

# Mastering Traditional & Marketing Press Releases

Optimize for leads or placement





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## Optimize for leads or placement

Press releases are traditionally a venue for building “buzz” and brand familiarity through prime placements in trade publications and media outlets, but they are also increasingly utilized as a means of contacting prospects, driving leads and influencing purchasing decisions. The key to mastering both types of press release, traditional and marketing, is catering to your audience and utilizing your public relations department and resources to deliver marketing goals.

Before you begin writing any press release, you should consider a few essential questions both journalists and public relations professionals use to determine their messaging and focus:

- What is newsworthy?
- Who is interested?
- When do I send?

### What is Newsworthy?

Before you begin debating where you want to publish your latest news or topic of interest, consider it from the reader’s perspective rather than your own. This will help you decide if you have something truly worth the expense and time associated with a press release, or if you’ve just unearthed a topic for water cooler conversations.

### Marketing Press Release

Consider the information from your target market’s perspective. Everyday millions of Americans search Google and Yahoo! News for ideas, information and products to help them and their business. If your information would interest these educated and focused Internet surfers, a marketing press release is your best bet. Ideally, you want to align your release with the needs and goals of your organization’s target market in order to lure the right buyers to your site.

In addition to news and announcements, possible topics for marketing press releases include:

- White papers
- Web seminars
- Speaking events



## Traditional Press Release

Consider the information from a journalist's perspective. You may find your new merger, a product re-launch or a change in executive management interesting, but will the general public? A journalist quickly sifts through press releases, looking for something unique that will capture their readers' attention and hopefully catapult their story to the front page. You can also increase your chances of publication by tying your release to a newsworthy event or business trend, such as the Super Bowl or rising interest rates. However, regardless of the press release topic, what is most likely to gain the journalist's attention is a well-crafted pitch (1 – 3 sentences) that accompanies the press release and summarizes why your news is unique.

## Who is Interested?

Choosing the target audience for a press release helps you determine what information you emphasize, where you publish the release and which, if any, of your current customers should also receive a copy of the release. This consideration is essential to the success of your press release.

## Marketing Press Release

Since a marketing press release is released online through an Internet distribution service like HRmarketer.com, your reach is only limited by Internet accessibility. However, don't discount the importance of choosing your audience. With a marketing press release, tailor your content so that your target audience will also be those most interested in what you have to say. Ideally, you will send your release to channels most accessed by your prospects, using terms that they would use for searching and focusing on products and services that would accelerate their business.

When utilizing a press release as a marketing tool, you want your target audience to search for **you**. Craft your release's language so this is the expected outcome.

## Traditional Press Release

For traditional releases, geography and publication are the two most important considerations when determining potential reader interest. If you've recently acquired a new client and you'll need to hire 400 employees for your call center in the St. Louis area but your corporate audience is in Los Angeles,

## How do I send a marketing release?

Direct2Net and traditional wire services such as PR Newswire and Business Wire are tools you can use to send out press releases. All three services allow clients to upload news releases for distribution to tens of thousands of individual journalists, general and trade media outlets, financial audiences and Web sites. However, there are some important differences between Direct2Net and traditional wire services.

### Traditional:

- Expensive (\$500+ for a national release)
- Tracking statistics typically billed separately and can cost \$200
- Premium charges apply for releases more than 400 words

### Direct2Net:

- First few distributions are free with HRmarketer membership, \$70 for additional releases
- Comprehensive statistics included
- No premium charges for length or distribution channels



don't forget to send the press release to St. Louis and surrounding cities' business editors. You could also send it to the financial editors in those regions for maximum press coverage. Consider both traditional media, such as newspapers and television stations, as well as trade publications and industry magazines. Your prospects are reading these magazines; a press release published here shows them that your company is a relevant player in your space.

Another tactic is to target editors looking for your type of news. Every day, thousands of journalists are searching for news, and some advertise exactly what they need. If your news is a good fit with their search and you get it into their hands when they need it, you've increased your likelihood of publication.

Consider "sponsoring" the press release in eNewsletters that target your buyers. Increasing numbers of eNewsletters allow you to post your release, for a fee, within the body of the newsletter. Additionally, many eNewsletters will rent their subscriber list for direct marketing campaigns and you can send your release this way (but make sure to tie it to an offer such as download of a free white paper). Again, HRmarketer.com will help you find these types of opportunities.

## When do I Send?

The final decision you need to make is when to send your press release out.

