

Las Vegas Quill Keepers

Marketing Your Work With a Press Release by Donna Jolly

For many writers, the only aspect of their career that they don't like is marketing themselves. You may write because it is your passion, but the business side of writing inevitably rears its ugly head when it is time to get out there and promote your work. One of the essential ways to market yourself is through a press release.

A good press release is a bit like a good query letter: concise, informative and interesting. Writing a good press release is only the first step; you have to distribute it to the media, specifically the right media contacts for your work. Thanks to the Internet, there are services available that help you do this for very little money, such as prweb.com. They don't charge a fee, but do ask for voluntary contributions to distribute your release. They also offer tips and sample releases to help free your PR muse and get you on the right track.

The Essentials of a Press Release

Another helpful site is Press-release-writing.com, which provides the following template for a press release — I've tailored it a bit for something a writer might say about their book:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact Person
Company Name
Telephone Number
Fax Number
Email Address
Web site address

Headline

City, State, Date — Opening Paragraph (should contain: who, what, when, where, why):
Example: Local Las Vegas author, Debbie Jones has published her first novel, "Everything You Didn't Want to Know About My Life."

Remainder of body text - Should include any relevant information about your book (the publisher, price, where it can be purchased), it's benefits (if non-fiction), or why it is unique. Since press releases are written in third person, you can include a quote from the author, or appropriate experts if it's non-fiction, or even quote a book review if you have one.

If there is more than 1 page use:

more-

(The top of the next page):

Abbreviated headline (page 2)

Remainder of text.

(Restate Contact information after your last paragraph):

For additional information or a sample copy, Contact: (all Contact information)

Summarize product or service specifications one last time

Author's bio (Try to do this in one short paragraph)

#

(indicates Press Release is finished)

Fine-Tuning Your Release

While the above can help you craft the release, there are a few basic rules to remember to help your release be more powerful

1. Make sure the first 10 words of your release are effective, as they are the most important. Use strong, active language.
2. Avoid excessive use of adjectives and \$10 words.
3. Deal with the facts. Avoid saying things like, "*Bourbon Decay* is a wonderful, delightful, brilliant coming of age novel." Unless you're writing this press release for your mother, leave out the shameless self-promotion. "*Bourbon Decay*, a coming of age novel, tells the story of a small-town southern girl. . ."
4. Provide as much contact information as possible: individual to contact, address, phone, fax, email, Web site address. Even leave your home phone number as many reporters work after-hours. The idea is that you want them to find you, or your contact spokesperson, so they can get additional details and publish your release.
5. Make it as easy as possible for media representatives to do their jobs. I used to be surprised at the number of releases I wrote that were picked up in papers nearly verbatim, until I realized, I was doing the reporters job for them, which is what they wanted. They have numerous assignments and tight deadlines. The more complete you can make your release, the less work they have to do.

Hitting Your Target

What makes your book newsworthy? Is it the first of its kind on a subject? If so, there's your hook. The easiest way to make the release of your book notable is by concentrating on the right audience. For example, your hometown paper, college alumnae newsletter, or neighborhood periodical will be interested in your press release because you are one of their own. The subject of your book may also appeal to magazines with a particular focus. Is your central character a Native American? If so, magazines pertaining to the Native American culture or Art might be interested in your release. Most importantly, don't forget trade magazines in the book industry, and send your press release to book reviewers at your favorite publications.

You don't have to concentrate on the media only. Send the press release to your favorite independent bookstore and include a copy of the book to entice them. You can also search book clubs on line, and send a press release to the contact email address.

Once is Never Enough

Once you send out your release, your work is not done. To penetrate a particular market fully, you will want to continue sending out a press release every two months – any more than that and the media might consider you a pest. Try to recreate your press release to current events each time you send it out so it is more likely to get picked up. “Samantha Windsor, romance novelist, will be giving a reading of her latest novel, ‘Splendor in the Boudoir,’ at Barnes and Nobles on West Charleston, Sunday, July 16 at 7:00pm.”

Beyond writing a great release, there are two other important factors to successful PR. The first one is luck. Hopefully, you’ve sent your release to the right publication at the right time. Timing is everything in public relations. The second factor in PR is perhaps the more important one: persistence. If you send your press release out to the world and the only thing you hear is the sound of crickets, resolve yourself. Declare a personal motto of “No Surrender” and you’ll increase your chances of getting that released published.