

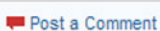
Give Your Press Release 9 Lives

This well-known PR tool can be repurposed many times.

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The press release is probably the best-known tool in the PR bag, coming in all sizes and flavors. Also called a news release, it can be written by a PR professional inside the company, a PR professional outside the company (a consultant or agency) or—in many cases with small companies—a non-PR professional who is charged with getting the company some visibility. Not surprisingly, if the company is either very new or very small, that non-PR professional may be the company founder, owner or president.

This column is not about how to write a press release that works. You've no doubt seen columns on that in the past—and we can certainly tackle that topic again in the future. Instead, let's discuss what you do with the release once it's written. Too often, PR novices see the press release as one-dimensional and short-lived. It's written, it's somehow sent out --done.

I like to think of a press release as a tool with many lives, maybe as many as nine lives, just like the proverbial cat. Let's clarify that a press release circa 2009 is nothing like a press release from just a few years ago. Yes, we sent out press releases in the days before the internet ruled our PR lives. But we targeted those releases mostly to the press. We aimed for releases with news value that our media contacts would recognize and then pass along to the real audience: People who read, listened to the radio or watched TV for their news. Sometimes media outlets would publish the release verbatim; more often, little pieces would be extracted or the whole release edited into a tiny blurb. If we hit the jackpot, the reporter or editor would decide to do a [story](#) himself, requiring an interview and maybe a photo shoot.

Not everything has changed. We still like to hit the jackpot with a release that sparks a story reported and written by a traditional media person. But a press release can be hugely successful without having a journalist act as gatekeeper and pass along the news.

Here's how a press release can have nine lives:

- 1. Distribute the release.** Use a reputable wire service to distribute your press release (we recommend sticking with BusinessWire, PR Newswire or MarketWire, although others exist that are free or practically free). This will send your news quickly and easily to thousands of locations on the web, hitting the online versions of most publications, TV and radio stations, as well as too many [blogs](#) to count. And when the release is properly search engine optimized (which is fodder for another column), the sky's the limit in terms of who may see it.
- 2. Put it on your website.** All press releases need to go onto your [company website](#). To make locating them easier, create a News Center or Press Center on the site and place all your press releases into this section. Don't send people to your home page when referring to a press release on your site or directing people to your site to read the news. Instead, link to the page where the press release can be found—or even to the actual press release. Position all newly issued releases prominently in the press center; the rest should be available, but archived.
- 3. Mention it in your blog.** Reference the press release on your company [blog](#). Even when the blog is attached to the website, it has a life of its own. Write a short blog post about each news release topic and provide a link to the press center where the full press release can be viewed. If you've done a good job of getting your blog known, this greatly increases the traffic viewing each release.
- 4. Talk about it in social media.** Reference the press release in all the social media you use: from LinkedIn to Twitter to Facebook. Again, use links. Tiny URLs are especially convenient for this; you can use [tinyURL.com](#) to turn an unwieldy link into one that's easy to reference and easy to open.
- 5. Include it in your marketing.** Use the press release in the company's marketing materials, including the sales kit used by company salespeople. The kit may be the kind you can hold in your hand, in which case you'll want printed copies of the release, or it may be virtual, containing PDFs of your press releases.
- 6. "Pitch" it to the traditional media.** The press release can, on occasion, be used as a "pitching tool." Because a press release today does not require the same news value as it did in an earlier PR era, most press releases aren't appropriate for this. But if you do have a story worthy of "pitching" to the media, a press release can be a terrific tool to help tell the story and encourage further coverage and visibility. While the wire service distribution route gives you maximum reach—spread all across the internet—you can also select just the right media targets and send the release to those outlets yourself with a personal note. E-mail is usually preferred, with the press release embedded in the body of the e-mail. Don't include it as an attachment unless you have an established relationship with your media target.
- 7. Take it to the trade show.** [Trade](#) shows are not nearly as abundant as before. Too costly, both in dollars and time. But they still exist. Some are B2B, some are consumer. Either way, your trade show press release can be used in several ways. Bring it to the press room so members of the media who attend the show can pick it up in person. You also can send it to the media before or after the show; that way those who don't attend will know what you're up to, and those who do might be more inclined to stop by your booth. You'll also want to hand it out to potential customers at your booth.
- 8. It's a networking tool.** Networking is another vehicle for distributing your press releases (although the preferred term today is "relationship building"). That's what your press release can help you do: build relationships by providing information. After you meet a candidate for a business relationship, the press release can provide further insights into what your company is all about. You don't have to send the release to the person yourself. If you've done the other steps correctly, she'll find it herself on your website or via your blog. Or she might run across a link through social media.
- 9. Internal marketing.** Internal marketing is as important as external. Use your press releases to keep your team morale vibrant. Everyone likes working with a winner—your press releases showcase your company's milestones and differentiation. Keep press releases in full view of your staff for maximum benefit.

That's a lot of life for one PR tool. But if you get these procedures down, you and your company can benefit from all nine lives.