### Traditional Press Releases

If you can time your press release to coincide with a current event or a seasonal topic, you've increased your likelihood of getting it published because your news release becomes a thematic fit. On the other hand, avoid sending press releases during national crises or international turmoil. A journalist has little trouble finding news during these times; they probably won't be looking through their press releases.

### Marketing Press Release

The key here is strategic repetition. If you are engaged in online marketing and not sending out at least one or two marketing releases per month (with a revised headline each time), you are missing valuable opportunities and placing your company at a competitive disadvantage.

Once you've made the decisions on content, audience and timing, it's time to begin writing the press release. Both types of release have certain strategies to create maximum pull. Clarity, cohesion and concision are always necessary, but the techniques outlined below can transform your releases from moderately successful to powerful lead generation and marketing tools.

# Dissecting the Traditional Press Release

## Media Contact

This is a necessity if you are sending the press release to traditional media such as newspapers and magazines. If, however, you are sending the information out through Direct2Net or another online distribution tool, this information is optional.

Choose a member of your firm to serve as the media liaison. Include their name, title, address, phone number, fax number (if applicable) and email. Make sure that this person is well briefed on the topic and can speak intelligently about it and your firm. Media members will often use this information to get the specifics they need for their publication—be prepared.

1

## Headline

Look at newspaper headlines—what do you notice? Besides the lack of articles and appropriate semicolons, you'll see that all the headlines are as succinct as possible. You'll also notice that the words they do feature are carefully chosen for the most impact. When you write your headline, take this into consideration so that the editor has to change as little as possible and more of your intended message makes it to the page.

2

## Subhead

Subheads are a feature of many newspaper articles, and they are nearly as important as the headline. The first subheading is typically directly beneath the headline and serves to give the reader more information about the article. You can use this to clarify your press release's purpose and content. However, use the same concepts here as with the headline: choose your words carefully.

You can also place subheadings throughout your article to help organize it for your readers. If your article is lengthy or includes diverse information, your reader will need signposts to guide them through. Subheads serve this purpose. They also help to point the reader to the sections that are most relevant to them.

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**HRmarketer.com to Release "Trends in HR Marketing" Report Series** 2

HR decision makers and employee benefit brokers 3

APR 2006, Calif. - January 11, 2006 - HRmarketer.com, the no. 1 marketing and media visibility service for companies selling to human resource decision makers and employee benefit brokers (<http://www.hrmarketer.com>), has announced plans to release a series of research reports in 2006 entitled "Trends in HR Marketing." 4

Where do HR suppliers spend their marketing and PR dollars? Which marketing activities have the greatest impact in generating leads? What percent of revenue do most HR vendors spend on marketing and public relations? How many trade shows does the average HR supplier attend and exhibit at?

These questions and more will be addressed in "Trends in HR Marketing," a series of reports which debuts in the first quarter of 2006. Each quarterly installment will include valuable results from surveys sent to over 5,000 HR suppliers, as well as analysis from HRmarketer.com's leading experts on marketing and media visibility.

"Nobody has greater access or insight into the marketing and PR practices of human resource suppliers than HRmarketer.com," said Mark Wilman, president of Fisher Vista, LLC, creators of the HRmarketer.com service. "The 'Trends in HR Marketing' reports will give the HR marketplace a better understanding of best-practice marketing and PR techniques that will help HR suppliers better prepare and execute cost-effective campaigns." 5

The "Trends in HR Marketing" series will be released quarterly in 2006 and include such topics as:

- Q1: Trends in HR Marketing: Annual Findings
- Q2: Trends in HR Marketing: Marketing and PR Activities
- Q3: Trends in HR Marketing: Online Advertising
- Q4: Trends in HR Marketing: Budgeting

The reports will also segment findings by size/revenue of HR suppliers and type of HR products/services sold, allowing HR suppliers to benchmark against their competition and similarly-sized companies. In addition, HRmarketer.com's marketing and PR analysts will identify best-practice trends by evaluating the marketing and PR practices of highly successful HR suppliers in each industry segment.

**About HRmarketer.com**

HRmarketer is a service of Fisher Vista LLC, a marketing and information services firm focusing exclusively on the human capital industry. Founded in 2001, HRmarketer.com is the no. 1 online marketing and PR service specifically tailored for companies that target decision makers and other purchasing influencers for human resource products and services and employee benefit brokers. HRmarketer combines a database of marketing and public relations information with press release distribution, campaign management, business intelligence and advisory services. The company services over 300 human resource suppliers and insurance carriers, helping them increase their visibility and generate sales leads.

