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**Genre Analysis-Press Releases**

A press release is a written piece of communication to promote something that a business considers newsworthy. In these competitive market days, companies can use a lot of help to make sure their business stands out above the others, and press releases are a great way to do so. They basically advertise the achievements or improvements of a business and its employees to the public through news television, newspapers, magazines, and online journals. Any media outlet that is interested in the story will pick it up and the readers or followers of that media will be the audience. Press releases are an important way to share what is happening in businesses and are basically a free version of advertising to the public audience. Because of the formal and emotionless style common in press releases, they are very effective in sharing news with a public audience.

Press releases are often the only thing the public will see about certain companies, and since those companies want to appear professional to customers, it is important that they are taken seriously and written in the best way possible. Most commonly, public relations firms or marketing departments of businesses are responsible for writing press releases. Employees in both are well trained in writing, specifically in business writing for the public. They are usually expected to have great knowledge of formal tones and understanding of the press release format. The authors of press releases have to know how to write in a clear and concise style. Also, the content of press releases rarely appeals to a reader’s emotions. They are meant to report news, not spark a feeling in the audience. For example, in a part of the press release for Shoestring Commerce Inc, there is very little written outside the main facts the business wants to promote. The excerpt reads, “The new service, which can be found, installed and implemented at http://www.shoestringcommerce.com, helps the small- to medium-sized retailer buy, receive and track vendor performance from anywhere with an Internet connection” (e-releases). As observed, Shoestring Commerce Inc. wants the readers of this press release to notice the improvements their company is making and not only notice something like a beautifully written letter. For this reason, press releases can be considered boring, but they are highly effective. After reading the entire Shoestring Commerce press release, the reader will likely have a perfect understanding to the changes the company is making, which is exactly what Shoestring Commerce was aiming for.

When writing a press release, there are key sections that go into almost every one, and each section holds importance to its effectiveness. First, there must be a catchy headline to attract the reader’s attention. The headline lets the reader know the importance of the press release and usually which company is involved. Also, as in most writing pieces, there is an introduction that focuses on a brief explanation of the “who, what, when, where, and why” of the entire release. If all of that information can be written in one or two sentences, it will grab the readers’ attention right away and leave them wanting to know the rest of the details. It also helps the readers sort out quickly which press releases are important to them and which are not. If the reader notices a headline and an introduction paragraph that interests them right away, they will know the press release regards an industry or business they want to pay close attention to. Any improvements or change in that industry will be very important to the reader and the press release will help clarify what the change means and any impact it will have. After the introduction, like in most pieces of writing, comes the body. It is the majority of the press release and gives background information on the company, extra details to expand on the headline and introduction, and facts about the story that the business feels the public should know. It generally explains the importance of what the press release is about to the reader.

Finally, the release ends with a “boilerplate”, which is a generic couple of sentences that gives an “about” overview of the company, or individual’s purpose and background. Although the boilerplate may seem unnecessary, it can help the business attract more customers. If readers are interested in the press release, they may be interested in more information on what that company does as a whole. For example, if a senior citizen is interested in a press release from American Specialty Health Inc on opportunities for senior health fitness programs, they may want to know more about the company to share with family and friends. The boilerplate on the press release reads, “American Specialty Health Incorporated (ASH) is a national health and wellness company that provides population health management programs including wellness and prevention, specialty network management programs, and fitness and exercise services to health plans, insurance carriers, employer groups, and trust funds. Based in San Diego, ASH has 700 employees and covers over 15 million members” (ashcompanies.com). The boilerplate is only a few sentences long but provides expansive information about what the company provides that would otherwise not be included in the release. The senior citizen reader will notice that American Specialty Health does not only do things for seniors, and may share that information with others, gaining extra business for the company. The boilerplate can sometimes be the most interesting part of a press release for a reader, as they learn something new about a company they may have not previously heard of. It is advertising in the simplest, cheapest form. All of these requirements for press releases are usually constrained within one or two pages to keep the story from getting too wordy and keep the reader from losing interest.

As seen, press releases are extremely structured and formal, making them very appropriate for businesses and readers alike. It is an easy way to get important information out quickly, which is vital as companies are competing to be the first one to accomplish anything newsworthy. Press releases give the media outlets and the public the opportunity to pick which stories interest them and share them with others. As said before, although press releases are not always the most entertaining things to read, they are extremely helpful tools for businesses to share what is happening in their world, and for the public to understand it.