

CHAPTER 5

CATCHING AN EDITOR'S "EYE"

"Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the thinks you can think up if only you try!"

~ Dr. Seuss



What makes it newsworthy?

Newspaper editors ask a simple question: What will our readers get out of this story? Is it newsworthy, timely, or important? Is a company promotion or new hire a story of great interest? No one cares unless it affects them directly. Nor does anyone care about your business making money—even if they buy your product or service. Consumers only care about a company's financial success if they are a stockholder. So don't confuse your company's news with being of interest to consumers. With the press, sending them a non-story or advertisement means the trash can, at best. So build your reputation with the press by sending them news written in a similar, journalistic style that they feel is of value to their readership. That's the best way to be taken seriously and get your story published.

Newspapers love human interest stories, especially about someone local who is within their community and service area. Pique their interest! By feeding them good stories, you'll get the ink that helps provide credibility. That's priceless.

A funny but true example that was once explained to me this way is: It's not news when the dog bites the mailman. It IS news when the mailman bites the dog! Your goal is to come up with valuable consumer information or something truly unique—or even a timely event for a non-profit or a large community cause where an editor will feel it is worth the editorial space in his or her newspaper.

After you write up your story (in standard press release format) ask yourself: "Would I read it?" Does it sell rather than tell a story? (If it smells too commercial, an editor will not accept it, and instead the newspaper's salesperson may call to try and sell you on advertising space!) And finally, could you put your competitor's name in exchange of your company's name? If the answer is "yes," then you don't have an original story—rewrite and make it something that is unique to you so that there is good reason to tell people. If you have never written a press release or are not sure what "press release format" is, it's a very easy format; usually just one page (sent in the body of an e-mail to the appropriate editors) as shown below.



Press Release Sample Template:

Whether you are sending the release electronically (preferred), mailing it, or faxing it, place it on company letterhead. Do not include photos when sending it electronically. Make them available upon request and be sure to send high-resolution photos when you send them.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (always in caps)

CONTACT: Contact Person (Who the media should contact for more specific information)

Company Name: (Your company)

Phone Number & E-mail Address: (Contact person's information)

For faxed press releases: center your headline; put your headline in bold or in caps; use 14 font size, larger than the text body font size, which should be 12; for e-mailed press releases, put the headline in your "subject line" and your sub-headline directly below it.

Editor's