

Five top tips for promoting your firm



Getting free coverage in the media promotes your firm and positions you as an expert in your field, but how do you get journalists interested? Chantal Cooke offers advice on how to get free publicity on TV, radio and in print with just four hours' work each month.

A good way to spread the word about your firm and the services you offer is to enlist the help of journalists and broadcasters, but how do you convince them that your company is worth shouting about?

The best way to start is by creating a press release that details who you are and what you do, but it's essential that your press release is as clear and concise as possible. A badly written press release is better than no press release at all, but obviously a well crafted one will put your case across in the best possible light.

When penning your press release, the key point to remember is that this is your communication with the journalist - not with your potential clients or readers/viewers – so you need to address it to the journalist and ensure that you give them what they need to know. The top five things to remember when writing a press release are:

- **Headline:** It's imperative that your headline is clear and gets to the point straight away. Journalists receive hundreds of press releases every day, so you need to supply the necessary information immediately. Clever headlines that don't reveal anything are not helpful and will probably result in your press release being relegated to the bin. If your press release does what it says on the tin, it's a good indicator that you do too, which can only be a good thing.
- **Cut the waffle:** Your main text, like your headline, should get to the point as quickly as possible. A long page of prose is likely to put off the reader and won't get your message across, so cut out any unnecessary jargon or 'sales talk'. Using bullet points can help to refine your main ideas and draw the reader's attention.
- **Your identity:** Be clear about who you are. Unless the journalist understands who you are and what you do, they won't be interested. This is your opportunity to add credibility to your firm, so include a brief summary of the firm (and if appropriate, your own professional experience) and ask yourself the question: 'why should anyone trust my expertise in this area'?
- **Contact details:** Make sure you include all your contact details, including your landline number, mobile number, email and website. Journalists often work to tight deadlines so you have to make it easy for them to contact you. Remember that if they can't reach you, they will probably go elsewhere.
- **Format:** When formatting your press release, remember to make it as easy as possible for the reader to access the content. If you are sending the release via email put it in the body of the email (not as an attachment) and make sure that the layout is easy to read. Extra files to open, closely packed text, and reams of irrelevant background information are all likely to stop journalists from looking at your information.

Finally, when you do send out the press release, make sure that you have someone available to talk to the journalist; don't send the release if you are about to go on holiday. If they follow up on it they will need to speak to you further, so make sure you have a spokesperson available who knows their stuff and feels confident speaking to the media.

A poor press release is better than no press release, but a bad interview can be worse than no interview. Journalists like to deal with people who are easy to work with and deliver what they promise. If that's not yet you, don't start to cross any bridges that you may end up burning.

Chantal Cooke is co-founder of the Passion for the Planet group of radio stations. See <http://www.passionfortheplanet.com> for more information.