



Do Your Own PR in Five Simple Steps

By *Miriam Donohoe, MD Media*

Don't be afraid of PR. Believe it is within your reach, and possible to do for yourself. If you have a good story, be brave and tell it!

STEP 1: Identify your story

What is your story? Is it a new product? A new business or service? A new plan for development? Step one of any PR campaign is to identify what your story is, what is newsworthy, and what is likely to attract media attention and get you noticed.

Some pointers:

- Is this something completely new and likely to grab attention?
- Anything that can be identified as a “first” helps makes the news. Or the “biggest”, “best”, “tallest”, “smallest”, or “most unique” will likely strike a chord.
- The best stories have people at the centre. Try to put you, or some of your team, at the centre of the story.
- Look for the quirky or interesting angles that will make people stop and say “Hmmm, that’s different”.

STEP 2: Write a press release

Now you have identified your story, write it in the form of a press or media release.

- Keep it short.
- Make sure the release answers the five “W’s” and the “H”. Who, why, what, where, when and how.
- Write in the inverted pyramid style. Put the most important and interesting news at the top, followed by supporting details in later paragraphs.
- Write a short, snappy headline.
- Make sure the subject line on the email will encourage the recipient to read it.
- Always try to include a quote.
- Be sure to include a website address, if available.
- Include a contact name and all possible phone numbers at the end.

STEP 3: Importance of a good picture

It's an old cliché, but a picture is worth a thousand words. Having an impactful, creative picture to go with your press release enhances its chance of being picked up by media. If you don't have the budget to employ a professional photographer, you or a team member take it yourselves. Most smartphones have excellent cameras nowadays.

- Always try and have a person in the picture. So don't just get a pic of the product alone.
- Use colour and/or a prop to help it stand out.
- Make sure the pic you send to media is high resolution.
- Keep it simple. Don't have it too crowded with people or detail.
- The caption is a very important. Be sure it is clear and concise and summarises the details accurately. If possible embed the caption in the picture.

STEP 4: Building a database

There is no point in writing a great press release and getting super pictures taken if you don't know who to send them to! It is vital to build your own media database, with contacts. This can be done cheaply and easily using an excel spreadsheet.

- Local media. Gather all your local print and broadcast media contacts. Call your local newspaper and radio and ask for the main contacts and emails. Make yourself known.
- National media. Read the national press and find out what journalists in the different titles write about the sector you are in. Many newspapers and broadcasters publish key organisation contacts on their websites. If you can't find them, ring and ask.
- Add to the database as you go along, and as you make new media contacts. Try and build a relationship with media who are interested in keeping up to date with your business and story.

STEP 5: Releasing your story!

You have your story, your press release written, your picture organised, and your contacts lined up. Then decide when to go public. You might have a launch event to celebrate a new product or service, a new premises or business. This would be a perfect event to invite media to.

- Issue a media notice and invite media along if you are having a launch or an event.
- Try to gauge the best time of the day, or the week, to email a press release. For example, if a big story breaks on the day you are planning to issue a press release try and hold off a day or two when the news agenda quietens down.
- It is always best to email a press release early in the day, ahead of deadlines.
- It is a good idea to follow up a press release with a phone call to a journalist or newsdesk
- Don't get discouraged if the media doesn't pick up your story. Breaking news or major events will take priority over other coverage. If an editor or reporter says no once, that doesn't mean they'll say no to everything in the future.

More about Miriam:

Journalist, newspaper columnist and PR consultant **Miriam Donohoe** has over 30 years' experience in the Irish media. She set up MD Media in 2010 after a career with the Irish Times where she held several senior positions including Political Reporter, Asia Correspondent, News Editor, Travel Editor and Features Editor. She works with a wide range of clients on PR and media campaigns.

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