

PUBLICITY

A No-Cost Way To Promote Your Business

A Special Report for Small Business Owners!

by George Shaddock

Learn how to write your own willing publicity for the
FREE promotion of your business.

Including the most frequently asked questions (FAQs)
about
working with freelance writers.

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How to write your own Press Release

for FREE PUBLICITY

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If you're like other small business operators, you need to let the market know about you and your products or service, but don't want to spend the money on a full-blown advertising program! This booklet will show you how to write your own Publicity Release, *which costs you nothing!*

A PRESS RELEASE

A Press Release (also called news release) is information written by someone in your company or a public relations organization, to announce to the public new products or services, or any of a variety of happenings that might be of interest to the local, regional, national, or professional community.

VALUE OF PUBLICITY

A published press release is called "Publicity." News coverage by the media, either by press release or news reporter coverage, of the products, services, activities, events, positions, and people that their readers want to read about, forms the complete range of publicity. Favorable publicity is considered by many to be more reliable than advertising.

NO GUARANTEES

There is no guarantee that your press release will be printed since it is up to the editor, his needs, interest, and available space. A press release has a greater chance of being published if it is newsy, concise, factual (answers questions starting with: who, what, where, when, and how), and accurate

Publicity is FREE and VALUABLE

It's up to you to get your share

THE MEDIA NEED YOU

Editors of newspapers, magazines, trade journals, etc., know that they cannot possibly cover all items of interest to their readers through their reporter staff, so they rely on press releases detailing specific items of news. Fresh, newsy, and factual information that they feel is of interest, coming to their attention by means of a press release, is as valuable to them as the resulting publicity is to the company submitting the release. For this reason, you should never feel as though you are begging a favor of the media when you submit a release. Further, you should not stop submitting releases if the first one you submit is not printed.

DO IT YOURSELF

One of the nice things about a press release is that you can write it yourself. You improve your chances of being published if you adhere to the following:

- What you write should be clear, accurate, and newsy!
- Provide facts and avoid puffery (watch those adjectives). This is not an advertisement.
- Keep your release simple and straightforward.
- Follow the suggestions below.

HUNDREDS OF OPPORTUNITIES

The following list shows a few types of things that can be covered by a press release. There are virtually hundreds of things that might qualify. Review these few, then be creative.

- Opening of a new business
- Change of company name, slogan, or logo
- New Partner
- Unusual people, products, ways of doing business
- Business event
- New Product
- Product improvement
- New version or model of an old product
- Publication of new or revised sales literature -- brochures, catalogs,
- Data sheets, surveys
- Special events i.e. sale, open house, party, plant tour, contest, or sweepstakes.

TYPES OF RELEASES

As for types of press releases, consider the following:

- The announcement of a forthcoming event. (Submit your press release to the appropriate media at least 2 weeks to 1 month before the event.)
- If the release covers the growth of your company or the development of your product, it should include complete and accurate background information.

- A "Feature" release covers current happenings, products, services, or people. Our example is this type of release.
- The "Follow-up" release tells what happened after the fact (for example: how many people attended the plant tour, etc.). Submit this release immediately following the event. .

ELEMENTS OF A RELEASE

The written elements of a press release should include the following:

RELEASE INFORMATION.

- Tell the editor who or what company is submitting the release.
- State the company address, city, state and telephone number.
- Give the time and date of the release submission.
- Provide the name, title, and telephone number of the person to be contacted for additional information.
- The requested publication date indicated. This can be anything from "For Immediate Release," to "Release at your convenience."

HEADLINE AND BODY TEXT

- Your headline should immediately capture the reader's interest. Many people refer to this as the "Grabber," or "Hook." It should sum up your story in one to three lines.
- Write the body text in paragraphs of descending order of importance.
- If the release is longer than the available space, editors will cut-to-fit from the end. If your most important information is in the first paragraph, the essence of your release will remain intact. Keep your body text simple, straightforward and newsy.
- Provide answers to all questions starting with: who, what, when, where, how. Present the body information in a factual and newsy way. If you quote anyone in the body text, be sure to include the full name (correctly spelled) of the person quoted.
- Shoot for a word count of 150 - 350 words maximum.
- Type one of the following if your release takes two pages or more: -More- or -Continued-
- At the end of your release, type one of the following to indicate to the editor that this is the end: ### or -END- or -30- Center indicators you choose between left and right margins.

- Indicate in the lower left hand corner: Approx. Word count XXX (include headline and body text only).

FORMAT

- **There is no absolute format for a press release. What** you say is more important than format. Clarity and accuracy are most important. A good clean format with all your information presented in a clear and orderly way, makes it easy for the editor to understand your message.
- Type your press release, regardless of format, with double space lines and generous margins.
- Always include the name, title, and phone number of a specific person to contact for additional information.
- Always include an approximate word count. You may differ with the newspaper or magazine in the way you count words, but you should be within an acceptable range (5 - 10 words).
- If you include a picture with your release, style it after the type of pictures found in newspapers. Close up shots are better than distant shots. Newspapers usually use a 65 - 85 line screen, which means that the dots reproducing the picture in print are loosely spaced. Magazines use anywhere from 200 to 300 line screens and can reproduce detail more effectively.
- You must include the date of the picture and the names of everyone in the picture (correctly spelled) identified from left to right. Contact the media about pictures since the editor may wish to assign a staff photographer to your event.

