



5 tips for writing a book announcement news release that will get used by the press

By Sandra Beckwith

A book announcement press release helps us tell the world our new book is available for purchase. It's often sent to the media with a copy of the book or a note asking if the journalist would like to receive a complimentary review copy. It's also included in the book's press kit. It's not the only media relations tool you'll want to use to generate book buzz, but it's an essential resource when your goal is to tell the media outlets read, watched, or listened to by your book's target audience that there's a new book they'll want to know about.

An effective a book announcement press release is written in a journalistic format that mimics how a magazine or newspaper would write about your new book. It uses the traditional news release format that journalists are accustomed to receiving.

Because this is such an important tool - and because there is a trend among inexperienced publicists to turn the announcement into an advertisement that journalists will reject, not embrace - it's important to understand how to write a release that will get read and used.

Here are tips designed to help you avoid common and costly errors with your important announcement release.

- 1. Use the traditional news release format.** This includes your contact information, a headline, and your announcement written in a journalistic style. Study the press releases at www.prweb.com and www.prnewswire.com for examples. Don't use graphics, multiple columns, or different fonts, sizes, and colors.
- 2. Remember that you are not the news.** Your book is the news. Unless your name is recognizable, don't put it in the headline. "New book details secret World War II plot" is more compelling than, "John Brown's first book is about World War II."
- 3. Avoid using superlatives.** A news release announces news in a factual way, so limit your descriptive text to the facts. This isn't a book review expressing an opinion - it's an announcement that a journalist would like to copy and paste into a publication. That's why you want to avoid language - "fabulous," "best-ever," "fascinating" - that you won't see in a news story.
- 4. Distribute your announcement release in text format, not as a PDF file.** It is easy to copy and paste text from an e-mail or from a Web site; it is hard to copy text from a PDF file. The more you make somebody work to use your information, the less likely they are to do so.

5. Tell us where to buy the book. This is the key chunk of information most often omitted in the homework assignments submitted by students in my book publicity e-course. Remember to include the title, publisher name, publication date, price, and information about where it can be purchased.

In addition to distributing your release to your targeted media outlets - including online options such as blogs - post the release on your Web site so it can be found by search engine users. Your goal is to get your news in front of the people who are most likely to buy your book.

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