

Press relations

THE PRESS RELEASE AND PRESS KIT

A Press Release is the most common means used to share information with the media. It generally consists of a one-page document, two-three pages' maximum. It is primarily sent via email. It announces something current, such as a discovery or something novel, new, unique; a promotion or appointment; findings or updates about a program; a study or a particular event. It should follow the standard written format in order to be easily understood. In order to stand out from the pool of other press releases, it's good to know certain rules and tips.

The PRESS KIT is a packet of documents that includes the Press Release and other documents that provide more detailed information about the subject. It is generally used when doing a media press conference where it is usually distributed or during an event.



The Press Release

THE FORM

► **Limit the length/number of pages**

Ideally, one page, 2-3 pages maximum. Some media will reprint the Press Release as it is sent, verbatim, so this just another reason to make sure it's not too lengthy.

► **Title + "Catchy Headline" or sub-title**

Provide the essential information and a "catchy opening" to attract reader attention. Don't repeat the same information that appears in the Title in the Headline.

► **Aerate**

Space the text so it's readable, leaving adequate spaces and margins between the main text, the line spacing, symbols, and headings. The Press Release should be presented in such a way that it doesn't put the reader off at first glance.

► **Show that it concerns a document reserved to the media**

Be clear in the Title to indicate that this document is a "Press Release," aimed at journalists, concerning the news media and not a publicity notice.

► **The date**

The Date is important for the journalists to reserve the date in their agendas and also for their archives.

► **The "press contact"**

Press Contact: This is essential to include in the Press Release, the name and contact information for the person(s) authorized to speak on behalf of the organization and answer any media questions.

► **Verify**

A title, a **chapô**, a date, the indication "Press release", the press contact, an address Internet where visuals or further information, mini presentation of the organization can be downloaded, at the end of the release with facts and figures (this paragraphe is called «About the...» or «Note to editors» or just the name of the organization).

Send the Press Release to the media organization's editorial chief who will then forward it the journalists and others concerned regarding coverage. Be sure to have the correct information for this person (name, title, contact information).

EXAMPLE of a Title and a Headline:

Tribunal delivers its Advisory Opinion regarding illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

- The Tribunal for the Law of the Sea recently delivered its Advisory Opinion on the Request submitted to the Tribunal by the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission of West Africa (CSRP) regarding the issue of illegal, unreported, and undeclared fishing (IUU) practiced in many of the region's coastal countries which contributes to the progressive depletion of fishing stocks.
- The Advisory Opinion clarifies the obligations that the States must assume as far as combating IUU is concerned.

THE CONTENT

▶ **Announce one single fact per release**

To avoid confusion.

▶ **Avoid over selling. Be factual. Bannish the superlatives. Be precise and complete**

Avoid using superlatives and judgements. Stick to the facts. Be specific, provide detailed information i.e, data, statistiques, dates. Without this information the release may be viewed as an advertisement.

▶ **Provide contextual elements**

For example, note examples of studies done by other organizations that address this topic. This is a way to put the topic being addressed in the Press Release in a broader context.

▶ **Use phrases that demonstrate «a slant»**

When reading a Press Release a journalist is first all looking for two basic things: Novelty and Uniqueness. For instance, «The first person to walk on the moon.» (novelty); «The only tools with a lifetime warranty guarantee.» (uniqueness). Of course, make sure that the thing really is «new» and «unique» and can be verified as such, which is not as easy as it sounds.

▶ **Use Quotations**

The «human aspect» is always the most important part of any communication and in a Press Release, in particular. A journalist will seek to personify a fact which will serve to «put a human face» on your message, thus making it more memorable. A quotation can be «invented», in agreement with its «author» or an actual direct statement coming from a leader, stakeholder, or a partner.

Attention:

Do not be mistaken about the target audience. A Press Release is intended for the media/journalists, not for clients or donors or others to be convinced. It is not an advertisement. It is important to be measured in the words used, keeping the tone neutral and objective as in an article. Also, keep in mind that some media will run part or all of the release verbatim. They are more likely to do this if it reads more like a news article.

EMAIL DISSEMINATION

- ▶ **File Size:** If sending the Press Release via Email, then pay attention to the file size, making sure it is not too big. Ideally, 1 Go or less, sent as Word document with text that can easily copied and pasted.
- ▶ **Subject:** Write an attention grabbing subject line (but not overselling and definitely not fake!) giving the basic information. Be aware that often on the first three words are visible in messaging software; therefore, the first three words you choose are crucial. A good email subject line is essential as it is the journalist's first contact with the information.
- ▶ **Make a "Pitch"** at the very beginning of the email, attention about two-three lines that give the key information and encourage the journalist to read the release in the email or as an attachment. If the "pitch" is personalized then even better.
- ▶ If sending a group email, make sure the person being addressed is the only visible recipient and all others listed as "Blind Copy" – BCC. When a journalist receives the email she should not see the names others who have been sent the exact same copy.



Press Kit

The Press kit is a package of documents that is made up of the Press Release and additional documents that provide more detailed information about the subject, for example, images, graphics, bibliographies, etc., and its creation must be fully justified. It should be organized, generally following the format of an Overview Summary, the Press Release, then, depending on the subject and length, various sections with numbered pages. It may be sent by Email or distributed during the press conference or an event.

A good presentation is very important. Do not forget that a press kit, just like the press release, contributes to the image of the organization. Given the increased use of the Internet, Press Kits are not as thick, often just providing links to the different web spaces (organization Website, YouTube, Flickr, etc.) where additional information can be had, thus reducing sending files that are too heavy by computer.

Creating a Press Kit is most often justified for use during a Press Conference where a lot of the information being shared includes lots of data and statistics or, where there will be several stakeholders intervening. Also, a description of the organization should also be included in the dossier, with basic facts including an overview about its history, programs, projects, an analysis of the contexts, its results, etc.

Depending on the organization, and the resources available, a lot of imagination can go into the making of a Press Kit.

THE PRESS RELEASE AND PRESS KIT

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COMMUNICATION ADVICE WORKSHEET



FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR
L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL