



## How to Distribute Your Press Release

Your press release is written, and it's on target to advance your brand in meaningful ways. It will promote your latest product or service, your fresh leadership, or your new customer-centric corporate direction. Congratulations! Now what?

Now you have to get your release in front of relevant media who will use it in different ways that will gain the favorable attention of your target audience. How hard can that be?

### Your Press Release Distribution Options

Keep in mind that today's range of media outlets encompasses much more than the traditional print, television, and radio outlets of the past. Much more. You might now have to further engage relevant podcasters, web journalists, bloggers, vloggers, influencers, and other new media sources who've engaged your customer base.

The bottom line is that your company now has more potential media outlets to target than ever before. Your press release distribution strategy must keep up.

The span of such strategies available today starts with the personal and ranges to the fully electronically automated. Between the two ends of the spectrum is an often useful hybrid of both approaches.

Personal contact with important media connections you've already established is always the most likely to be fruitful, but it's not always the most practical or realistic.

That's where automated press release services, also known as newswires, come into the picture. This is the quickest (though most impersonal) way of distributing your release to potentially hundreds or even thousands of media outlets across the country or spanning the globe.

You also have online tools at your fingertips and other outside experts who can help you with your manual distribution strategies and implementation. Let's take a closer look at all of these approaches.

## Manual Press Release Distribution Is The Best (Though Not Always Practical) Strategy

Let's say you own a local watering hole with live music. Your specialty is alternative rock, and you've smartly introduced yourself to your daily newspaper's entertainment editor. You've gone to lunch with her before, invited her to several of your shows, and made yourself available when she wrote about national trends in alt-rock music.

When you build a new stage and double your number of live shows, you make sure you send this favorite music editor to contact the first press release, and she writes a positive story about it. After all, she has space in the newspaper she constantly needs to fill.

Easy, right? All it took was a little time, patience, and effort. In return, you get a "free" story (as opposed to having to run an expensive ad in the same daily newspaper) that carries enhanced credibility because it's written by an impartial editor, not your ad agency.

But that's only one editor. Maybe you (or a staff member) have the time and energy to develop a few more similar relationships with weekly entertainment magazine editors, local music bloggers, and podcasters. Since your market encompasses only a niche of the larger music scene, and you're addressing a rather contained geographic market area, you might not have to establish that many relationships. Most of your audience only tunes in to a few media outlets to satisfy their music tastes, so your press release distribution costs are...*zero*.

Is this realistic? Sure, in limited situations. The "touchy-feely" manual method of press release distribution works fine in this case, with so few media outlets. All you had to do was establish and nourish as many meaningful contacts as possible in that small media footprint. Send your contacts press releases that are well-written and relevant. Then follow up with each contact to see if you can encourage their interest in writing a story that intrigues your audience and benefits your interests.

Simple. In this situation. But what do you do when your target audience is much bigger, and this strategy is impractical?

## When Automated Press Release Distribution Is The Most Practical Approach

Now let's say your public relations responsibility is an international chemical manufacturing corporation. You have a global list of 10,000 media outlets. You're launching a new product line, and even with an entire in-house public relations department devoted to the task, manual press release distribution simply isn't an option.

That's a scenario where the newswires come into play. Newswires will take your company's press release and distribute it to thousands of media outlets at a time. It's obviously not nearly as personal an approach as the manual method outlined above, but it gets the story out there quickly and efficiently.

Are journalists as enthused about receiving a press release from someone they don't know as they would be in getting story ideas from a familiar source they work with regularly? Of course not. In fact, one study showed that as few as 20 percent of journalists even look at such press releases. Another study put the figure at about two-thirds of media sources who at least occasionally glance at the releases for background or additional information when writing a story.

Those might not be great numbers, but they satisfy a shotgun approach to press release distribution. That is, if you send the press release to 1,000 sources and 200 of those outlets pay attention, that's not bad, statistically speaking. And those odds could be greatly improved if your company has claimed a leadership position in your industry.

As for cost, newswires are subscription services. This is important because the company must constantly update the contact information of potentially thousands of sources in real time. Your annual cost for this press release service can start at a few thousand dollars for one user license and go up from there.

The different newswires can offer various services, and some are better than others at generating media outlets within your specific industry. Some might be stronger with consumer sources, while others will have greater B2B expertise.

## **Consider Taking a Hybrid Approach to Press Release Distribution**

Why does your distribution strategy have to be one or the other? Manual or automated? It doesn't. You could take a hybrid approach to get the best out of both worlds.

What if you identified ten or 20 critical outlets or journalists who should be addressed personally, and the rest of your distribution sent via newswire to thousands more? Or connect with however many hands-on media sources you or your department have the time and skill to personally reach out to. Then send the rest automated.

The point is that a hybrid model of press release distribution can let you take advantage of the relatively few media relationships you've already nurtured but also take the shotgun approach to the distribution regarding the rest of your media landscape.

## **Additional Press Release Distribution Resources, from Databases to Professional Expertise**

If you're going to conduct your own manual distribution to a larger contact list, one valuable online tool is a media database. This is an online tool featuring regularly updated contact information for thousands or even millions of sources.

Platforms from the likes of Agility PR Solutions, Cision, Meltwater, Muck Rack, Prowly, and many others can cost a few thousand dollars a year and up. Like the newswires, media databases are offered on a subscription basis and updated regularly.

There are many variables in cost and features, including database size, geographic footprint, search filters, and the overall comprehensiveness of the information available.

Yet another potentially valuable resource in your press release distribution efforts is professional support. Public relations firms specialize in the entire campaign, including communications strategy, the writing or production of the press release, distribution, and follow-up. The cost can be high, but if your budget enables such a long-term partnership, it could be an ideal solution to your distribution needs and more.

On a smaller scale, you could also hire a freelance public relations professional. This person might have a significant track record in the public relations field but work from home at a much lower hourly rate than a prestigious downtown PR firm. Look for a freelancer with a background working with the sort of media outlets you need access to.

Whichever approach you use, your efforts could pay off in big ways. News stories carry a greater level of credibility with your audience than ads since they come from credible and impartial sources.

Plus, those sources need and want your relevant news. Today's media environment, whether it's cable news or digitally based, is 24/7. The need to post new content is constant. Once your company gets perceived as a frequent source of information that can be used, your press releases will get noticed, and favorable stories will be written.

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