



Good News Friday

January 22nd 2010

How to write a media release

Writing a Media Release by Mediaexpress.ie

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[A little bit about Mediaexpress.ie](#)

Mediaexpress.ie is Ireland's leading media release distribution service. Our commitment is to provide the fastest, most accurate, relevant, and comprehensive media contact information for the 32 counties of Ireland. Mediaexpress.ie helps those who don't work in the media understand how journalists and the media work, and increase their effectiveness in gaining positive coverage.

Mediaexpress.ie is the new service for reaching Irish journalists with your media release. Now you can upload your release, attach your photos and send them to any of our 200 media lists. Our media lists include every journalist in Ireland, including national and regional media, and specialist contact lists on everything from health to fashion.

We also offer a media release writing service, photo shoot ideas, and a bespoke media list building service where we can create a list for your specialist event.

Mediaexpress.ie is a simple 4-step process. All you have to do is upload your release and photos, choose from our 200-plus media lists, schedule your release to be sent from your email address and pay. Once your release has been sent you will get a full report of who the release went to and confirmation that it delivered.

[Why use Mediaexpress.ie](#)

Fast and simple: You can select a targeted media list in just minutes — the process is so easy that you don't need any training. Once you've selected your list you can send your media release to those who want to read it. For a small fee you can target relevant media from Ireland's most comprehensive database.

Low price: When you use MediaExpress.ie, you don't pay a membership or a licensing fee, and you don't have to buy expensive software. You pay a one-off affordable price that guarantees your release gets to the people that want to read it.

Highly accurate: Our media lists are refreshed daily with updates by our research staff. If you are sending a media release yourself you need to ring around to make sure your media lists are up-to-date. With Mediaexpress.ie you just select the lists you want, knowing that they have all been verified and updated by our staff, saving you hours of work.

Highly targeted: Select your list from any of our 200 targeted media lists of the most influential journalists/producers/editors in Ireland. You can select your list by media type, area of interest, and geography. Mediaexpress.ie is the only service that has access to all the media contacts in Ireland.

Media release writing and pitching tips: If you have never written a release before and don't know where to start, you can avail of our media release writing service. We here at Mediaexpress.ie have over 12 years experience working in public relations and writing media releases. We can also give you ideas for photoshoots and tips for pitching to journalists.

Distribute your press release: Once you've uploaded your release and selected your lists you can have peace of mind that we will make sure it gets to its desired destination.

You've got a specialist audience and you don't know how to start building your media list: As one of our additional services at Mediaexpress.ie we can build a specialist list for your announcement. We like to think we have every media list that you will ever need but from time to time people want a list that is a little more niche, but that's fine. Just get in touch and save yourself hours of heartache by letting the experts build the list for you.

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1. Introduction – Good News Friday

What is Good News Friday?

Good News Friday is our solution to the miserable media climate that has descended over the past year. At Mediacontact.ie we believe that positivity and optimism will overcome the doom and gloom.

When is Good News Friday?

Friday, the 22nd of January. This date was chosen for a specific purpose – it falls right before what is statistically the most depressing week of the year. We reckoned people could use some good news heading into it.

Why should I take part?

- If, like us, you believe that optimism is the way forward.
- If you see the power in positive thinking.
- If you have some good news you'd like to share with the world.

How to participate in Good News Friday

Anyone who wishes to participate in Good News Friday should log on to www.mediaexpress.ie and follow the instructions on the home page. You can schedule your positive press release at any stage to be sent on Jan 22nd 2010.

If you don't want to use Mediaexpress.ie to send your press release you can still participate. All you need to do is include the following short paragraph in your release sent on Jan 22nd 2010:

'This message is sent in the spirit of positivity and as part of Good News Friday - a whole day dedicated to good news.' This will connect all of the releases contributing to the Good News Friday project.

2. Introduction – Media Releases, the Rules

Close to 80% of the stories in our newspapers are generated by media releases.

The objective is to get your media release to appear in the media unchanged. If that is to happen, the media release must read the same way as a news story. It might seem obvious, but it is a skill that has to be mastered.

It is important to identify the news value in a story, consider the following points:

- It is the first the biggest/the longest/the oldest.
- It happened in this town or region.
- It is curious, revealing, funny or entertaining.
- It is significant; soon everybody will be doing it/reading it/ wearing it.
- It could have an effect on anyone's daily life.
- It adds something to an existing news story.

A number of key principles are common to all good media releases.

A good media release has:

- A good headline.
- Answers the important questions in the first paragraph.
- Uses active verbs and first-degree words.
- Keeps the fog factor in mind.
- Has the correct layout.