HOW TO SUBMIT

Some think that you should submit the release to the Managing Editor only of a newspaper or magazine, with no mention of a specific name. Others feel that you should contact the newspaper, magazine or whatever media you wish to receive the release and find out who would be the proper person (with title) to receive the release.

I suggest the second method, confirming the necessary information by phone. I also suggest you get the fax number of the proper contact. If possible, talk directly to the proper contact and tell him or her you are planning to submit a press release regarding (subject). Indicate that you will FAX the release immediately and ask for a call if there are any questions. Then FAX the release. After submitting your release, *leave it alone.*

The editor will make his decision based on his analysis of the news worthiness of your release as compared to others, and space available. You will not help yourself or better the chances of your release appearing in print by pestering him. You may sabotage your efforts by such calls.

SUBMIT TO WHOM?

Submit your press release to any newspaper, magazine, newsletter, trade journal or any other media that covers your market area. Don't overlook radio and TV stations. You will find the description of the editorial staff within the first two or three pages of any newspaper or magazine. As noted above, I recommend you call the Managing Editor to determine the name of the person to receive your press release. If you do not wish to call (long distance charges, etc.) send your release to the Managing editor.

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On the positive assumption that your release will arouse interest, be prepared to provide additional information if the editor, or someone assigned by him, should call.. The best way to do this is to prepare a "Position statement."

YOUR POSITION STATEMENT

If you have written a "Mission statement" for your business, your job is almost done. If not, read on.

- In no more than three sentences, write who you (your company) are. This should be less what you are but more how you or your business benefit people. When people see your name, what do they think of? What is your image? This might be the same answer you would give to a dinner partner who asked, "What do you do?" A dentist who says, "I'm a dentist," may conjure up pictures of torturous drilling. Instead, he might say, "I help people keep a beautiful smile."
- In 150 words or less, profile the type or groups of people who represent your prospective market. Explain why these people are important to you and how they benefit from your product or service.
- Describe your two primary goals in no more than four sentences.

FOLLOW UP

When your press release is published, you might want to drop a "Thank you" note to the editor. A short phone call might also help. If the editor has expressed enough confidence in your release to publish it, and has received no negatives from his readers, he will be more receptive to releases from you in the future. The

establishment of a relationship can be helpful, however, don't presume that he will publish future releases based on your relationship.

GO FOR IT!

You should have enough overview of a press release now to **WRITE YOUR FIRST PRESS RELEASE AND SUBMIT IT**. The value of Publicity to you and your business is well worth the small effort involved. Just remember to keep it newsy, concise, factual and accurate!

GETTING ADDITIONAL MILEAGE

Copies of your published press release can be helpful when used to support a presentation of your product or service. A copy of the release can also be sent out in your "inquiry response" packet, along with your brochure or any other information you might wish to include.

FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

If your need is for a more polished publicity release, or a release that will tie in to your advertising, the next section provides FAQs (frequently asked questions) about working with a Freelance professional copywriter should provide some assistance.

Frequently asked questions about working with a freelance (professional) copywriter.

The following are a few of the frequently asked questions (FAQs) that might be helpful to you in deciding when and how to work with a professional copywriter.

Let's be clear about terms!

Freelance copywriters (**people who write copy for advertising or promotion or press releases**) *are professionals working for you.*

Copywriters working for an advertising agency **are not freelance (unless they are moonlighting)**. *They work for the advertising agency . . . not you!*

FAQ 101 - Why should I hire a freelance copywriter?

It's good business to have any written communication that presents your company, its goods or services, done professionally. If you currently deal with an advertising agency, much of your advertising copy will be prepared by them.

When you need collateral materials such as brochures and flyers, or have special projects such as direct mail offerings, lead mailings, or sales presentation scripting, a freelance copywriter can be a valuable asset. If you try to get these things done through your advertising agency, you may not get the copywriting talent the job requires, and the cost of the agency overhead can increase the cost of your job more than necessary. A professional freelance copywriter is a craftsman skilled in the use of words to accomplish your specific goal. You are purchasing his talent for the specific task - without lengthy commitment.

FAQ 102 - How can a freelance copywriter know enough about my company or the features and benefits of my product or service to write about them?

It's up to you to provide the copywriter with enough background information on your company and the specific product or service to be described to enable the copywriter to write with conviction and excitement. A professional copywriter knows how to convert this information into an orderly, tightly-written presentation necessary to accomplish your desired goal.

FAQ 103 - Shouldn't I get an advertising agency to handle my needs?

