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**Press Release Analysis**

  A press release is a common tool used to disseminate information about an event, new product or service, or a new business. Most often, press releases are written for members of the media to be used as a source of information when writing a new story, or preparing a script for radio or television news. Because the release is more targeted to members of the press, the style of writing is usually quite formal, so that it will sound very professional should it be cited in their work. The format for writing press releases has been standardized, and includes 7 main components to make the releases easy to draft quickly (many businesses will have a template on hand so they can make a release in a timely manner to the media if the release is reacting to an emergency, or public problem). We will explore the 7 different parts of a press release, and explain why each is important to a good press release. Because both the content, and the formatting are vital to a successful release, the importance of each is reiterated below.
   The content of a press release is what journalists will rely on to cover the topic of the release. First, an introductory paragraph which looks to answer the basic questions of who, what, where, when, why. This information is located near the top, mainly because this is the most important content in the release. This section covers the main idea, and this is where most of the facts are found. Additionally, keeping all of this information confined to one paragraph makes it much easier for the journalist who is attempting to write a story from the release. Instead of having to scan over the entire release, the journalist knows that the key facts are located in the first paragraph. After reading the first paragraph of most releases, the journalist will have a pretty good idea of what story they will write (whether they are covering an event, a product release, or a personal statement), the main facts, and also an idea of what outside research they will need to do to complete their piece. After the introductory paragraph, the body of the press release is used for supporting information; statistics, quotes, details providing the tools for journalists to write complete developed stories without the need for a lot of extra research. The body paragraph is very important for the person or organization issuing the release, becasue the supporting information they provide is most likely what will be used by journalists. The very best information, that you would want to be included with every news article should be clearly stated, sourced, and organized. The easier it is for a journalist to clearly understand all of the information provided in the body paragraph, the more likely they are to put it in their article. After all of the information pertaining to the subject of the press release has been covered, the release includes a paragraph known as a "boilerplate", which is a paragraph that is typically standard between all press release of the same company, or individual, and it contains basic background information. The boiler plate is an essential part of the press release, because it adds convenience for the journalist, and consistency between news organizations because all outlets are getting their information from the same source
    Although the content of a release is very important, and much time must be spent on ensuring that your message is clear, proper formatting is important to catch the attention of journalists. If the release does not catch their attention, or if information is not clearly displayed within the article, there is a good chance that they will not cover your topic. The first part of a press release is a headline, which should grab attention, so that a journalist looking through a list of new press releases will be interested in writing a story about that release. If a release does not have a good headline, it will likely be overlooked, and there will not be substantial media coverage for the organization releasing the information. Next is a dateline, which contains the date, and sometimes the city from which the release was issued. This dateline basically provides more information to the news outlet, allowing them to sort out news that may be more important for their outlet. Press releases will generally be considered more newsworthy depending on their timeliness (Online media outlets want to publish stories instantly, so being outdated by a day is huge for that audience, while printed media has a little more leeway, neither will print old news), and also the proximity to the news outlets audience. For example the opening of a new business is much bigger news in the community where it is located, than a city 30 miles away. After the rest of the content, most press releases contain a symbol to show the end (typically "###") this signifies the end of the release to the journalist so there is not confusion about whether or not there are additional pages which may have become separated. The final element of a press release is the inclusion of contact information for a representative of the company or individual who published the release. By adding contact information, journalists with specific question can quickly contact the proper person, and publish stories in the most timely manner. Also, by providing direct contact information for a spokesperson, the issuing company has even more control of where the journalists information will come from, and can make sure that their message is not distorted by poor research.
    The format of a press release is very specific, and can be confusing at first, but having a standard allows for the entire process to be very efficient for both journalists, and organizations. Well organized press releases ensure that a companies message is published in the manner in which they wanted. Also, the standard format allows for journalists to quickly write stories from a press release, which is a win for both sides; the writer does not have to work as hard, and may be more likely to cover what is in the press release, and also, the faster a journalist can publish their article, the more immediate the coverage will be for the releasing company, or individual. The press release is an invaluable tool for controlling the spread of information, and sharing a predetermined message through all types of news outlets at little or no cost. The format that we dissected makes it convenient for both companies and journalists to allow for timely publishing of news and information.