For any Good News Friday release, these points are still extremely relevant. Equally important, **your release must be good news!**

3. A good media release has a good headline

A good headline helps to attract attention. Today, that is more difficult than at any time in the past.

Remember you get just one chance to make a first impression. Many journalists get over 100 emails a day. Why should they open yours? To give them a reason you must write a snappy headline that gives the essence of your message in a few short words.

It has been estimated that a Sunday newspaper, with its supplements and free magazines contains more information than someone in the Middle Ages would have encountered in a lifetime.

Everyday we are bombarded with information from radio, TV, newspapers, mobile phones, the internet, sign posts, public announcements, the list is endless. We have more brain cells than our counterparts in the Middle Ages. We are better equipped to accommodate all of this information. So we cope by blocking information out at the source. As information reaches us, we instinctively decide whether or not it is interesting.

Writing a good headline

This is a poor headline:

BMW REGION CAPITAL ALLOWANCE OF £1 MILLION WILL ENABLE IMPROVEMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PHERIPHAL AREAS

What is wrong with it?

- It is too long, 14 words is twice too long. Great headlines can be spoken in one breath.
- It is full of big, awkward words like ‘infrastructure’ and ‘peripheral’.
- It is passive, using phrases like “will enable”, which is a very indirect way of dealing with something.
- It’s unimaginable. No matter how hard you try, you cannot mentally see what the story is.

Here is a good headline:

**€10 MILLION GOOGLE INVESTMENT
CREATES 100 JOBS FOR BALLINASLOE**

Here's what is right with it:

- It's short - tells the story in seven words.
- It's in vivid simple language.
- It's active - 'Creates 100 jobs'.
- It's in the present tense so it's newsy. (The future tense would work equally well:
€10 MILLION GOOGLE INVESTMENT WILL CREATE 100 JOBS FOR
BALLINASLOE)
- It is imaginable.

When you are writing a headline, remember the obligation is on you to attract the reader. Educate yourself by reading the headlines in newspaper stories, and then reading the story they relate to.

A good headline captures the essence of your media release in a sentence. Imagine you need to get the essence of your media release to somebody who is running to catch a bus, that's your challenge when writing your headline.

As your release will contain good news, steer clear of negative adjectives. To give a very simple example, instead of NO JOBS LOST, focus on the positive: JOBS SAVED etc.

4. A good media release answers the key questions in the first paragraph

Why?

1. In many cases all the journalist will read is the headline and the first paragraph. If you don't make an impression with them then your release is doomed to failure.
2. If your story makes it to print, and a bigger story comes along before it goes to print, they will edit your story. This is usually done from the bottom up. So your media release must be understandable.
3. Readers are busy and distracted. They may not have time to read every story to the end. So you want to deliver the key information early, just in case.

The key questions are:

What (is happening)?

Who (is involved)?

Where (is it happening)?

When?

Why?

To answer those opening questions the opening paragraph might be along these lines.

Google has today (Dec 1st 2009) announced that it will invest €10 million and create 100 jobs by opening a new European global research facility in Ballinasloe Co Galway. The move will occur with immediate effect as the company has taken space in an IDA facility in the town until a state-of-the-art facility is completed in 2009.

You can see, even if nothing else of the story is printed, that the reader has learned the key elements of what's happening.

5. A good media release uses active verbs

This sentence uses the passive form of the verb:

A general election was called by Brian Cowen.

This sentence uses the active form of the verb:

Brain Cowen called a general election.

Remember if it's a headline, don't just go for an active verb go for a present or future tense verb:

Cowen calls an election.

Cowen to call an election.

Here is the best way to remember the rule

BAD: Man bitten by dog (passive, past tense).

GOOD: Dog bites man (Active, present tense).

6. A good media release keeps the fog index in mind

The Gunning Fog Index is about sentence length.

Based on an observation of the pattern of attention given by readers to printed material, it suggests that the longer a sentence, the thicker the fog through which the reader must get to reach the message.

8-10 word sentences are clear and easy to understand.

10-15 word sentences are slightly less clear and easy to understand.

15-25 word sentences can mean the fog is thickening.

25+ can mean the sentence is impenetrable.

The following sentence for example has 55 words:

“Through a process of regeneration, while managing the new capital infrastructure programme and the current expenditure programme, the Mayor will bring new jobs to the area in the vicinity of the city centre and the outlying hinterlands, which will unfortunately not include Fairylawn, which is one of the places most in need of urgent developing.”

It would have been easier to understand if it was broken into shorter sentences.

With shorter and clearer sentences it will read much easier:

“The Mayor will bring new jobs to the city centre and a number of other areas in the city suburbs. He plans to carry out this regeneration by implementing new programmes of capital and current expenditure. Unfortunately this will not include Fairylawn, which is the area most urgently in need of help.”

