

Tips on Preparing a Press Release:

- 1 a simple, snappy headline that tells the story
 - 2 the opening paragraph should make your first and major point
 - 3 the first half of the release should be drenched in factoids
 - 4 leave quotes to the back half
 - 5 never present opinion in anything other than quotes
 - 6 round up boring but necessary information in notes to editors
 - 7 try to include just one, named contact
 - 8 always call the journalist who you've sent a release to, ostensibly to check they've received it – but which then gives you an opportunity to 'spin'
- a) Try to imagine you're a busy journalist on the receiving end of the release. Include facts and quotes that give them plenty of angles – avoid the mundane.
- b) Ask yourself whether or not you need send a press release – why not a tailored briefing note and one-to one briefing. Always remember that journalists are far more likely to read their competitors work than they are people's press releases. Often far better to cultivate and then brief one journalist, to whom you can give an exclusive with which they might 'splash', than to brief 10 journalists who give it a nib on page 98.

Other things which are good to remember:

- check relevance/newsworthiness – never issue a release without a story or your next one maybe ignored
- Be clear, factual and simple
- Write a punchy headline to grab attention
- Make your point quickly – editors give press releases three seconds' attention max
- 'Punch up' the headline and the first paragraph, then 'punch it up' again – its your one and only shot
- One page good, two pages OK – 400-500 words max
- Use quotes from senior people
- Support your points with independent quotes/data where possible
- Include independent/third party sources who are happy to be contacted by the editors for a quote
- Date every release
- Include phone numbers of press office and assigned spokespeople at the end
- Keep your mailing list up to date – journalists move around quickly
- Think around your mailing list as well – who else would be interested in hearing the story? Think audience!
- Final point – remember 4 golden rules of what to include in a release: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN

AGENDA FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- 1 Why partner with the media?
 - To help raise the issue with the public, opinion leaders, official bodies
 - To help attract support from funding bodies, sponsors, contributors
 - Helps with accountability for the issue and other activities
- 2 What does media / editor want?
 - A story which will help it sell newspapers and increase its circulation
 - A story which will help it gain respect of opinion formers and advertisers
 - A story which fits his brand
 - Sometimes, to fill space on quiet news days
- 3 What does the journalist want?
 - An exclusive. A story which will make him/her famous
 - A story that no one else has
 - All the facts plus something special
 - A story which fits with his editors direction for the paper
 - A quote from a reliable industry source
- 4 How does a journalist get his/her stories?
 - Contacts. People in industry, business, NGOs ..who he/she knows
 - His/her own investigation
 - Press releases and news 'wires' – Reuters, AP, APTN, etc.
 - Other press – national and international
 - The Web
- 5 How do you best gain the support of the media?
 - Keep an up-to-date list of journalists and their interests
 - Maintain regular contact – whether there is a story or not
 - With well written press releases
 - By briefing in exclusives to known journalists
 - By being a reliable, trusted source of information
 - By being available for comment when called upon – willing to give comments or able to put the journalist in contact with a spokesperson on the issue.
- 6 Who's job is it to maintain good media relations?
 - Everyone!
 - A designated person or team.
 - Project directors – those who are expert in the field
 - Ramesh – spokesperson for the organization
- 7 Why maintain good media relations?
 - Help get issues raised
 - Help ensure the facts are told
 - Help quash issues you don't want raised.
 - Helps ActionAid get the profile it needs.