Contact Information:  
Mark Wilman, President of Fisher Vista, LLC  
Address: HRmarketer  
PO Box 10  
Capitola, CA 95010  
Telephone: 831-460-9700  
Email: [info@hrmarketer.com](mailto:info@hrmarketer.com) 1

**HRmarketer.com** a service of fisher vista  
PO Box 10 Capitola, CA 95010 831-460-9700 [www.hrmarketer.com](http://www.hrmarketer.com)



## Lead Paragraph

The lead paragraph is the most important paragraph in your press release—when journalists are pressed for time, they will base their decision to continue reading on the strength of the lead. It is also the paragraph that space-hungry editors will edit the least. In the lead, include the most important information and the topic of your press release. This is the hook that will draw the readers in, grab their attention and give them enough information to entice them to read more. Journalists sometimes spend hours writing and rewriting their leads. You should use their technique as a guideline for how carefully you should write this paragraph.

4

## Body Paragraphs

This is the heart of your article. As you write, remember to use a top-down hierarchy. Editors always cut from the bottom up, so you want your most relevant information at the top. Additional details, information that may have been published in the past or information that is less important to your company should fall near the bottom of your press release.

When you write the body paragraphs, remember that you are writing for journalists. They want facts, stats and features, not flowery adjectives and adverbs. Unnecessary description often makes journalists suspicious of your company and your product. Also, use short, succinct sentences. Most newspapers are written on a sixth-grade reading level, and compound sentences, lengthy sentences and additional clauses will push your press release above that. Paragraphs should be succinct as well. Use local newspapers as a guideline, and mimic their techniques if you can.

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### HRmarketer.com to Release "Trends in HR Marketing" Report Series

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For decision makers and employee benefit providers

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CAPITOLA, Calif. – January 23, 2006 – HRmarketer.com, the no. 1 marketing and media visibility service for companies selling to human resource decision makers and employee benefit brokers (<http://www.hrmarketer.com>), has announced plans to release a series of research reports in 2006 entitled "Trends in HR Marketing."

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#### Contact Information:

Mark Willaman, President of Fisher Vista, LLC  
Address: HRmarketer  
PO Box 10  
Capitola, CA 95010  
Telephone: 831-460-9700  
Email: [sales@hrmarketer.com](mailto:sales@hrmarketer.com)

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HRmarketer.com  
a service of fisher vista

P.O. Box 10 Capitola, CA 95010

831-460-9700

[www.hrmarketer.com](http://www.hrmarketer.com)

# Dissecting a Marketing Press Release

## Headline

Use a short yet compelling headline. Your headlines, if effectively written, will make it easier for your prospects to locate your release online. Use the most popular keyword, or keyword phrase, in the headline because this carries the most weight with search engines.

1

## Keywords and SEO

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques can help you gain maximum impact with your press releases. Identify two primary keywords or phrases that relate to your topic and use these words throughout. These keyword links can then link directly to your website and landing pages, raising the SEO of your website and encouraging prospects to visit your home page.

2

## Industry Search Terms

Use the most likely variant of the term (e.g., Professional Employer Organizations rather than PEO) throughout your press release to maximize your chance of being found in a search. Be aware, however, that using industry-specific or niche-specific terms can dramatically decrease your potential audience. Whichever decision you make, choose your words based upon your purpose and your marketing goals.

3

## Boilerplate

If you publish online, your boilerplate will most likely be left intact. In this case, you can use it as a tool to encourage brand recognition and increase your SEO. Many marketing professionals leave boilerplates intact on traditional press releases for journalists' reference as well, but it is typically deleted before the press release is transformed into a newspaper or magazine story.

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Address: HRmarketer  
PO Box 10  
Capitola, CA 95010  
Telephone: 831-460-9700  
Email: info@hrmarketer.com

### "Trends in HR Marketing" Report Series

HR decision makers and employee benefit brokers

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a service of fisher vista

PO Box 10 Capitola, CA 95010 831-460-9700 www.hrmk.com



These are some press release basics and tips to get you started. If you have any other questions about press releases, HRmarketer.com has marketing and PR tips available for their members that cover everything from what never to say to a journalist, to the use of blogs as marketing tools. If you feel your press releases are ready to go, HRmarketer.com offers all the tools you need: a publications database which will give you information on specific journalists, and Direct2Net, which will allow you to blast your releases to thousands of media members and industry specialists. Visit [www.hrmarketer.com](http://www.hrmarketer.com) for more information.

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