

# Ideas and considerations for your press releases.

79% of journalists report finding story ideas on newswires

92% of journalists view news sources such as wire services as credible.

2007 Arketi Group Web Watch Survey

## Die! Press release! Die! Die! Die!

Tom Foremski, a notable Northern California blogger, made a passionate plea for the demise of the press release on 2/27/06. In his opinion, press releases had become nothing more than corporate speak, hype, spin, and hyperbole widely disseminated “to reach the digital and physical trash bins of tens of thousands of journalists.”

His proposal “was to deconstruct the release into special sections and tag the information so that as a publisher, I can pre-assemble some of the news story and make the information useful.” Todd Defren of SHIFT Communications ran with this idea and the first template for the Social Media Release (SMR) was born. There has been a conversation about the SMR within small circles over the last year and many large companies have experimented with the format but it has not become mainstream as of yet. The discussion is heating up now with the IABC looking to take a leadership role in the development of the Social Media Release.

The rationale behind the SMR (aka: SMR, SMPR, hRelease) is enviable:

- Reduce the hype and hyperbole that can be found in most press releases.
- Succinctly tell a story that will be useful to your targeted audience.
- Provide multimedia elements and links to spoon-fed online information that adds value to your page of content and gives the reader additional resources.
- Provide something that people will want to share in order to incite a conversation.

**The purpose of this document is to show that these key points can be integrated into any press release issued over Business Wire right now without the need for a set template.**

## Important Considerations

- **Decrease corporate speak:** Read your press release draft before you submit it. If you were a journalist or consumer would your content sound honest? Is it newsworthy or topical to your core audience?
- **Speaking of corporate speak... quotes:** Quotes are a very valuable asset to a release as they lend a human voice. However, a fake quote and/or one that is insincere can be sniffed out rather easily. If one of your partners, executives, analysts, etc. is to be quoted in a release make sure that it's legitimate.
- **Identify the goal for the release:** What is the objective for the release? How can this objective be clearly defined within the first paragraph of the release and alluded to, or clearly and concisely stated in, the headline?

## CONTENT IS KING

[Business Wire](#) and [EON:Enhanced Online News](#) provides excellent visibility and distribution for your news. However, a release will not perform at its best if it is not written around words and phrases that will render the content findable online or relevant to the reader.

**Invest time thinking about key words and phrases.** Think about the topic that you are issuing the press release about. What words and phrases would people use to find that release if it were in the Yellow Pages or if they were looking for it themselves in a search engine? Focus on 3 per release and plan on using them repetitively throughout the text.

- How often and the placement of words is as important as which words are selected. Consider the Business Wire Text Optimization Tool powered by NewsForce. For \$20 this tool will help identify keywords and provide guidance as to where and how often to use them in your text. (<http://bw.newsforce.com>)
- <http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com> is a good free tool.
- <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal> is a great comparative tool.
- Can't make up your mind? Use Google Trends (<http://www.google.com/trends>) to compare search volume on Google between words and phrases.

### Fun with formats

The layout of a press release's text can change on a release-to-release basis in order to satisfy the needs of the release. Please look at the following examples:

- **Dell:** When Dell wanted to issue content about The Dell Lounge webcasting the 2008 PLUG Independent Music Awards, they didn't write a narrative release. They used hyperlinks and bullet points throughout the release.
  - <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20080303005224/en>
- **P.F. Chang's:** P.F. Chang's issued the following release about new menu items. Note how they utilized bold and underlined text to break up the release by menu item.
  - <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20080207005286/en>
- **Curl Technologies:** Curl's agency, Lois Paul & Partners, adds a company resource section to the end of each release directing readers to their Del.icio.us, Flickr, and Photobucket pages, a link to digg (a prominent social bookmarking site), and links to blog posts via Technorati that are tagged with words that Curl deems to be valuable to their industry.
  - <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20080304005364/en>
- **Durtbagz.com:** Durtbagz.com, an online retailer, wanted to make it as easy as possible for readers of their first release to link to the company YouTube page, photo sharing sites, and Facebook page (among others).
  - <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20071121005047/en>
- **FranklinCovey:** FranklinCovey wisely utilized bullet points to highlight the strengths of one of their latest offerings.
  - <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20080107005402/en>

**While you can be creative with how you lay your release out, always remember to consider your audience and the goals for the release.**

### Hyperlinks, bullets, bold... oh my!

Business Wire's XHTML delivery provides clients with numerous options for changing the appearance of text and the layout of a document. We feel that it is important to know how and why this can help your release.

#### **Embedded links (hyperlinks from words/phrases):**

Don't know how to add an embedded link to your Word document? Click [HERE](#) to view a brief tutorial. Embedded links allow you to direct people AND search engines from words/phrases in your release to relevant and valuable pages of web content.

#### **Tips:**

- Try to keep your links to 1 link per 100/words of your release. There are exceptions as long as you're linking to pages that contain the word/phrase that you are linking from.
- These links provide an opportunity to create valuable inbound links to pages on your web site (for those links that point there).
- Contextual links can be more valuable than creating a link from an un-related word or phrase. If you are a company that does "custom widget stamping" then link from that phrase to a relevant page on your website.
  - Try this: "Today we launched our [new custom widget stamping product.](#)"
  - Instead of this: "Today we launched our new custom widget stamping product. For information, click [here.](#)"
- If you link from a company/industry-specific term, or from a company, product, or service name, try to link to a page within your website that is specific or relevant to the term that you linked from (vs. [www.homepage.com](http://www.homepage.com)).
- Avoid adding embedded links to your headline. Search engines may view this as spam.

#### **Bold text:**

Bold text is a great way to make words/phrases stand out to the reader and to the engines. Like anything else, moderation is key. You don't want to overdo it so pick and choose what you bold carefully.

