action, inviting interested readers to take the next step and visit the linked website.
- ▶ Also keep in mind that easy formatting changes such as using bulleted lists and bold paragraph headers capture attention when readers scan your content, and make it easy for journalists and socially connected readers to understand and share key messages.

Visuals (images)

- ▶ It is important to use visuals in PR campaigns and press releases. Include photos, a graph or chart, or even a link to a YouTube video if you have one. If you don't have any photos available, then grab a stock photo (use Google Images). Some of them are free. However, make sure to use a "low resolution" photo.



Fatal Attachments

- ▶ The fastest way to make your press release hit the recycle bin is to send it as attached mail. Attachments take more time to read since it may require the editor to save the file to disk, switch to a word processing program and hunt for the directory the file was saved into before they can see what the release is all about. What's worse is that attachments can carry viruses.
- ▶ Cut and paste your press release into the body of the email. Make it a font that's used by a wide range of computers, such as Times New Roman.

Email Subject Line

- ▶ In general, use your headline as the subject line of the e-mail. If you've written a good "grabber" headline, this will help your message stand out in the editor's e-mail inbox. Avoid vague language for snappier subject lines.
- ▶ To elicit a response, your email communication, starting from the subject line, needs to be specific in terms what you're promoting and the action you're prompting your recipients to take
- ▶ \$\$\$\$!!!! Madness Repeating dollar signs and exclamation marks in your subject line or text makes your press release look like an opportunity scam. It may make your press release get blocked by spam filters, too. If you want editors to receive your news release and take it seriously, ditch those dollar signs and exclamation points and replace the hype with persuasive facts.

Send your Release as a “BCC”

- ▶ Nothing is more annoying to a busy editor than opening an email and seeing dozens of email addresses including their own on the addressee list. To avoid annoying writers and editors learn how to use the blind copy function in email.