Media Release

EMBARGO (Enter Time & Date 22/01/10 here)

Strong headlines and good writing vital for effective media releases – Jack Murray

Strong headlines and good writing are vital for effective media releases, Jack Murray today told a training seminar in Dublin. He said: “Media releases with long sentences and formal, technical language often fail.”

“Media releases about serious and important issues often become heavy and dull,” he said. “As a result, newspapers don’t use them.”

“To be a success you need to write a snappy headline that communicates your release in a single sentence. Then add some memorable quotes and interesting details and you are ready to sell your message,” said Murray.

Following his presentation he said that he expected that all those who attended would go home and write their own media releases.

-Ends-

For further information contact:

Jack Murray Tel: (087) 2256090

7. Questions you should ask yourself

How recent is your story?

The media is not interested in old news. Radio and tv are the most demanding when it comes to freshness of their news output, because they have several bulletins a day. Daily newspapers only want that day's news. Weekly and monthly publications are more flexible.

Will it interest the readers?

If you think like a journalist, you will always have your readers in mind. Your story is of value only if it is going to be read and creates some sort of impression.

How topical is your story?

Can you relate your story to another, perhaps more significant, news event? If so, its value is likely to be increased.

The news test

It is a good idea to apply this simple test to check the newsworthiness of all your potential stories. Here is the news test:

- **Timing:** Make sure your story is fresh enough for the media in which you want to place it.
- **Angles:** Have you looked behind the facts and come up with the most interesting and newsworthy angles for journalists to pursue?
- **Reader Interest:** Will your story prompt action or comment among readers?
- **News Diary:** Ensure it will not be fighting for other similar news on the day you release it.
- **Topicality:** Watch for other news stories or events which might add value to your story. They might make you rethink your news angles.

8. Please Remember

- Always use 1.5 line spacing for media releases.
- Type 'Media Release' in 36 point Times New Roman or other well used font.
- Type headline in 14 point Times New Roman.
- Type sub heads in 14 point Italics Times New Roman.
- Type main text in 12 point Times New Roman.
- Always type the headline of the media release in the subject line of the email.
- Always type the main text of the media release in the body of the email.
- Never attach a media release to an email - it won't be read.
- Keep it positive!

Good News Friday Project

Please remember to include the following paragraph in your release:

'This message has been sent in the spirit of positivity and as a part of Good News Friday – for one day bringing good news back into fashion.'

This will connect all of the contribution to a happier media climate, and make Good News Friday a cohesive project.

Embargo

At the top of your release, put an indicator to the recipient as to when it may be used. It will only apply if somebody is saying something at a meeting, and you want to release it in advance of the meeting. It does not apply to 90% of releases.

Margins

Your media release should not look too crowded. Make sure you have margins of at least 2 centimetres on either side. Remember that a sub-editor may need to pencil notes or sub-headings into your text, so leave room for this purpose.

Paragraphs

Broken up text is much easier to read than text which is presented in long, uninterrupted blocks. Use one paragraph for each new idea and for quotations. If you find a paragraph running to more than three sentences, examine the possibility of breaking it into two.

Dates

Always include the date on the top of the release in at least 12-point bold text.

Quotations

When we see quotation marks in a story, we know that there is a human being, a voice in the story. This adds to the interest.

Quotation marks, properly used, pull the eye of the reader. They can make the reader continue to read a media release.

Putting some of the data in the mouth of the speaker gives greater variety to what otherwise may be just a presentation of details.

Keep the attribution simple and unflowery: Jack Murray said, Jack Murray replies, Jack Murray states.

Boiler plates

A short paragraph about your organisation is known as a boiler plate and should always be included just before the end of the release. This gives a context to the reader about what you are saying.

Ends

It is important that the recipient of the release knows where it finishes. Putting ENDS in the middle of the line after you have finished, but before you put in the source is the way to make that clearer.

Source

No newspaper or radio station will give a moment's consideration to a media release that does not come on a letter-headed sheet indicating the organisations name and address. In addition, at the end of the release the news editor needs to know who sent this particular release and where they can be reached if anything needs to be clarified.

Don'ts for Good News Friday Releases

Don't type your media release in capital letters.

Don't type your media release in italics.

Don't fail to proofread your release, (or better still have it proofed by someone else).

Don't use clichés.

Don't use padding.

Don't send it late.

Don't send it to the wrong person.

Don't use bold points to emphasise your point.

Don't open quotation marks and forget to close them.

Don't focus on the negative.

Don't forget the Good News Friday paragraph.