#### **Bullets:**

Bullets are a great way to clearly identify key thoughts to the reader/journalist. Additionally, text that follows bullet points is given more weight by the engines. Bullets can be used to highlight key product or service details, main themes for the release (like a mini table of contents), etc.

### Valuable Additions

#### **Add multimedia:**

Numerous media studies suggest that the presence of multimedia with a release influences whether or not a journalist will use that content. Additional studies show that multimedia attracts the eyes of print and online readers.

- Multimedia elements make a release tangible

- Multimedia makes the release more robust
- Your release with multimedia allows for immediate access to content that can be used with a story or post
- Multimedia allows your content to stand out from plain text releases
- Multimedia can provide further incentive for consumers to check out your product, service, or company more closely.

#### **Add a company resource center:**

Turn your release into a full-blown online resource by directing the reader to more information about the company, product, and/or services. You could use links to provide direct access to pages or feeds within your website, incorporate social media sharing platforms that can be set up for free, and more! Here are a few ideas:

- **Link to your free photo sharing account on sites such as Flickr or Photobucket.**
  - Why? You can post photos of your team, product photos, advertisements, graphics, tradeshow photos, etc. These can all be accessible to readers of your release along with anyone searching the Net for images.
    - View [our photo gallery](http://flickr.com/photos/curltech) (<http://flickr.com/photos/curltech>)
    - View [our photos](http://s156.photobucket.com/albums/t9/curltech/) (<http://s156.photobucket.com/albums/t9/curltech/>)
- **Link to your free video sharing account on a site such as YouTube.**
  - Why? Not only are you directing readers to your product videos, instructional content, etc. from your release but your video content could be found by people performing web searches.
    - Example: Check out [our company videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/Blendtec) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/Blendtec>)
- **Direct the reader to your company page on <http://Del.icio.us>.**
  - Why? Del.icio.us acts like the “Favorites” bar on your internet browser. You can post links to your press releases, your press room, key pages within your site, articles about your industry, articles/blog posts about your company, etc. all in one place. Better yet, this information might be stumbled upon by people searching the Web and/or Del.icio.us.
    - Visit [our Del.icio.us page](http://del.icio.us/EON_Resources) ([http://del.icio.us/EON\\_Resources](http://del.icio.us/EON_Resources))
- **Provide a link for your company newsroom’s RSS feed.**
  - Why? This makes it easy for the reader to add your feed to their RSS reader ensuring that they receive all of your future releases.
    - Subscribe to [our RSS Feed](http://eon.businesswire.com/rss2/aenewstalk.xml) (<http://eon.businesswire.com/rss2/aenewstalk.xml>)
- **Link to your company blog.**
  - Why? Your company’s blog can be very important in providing a human voice to what you do. Your releases can promote and drive traffic to your blog.
    - Please visit [our blog](http://blog.hubspot.com/) (<http://blog.hubspot.com/>)
- **If they care they will share. Provide a link to an appropriate social sharing site.**
  - Why? If you write your release for your targeted audience they may choose to share it with other like-minded individuals on a social media sharing site. It’s never bad if others help spread your information!
    - Share this information on [Digg](http://www.digg.com/login) (<http://www.digg.com/login>)

#### **Anatomy lesson:**

**Create a release that provides a story for those seeking information as well as the building blocks that will also help a reporter or blogger write a better article/post.”**  
**-Brian Solis, 10/07 blog entry**

#### **Headline:**

- Your headline should be short, succinct, and influence someone to want to read your release.
- Google truncates headlines anywhere from 60-70 characters so don’t bury the important stuff. Yahoo! allows for more (approx. 120).
- Your headline becomes the page title to the search engine so the words/phrases utilized here should be important ones.

#### **First paragraph:**

- The first paragraph should clearly and succinctly state what the reader can expect from the press release.
- Avoid language such as “<your company name>, a leader in....” **Remember: Write in a human voice that will be appealing and engaging to your audience.**
- The first sentence of your release is viewed as the page description by the search engines so the words/phrases utilized here should be important ones. There are exceptions such as features-type releases.

#### **Body:**

- The Poynter Institute's [EyeTrack07 study](#) concluded that reading decreased as story length increased. Your release doesn't have to be lengthy to be successful. A shorter release can also free up budget to add a photo, graphic, or video clip to make the content more robust and tangible.
- Don't bury the lead. Cover the important information first.
- Bullet points can be used as a mini "table of contents" and/or used to highlight key messages or thoughts about the release's subject matter.
- Focus on multiple uses of your targeted key words/phrases. Our [Text Optimization Tool](#) can help with this.
- Utilize helpful and honest quotes.
- Include links, bold text, italics, underlined text, etc. when appropriate. **Moderation is key.**
- Add links to company resources. Spoon-fed links to your pages within your website, your RSS feeds, white papers or podcasts, video- and photo-sharing sites, etc. can be helpful to the reader.
- Boiler plate = company description. You can write your company description or link to a page on your website where people can get more information if they want it.
  - "For more information, please visit [www.abccompany.com/about](http://www.abccompany.com/about)."

**Add Value:**

- **DO** add a high-quality and telling photo, graphic, audio file, video file, etc. Releases issued with a multimedia element on Business Wire have been show to receive 2.5x as many page views as their plain text counterparts. Adding multimedia increases the robustness of your release and expands your distribution & web presence.
- **DO** add posting of your release to our EON:Enhanced Online News platform to ensure that your release will be positioned in perpetuity on a platform optimized for search engines and consumers. EON:Enhanced Online News significantly expands the shelf life and visibility of your release(s).

**Your Business Wire account support team is dedicated to providing you with the best possible solutions for your news. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us.**