

Why press releases are important in your marketing strategy

All companies, charities or organisations normally have a marketing plan that includes communicating with the general public or their more specific targeted audience. They may not know that they have a plan of this description (!)...and indeed the plan may not even be formulised or written down, but whether it is deliberate and captured or just part of their day-to-day activity, communication with others is crucial to the success of a company or organisation.

One easy way to communicate externally is through the use of a press release. A press release can be formal, written as a one-page round of text which is specifically sent to press contacts, or it can be written in a much more informal way, such as through the median of a newsletter, or a 'keeping you up to date' email shoot. Either way, the main reasons for using a press release as part of your marketing and communication strategy are:

- To form some sort of relationship with your customers / supporters, or potential customers / supporters, or those that are influential in the market in which you operate.
- To let people know what is happening in your company or organisation. This might include information on up and coming events or latest team news.
- To let people know about changes or developments in your service delivery. This could include informing people of the fact that you are now providing a faster service, a more enhanced service, or a whole new service!
- To shout about your successes! Have you had an increase in sales this month? Or perhaps you have been nominated for an award. Press releases are a great way of sharing this news.

So how can you create and distribute a press release? There are lots of ways to write a press release, but the most popular ways are to write up a snappy one page text, written in a style that's similar to a magazine or newspaper article. Give the text a snappy heading or title that is appealing to a reader, and keep the content clean and clear – use shorter sentences, well structured paragraphs, and don't include too many graphics or complicated images and layouts.

A press release of this nature can be distributed electronically through a number of online press release websites, and these are usually accessible free of charge. You can also send out a press release hard copy. If you choose to include this form of press release distribution, send your press release out to contacts at local newspapers, radio shows and magazines or publications.

Another form of press release that is quite popular with smaller companies or charities / organisations is to produce a newsletter that provides information about the company or organisation. This can be a one page document or a full booklet! Normally newsletters are colourful and include several stories, rather than focusing on just one prominent story. These can be distributed electronically via the press release online tools, but they can also be sent to your current customers.