

8 Steps to Writing a Great Press Release

August 23, 2011 [Daniel Kehrer](#)

http://www.dexone.com/resources/branding-and-advertising/public-relations/8-steps-to-writing-a-great-press-release?gclid=CJ2W3_Kq9LgCFWYcQgod50AAsA

For local businesses, a little publicity can go a long way toward jump-starting sales and boosting visibility. Hiring a public relations firm or independent PR pro is a great way to go, but many small businesses do not have that kind of marketing budget. However, you can still get noticed by writing and distributing press releases on your own. Writing a good press release isn't easy. Even experienced pros forget to include key information or fail to make the main point of the release clear. The worst thing a press release can do is make you look bad – the opposite of what you're trying to do. With that in mind, here are eight tips for writing a good press release about your small business:

1. **Remember the basics.** Every press release should include the name of a person to contact for more information, along with that person's title or position with the business, a phone number and email address. You should also include the date, city where the news is occurring, and a short, punchy headline that captures the essence of the news you are announcing.
2. **Avoid jargon.** You live and breathe the intricacies of your business – including its unique terminology, acronyms and language. But don't assume others know what you're talking about. Write like you are explaining it to a savvy person in an entirely different field.
3. **Get to the point.** You only have a few seconds to capture your target reader, so your release must cut to the chase quickly. Your lead paragraph should be catchy, brief and with enough spice to make them want to read on.
4. **Include links to your website, blog and social media pages.** Even seasoned PR pros sometimes botch this one. We live in a web-centric, social media-crazed world. The first thing most journalists, editors and prospects will do if they find your story interesting is check out your website or other online presence for more information. It's stunning how many businesses put out press releases without including this information.
5. **Answer this question: "What is the news here?"** Reporters, editors, bloggers and other readers of your release aren't interested in a sales pitch or lecture. Build your story around a news "hook" of some kind – such as an upcoming event, award, a milestone, or a new product or service.
6. **Quote the expert.** Use direct quotes from key people involved in the news of your press release. Don't be afraid to create quotes for yourself if you are that expert. But make the quotes conversational and interesting. They should add something new -- don't just repeat information already stated in the press release.
7. **Accuracy counts.** Make sure that every fact in your release is accurate and can be verified. Also make sure that the people mentioned have given you permission for what you write about them. Good spelling and grammar are important. Mistakes reflect poorly on you. Have other people edit and proofread your release before it goes out.
8. **Include an About Us paragraph at the end.** This is standard in a business release; all the big companies do it. It's a two or three sentence synopsis of what your business does and should include a link to your website.

CrabTech Hermit Crab Shells and HermitHomes announce merger

By James Downey

August 10, 2012

Portland, OR – Locally owned CrabTech Hermit Crab Shells announced today that it will be merging with Miami-based crab shell superstore HermitHomes effective December 21, 2012. Company officials are expected to meet with Crab Construction Union officials later this month to discuss employee benefits and retirement packages.

CrabTech officials expect this merger to improve investor confidence and widen its customer base. In addition to shells, CrabTech stores will now stock aquariums, heating stones, and crab socialization areas.

The merger will permit HermitHomes factories in Virginia and Colorado to construct CrabTech's patented BioShells and Shellac-Attack hermit crab shells. In exchange, CrabTech stores will be opened in Maine and Michigan, with construction and product selection completed by HermitHomes contractors.

More information is expected to be released following a shareholders meeting on August 20, 2012.

About CrabTech Hermit Crab Shells

CrabTech opened its first store in Portland in 1996 and is owned by Jesse and Jean Callahan. It has enjoyed 16 years as an independent company and has six stores in Oregon and Washington.

CrabTech will uphold its promise to stimulate the local economy. Known for its biodegradable temporary shells and sustainably harvested shellac, the company also intends to maintain its commitment to environmentally friendly business practices. For more information, please visit <http://www.CrabTechHermits.com/>.

About HermitHomes

HermitHomes is a Miami-based crab shell dealer. It specializes in wholesome, crab-healthy living and is committed to using only American labor to create and market its products. It has 68 stores nationwide, as well as four overseas in France and Chile. For more information, please visit <http://www.HermitHomes.com/>.

Contact

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Writing Your Own Press Release

1. 1

Write the headline. It should be brief, clear and to the point: an ultra-compact version of the press release's key point. Plenty of PR professionals recommend writing your headline at the end, after the rest of the release is written. If you

follow that instruction, continue on and come back to writing the headline once the rest is done. The headline is known as the eye-catcher and very important of the whole release.