If you already have an advertising agency, they may be willing to take on a special assignment. You may never know who wrote the copy for your project. The costs will reflect their agency overhead. If you do not have an agency, it's doubtful that you'll get a new one to handle any special project without your committing to a significant annual advertising budget involving media space or air time.

FAQ 104 - How much will a freelance writer cost me?

Much depends on the type of work you need done. The more clearly you can describe your need, the easier it is for the freelance writer to provide an accurate estimate. If you want to work with a famous copywriting specialist, you will pay a significantly higher price. There are times when this is absolutely justified. If your needs can be handled by a generalist, your costs will be lower. You will still be dealing with a skilled professional, not an hourly employee. Expect to pay professional rates.

FAQ 105 - How do I tell a freelance copywriter what I want done?

Describe the project and its scope as completely as possible and define what you want to accomplish with the finished work. Gather all available printed materials (yours and your competitors) that are closely related to your project. Make all materials available to your copywriter. It will also help to describe the size of the

finished page, flyer, brochure, etc. as well as how it will be used.

FAQ 106 - What is the best way to work with a freelance copywriter?

Work with copywriter as you would with any other professional. Don't expect a copywriter to attend conferences or do work on spec unless you have a very significant job or are willing to pay for his time. There are faster ways to maintain contact. Don't dictate the copy or the organization of the work. A professional copywriter is a costly secretary. It is the copywriter's job to produce copy that will accomplish your goal and satisfy you.

If you simply want someone to polish your copy, ask for *editorial service only*. This is less expensive but will not include re-writing your work (though the editor may offer suggestions). Some copywriters will provide this service while others will not.

FAQ 107 - What kinds of things will a freelance copywriter expect from me if he gets the job?

As complete and detailed description of the work to be done as possible, how corrections are to be made, and how changes are defined. Your copywriter should also have the name of someone in your organization (if not yourself) who can provide further information as necessary. Make sure your copywriter has a complete description of the format of the copy. and to whom the copy should be delivered. To reduce research costs provide (or make available)the following materials: 1) All previous company printed material related to the present job. 2) Any directly competitive printed material you have available. 3) If copy is to be fitted to a layout, provide a rough of the layout and indicate space for copy. 4) If copy describes a graphic in any way, provide a stat of the graphic plus a spec. sheet on the item pictured in the graphic. 5) A description of the average reader of the material to be printed. Age, sex, educational background, socio-economic status, etc. 6) The length of time are you allowing for completion of the copy.

Your copywriter will also expect to be paid on time.

FAQ 108 - What kind of time should I allow for a project that might require the services of a freelance copywriter?

Even for the smallest job, think in terms of two weeks minimum. Larger jobs can require much longer. Forcing the copywriter to rush the work may seriously affect the quality of the finished copy. Professional copywriters will do their best to meet your needs, and will let you know what they can do to meet your deadlines.

FAQ 109 - How do I select a freelance copywriter?

Get a referral from someone who has used a copywriter and been satisfied with the results. Solicit bids on your project from a number of different copywriters. They will submit samples of their work to give you a sense of their approach. It is most important that you find a copywriter with whom you can establish a comfortable rapport. While the copywriter's quote on your work is important, it should not be the primary factor in your selection.

FAQ 110 - I've heard freelance copywriters charge a fortune for their work. Is this true?

No, it's not true. If you hire the finest freelance copywriter in the country for a job that can be done by an generalist, it will cost you much more than you should be paying. That would be like hiring the finest heart surgeon in the country to put a band aid on your finger. A copywriter's fees can vary depending on the current demands on his time. Copywriters will normally give you a rate sheet describing their fees for specific types of work. The rate sheet is not used as a quotation since every job varies, but it will give you an idea of what to expect.

FAQ 111 - What kind of terms can I expect from a freelance copywriter?

Freelance copywriters normally do not offer terms. Payment is due on completion of the job. It is usual, on a large project, for the copywriter to insist on 25% to 50% of his fee in advance with the remainder paid on a scheduled basis as the work is completed.

FAQ 112 - What if I don't like the copy that a freelance copywriter gives me?

The best way to convey your concerns to the copywriter is to focus on the specific areas that you feel need changing, and describe how you would like to see them changed. The more specific your comments, the easier it is for the copywriter to satisfy your needs. "I'd like to see greater focus on this benefit," will enable the copywriter to revise to your need. If you are revising your original concept, then expect the copywriter to request additional funds for a change.

FAQ 113 - Will the finished product be ready to send to the printers?

Unless you have made specific arrangements with your copywriter to do the type setting also, the copy you receive will *not* be camera-ready. If you have commissioned an entire project, such as a brochure, and have told the copywriter that you expect camera-ready work, the copy will be submitted as such. His quote will reflect the additional work required. Remember that in multicolor work or process work, or any work requiring metal plates, there are negatives, stripping,

and a number of additional considerations. Your copywriter will advise you of these factors when he submits his bid on your work.

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