



Dealing with the Media

The Media Release

The Elements

Catchy Title

Your media release heading should be exciting so the recipients want to keep reading. Figures always grab attention. For example V8s inject \$34.2M into Townsville economy.

Important Information First

The first paragraph needs to tell the recipient everything your release is about. Stick to who, what, where, why and how. Remember, journalists and editors are constrained by deadlines so will only read the first paragraph to assess a release.

The Rules

Write in Past Tense

Use “said” not “says”. A release is about something that has occurred in the past.

Choose Your Words Carefully

Language is important, not only does it assist journalists with their stories but it also adds excitement to the releases and will attract more coverage. Start each sentence with the subject of the sentence. For example “Jill sat on the chair” not “The chair was sat on by Jill”. Use descriptive words. For example “spike” not “sharp rise”.

Read it Aloud

Always read your media release out loud. This will enable you to ensure the release flows well.

Interviews

Different media outlets want different things from an interview.

Television

Want a soundbite. 15 seconds maximum to run with a two minute story.

Things to remember:

- Don't look at the camera, look at the interviewer and be as natural as possible
- Avoid wearing stripes (they can create a fuzzy effect on the picture)
- Chat with the journalist until you are feeling comfortable – don't rush
- Interviews can be edited, so feel free to start over if you stumble over your words

Radio

- Make sure you know if the interview is live or pre-recorded
- Live is LIVE, don't respond “off the cuff”. Stick to your key messages (usually contained in the media release)
- Pre-recorded interviews give you the opportunity to repeat answers to questions. Take advantage of this opportunity if you feel you haven't expressed your point clearly
- They are chasing a soundbite for a 30 second news story (eight seconds) but will possibly use flowing dialogue in a longer feature outside of the news bulletin
- Try to avoid “ums” and “ahhs” if possible. Pauses are ok and quite natural

Newspaper

- Everything you say is recorded
- Do not misspeak or say anything you do not want printed
- Print journalists want longer, more in-depth analysis of stories and will run a number of direct quotes. The average length of a quote is about 30 words.

Other Rules

- Never ever say “no comment”
- Do not speak on any issues you don't have the authority to speak on
- Make sure media enquiries are passed through the appropriate hands
- Make sure interviews are consistent with strategies



Relationships

The best advertising your business can receive is positive press coverage. It costs nothing and is an objective, third party assessment of your business which people are more likely to trust than a paid advertisement. Developing relationships with local, national and international media can be a great way of improving your profile.

Tips for forming effective relationships with the media

- 1.** Never ever say no – most media outlets are running on tight schedules and their stress levels are running high. If you can't personally help them, put them in touch with someone who can. The more positive interactions with them the more likely they will come back to you.
- 2.** Be accommodating – put yourself out to help the media. Maintaining a successful relationship with a media organisation requires mutual respect.
- 3.** Be available – if you have made contact with the media through a media release, make sure you are available to comment.
- 4.** Be proactive – most media outlets are always on the lookout for new content or stories. Take advantage of this, call them, email them, drop in and visit. If the media don't know who you are, you won't get coverage. But... know when to stop!
- 5.** If you are looking for television coverage, remember television requires vision! Have some idea of things for the camera to shoot. The more creative the better!
- 6.** Don't play favourites. Give all your media outlets the same opportunities.