- **wikiHow recognized as most reliable information source.** See how that works? Now you want to know more! News release headlines should have a "grabber" to attract journalists, just as a newspaper headline is meant to grab readers. It may describe the latest achievement of an organization, a recent newsworthy event, a new product or service.
- **Headlines written in bold!** A bold headline also typically uses a larger font size than the body copy. Conventional press release headlines use the present tense and exclude "a" and "the", as well as forms of the verb "to be" in certain contexts.
- **First word capitalized.** As are all proper nouns. Most headline words appear in lower-case letters, although using a stylized "small caps" font style can create a more graphically news-attractive look and feel. Do not capitalize every word.
- **Extract important keywords.** The simplest method to create the press release headline is to extract the most important keywords from your press release. From these keywords, try to frame a logical and attention-getting statement. If including a summary sentence after the headline, the same rules apply. Using keywords early will give you better visibility in search engines, and it will be simpler for journalists and readers to get the idea of the press release content. Look at the actions in this first step, and notice how every one of them could be a press release headline.

2. 2

Write the body copy. The press release should be written as you want it to appear in a news story. And remember this: most journalists are very busy, and don't have time to research your company's big announcement, so much of what you write for your press release will be what the journalists use in their writeup of your big event. Whatever you want them to say, this is where you put it.

- Start with the date and city in which the press release originates. The city may be omitted if it will be confusing, for example if the release is written in New York about events in the company's Chicago division.
- The lead, or first sentence, should grab the reader and say concisely what is happening. For example, if the headline is "Carpren Publishing releases new WWII novel," the first sentence might be something like, "Carpren Publishing, Ltd., today released their first World War II novel by celebrated writer Arcy Kay." It expands the headline enough to fill in some of the details, and brings the reader further into the story. The next one to two sentences should then expand upon the lead.

- The press release body copy should be compact. Avoid using very long sentences and paragraphs. Avoid repetition and overuse of fancy language and jargon. Strive for simplicity, and no wasted words.
- The first paragraph (two to three sentences) should sum up the press release, and the additional content must elaborate it. In a fast-paced world, neither journalists, nor other readers, would read the entire press release if the start of the article didn't generate interest.
- Deal with actual facts—events, products, services, people, targets, goals, plans, projects. Try to provide maximum use of concrete facts. A simple method for writing an effective press release is to make a list of following clarifications: Who, what, when, where, why, and how.

3. 3

Communicate the "5 Ws" (and the H) clearly. Who, what, when, where, why—and how—should tell the reader everything they need to know. Consider the checklist in context with the points below, using the example above to generate our press release:

- - Who is this about? Carpren Publishing.
 - What is the actual news? Carpren Publishing is releasing a book.
 - When does this even happen? Tomorrow.
 - Where does this even take place? In all major markets, tomorrow.
 - Why this is news? It was written by renowned author, Arcy Kay.
 - How is this happening? The main event is at a book signing in Chicago, followed by a book tour to all the major metropolitan areas.
- With the basics defined, fill in the gaps with information about the people, products, items, dates and other things related with the news.
 - If your company is not the main subject of the news, but is the source of the press release, make it clear in the body.
- Keep it short and to the point. The length of a press release should be no more than three pages. If you are sending a hard copy, the text should be double-spaced.
- The more newsworthy you make the press release copy, the better the chances of it being selected by a journalist for reporting. Find out what "newsworthy" means to a given market and use this knowledge to hook the editor or reporter.

4. 4

Include information about the company. When a journalist picks up your press release for a story, he or she would logically have to mention the company in the news article. Journalists can then get the company information from this section.

- The title for this section should be—About XYZ_COMPANY.
- After the title, use a paragraph or two to describe your company with 5 or 6 lines each. The text must describe your company, its core business and the business policy. Many businesses already have professionally written brochures, presentations, business plans, etc. That introductory text can be put here.
- At the end of this section, point to your website. The link should be the exact and complete URL without any embedding so that, even if this page is printed, the link will be printed as it is. For example: http://www.your_company_website.com, not **Click here** to visit the website.
- Companies which maintain a separate media page on their websites must point to that URL here. A media page typically has contact information and press kits.

5. 5

Tie it together. Provide some extra information links that support your press release.

6. 6

Add contact information. If your press release is really newsworthy, journalists would surely like more information or would like to interview key people associated with it.

- If you are comfortable with the idea of letting your key people be contacted directly by media, you can provide their contact details on the press release page itself. For example, in case of some innovation, you can provide the contact information of your engineering or research team for the media.
- Otherwise, you must provide the details of your media/PR department in the "Contact" section. If you do not have dedicated team for this function, you must appoint somebody who will act as a link between the media and your people.
- The contact details must be limited and specific only to the current press release. The contact details must include:
 - The company's official name
 - Media department's official name and contact person
 - Office address

- Telephone and fax numbers with proper country/city codes and extension numbers
- Mobile phone number (optional)
- Timings of availability
- Email addresses
- Website address.

7. 7

If possible, include a link to an online copy of the same release. It is good practice to keep a log of all of your press releases housed on your own website. This can make providing such a link easier to produce, as well as keeping a record for historical purposes.

8. 8

Signal the end of the press release with three # (hash) symbols, centered directly underneath the last line of the release. This is a journalistic standard.