

Writing a Media Release

When you are planning a special event or a project, or there is something significant happening within your organisation you need to get the word out. One way to do this is to write a press release or media release that you can then send to local newspapers and reporters. This gives them the information on which they can write a story.

HOW WILL A MEDIA RELEASE HELP MY PROJECT?

- It raises awareness of your project within your community which can increase the support of your project.
- It is a great way to celebrate successes and achievements.
- It is a good opportunity to publicly thank supporters, sponsors and those who have helped to make your project a reality.

THE FIVE W's

Media releases should always include the five W's (who, what, why, where, when).

For example:

The Southland Rural Heritage Trust will be holding a Heritage Forum from Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd April 2012 at Southland Boys High School to celebrate Southland's rural heritage and develop the region's heritage network.

Who	Southland Rural Heritage Trust
What	Heritage Forum
Why	to celebrate Southland's heritage and build a support network for Southland's heritage groups
Where	Southland Boys High School
When	April 20th – 22nd 2012

TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR MEDIA RELEASE

- Include the most newsworthy information in the first paragraph – you need to capture attention and get your main message across immediately. For example if there is a celebrity attending your event, put that information first, or if your event is the first, last, oldest, youngest, biggest etc of its kind – this is the information you start with, it is how you “hook” the reader in.
- Make sure it is easy to read – use Arial font in at least 12 point, and double space your text. Head it up “Press Release for Immediate Use”.
- Use a single headline that explains what your story is about.
- Copy and paste the text of your press release into your email or if you are sending as an attachment put a summary in the body of your email – that way the reporter can access the information easily and won't miss the information if they can't open your attachment.
- Make sure you keep your story brief – less than one page is ideal.
- Media love to cover local stories, with a “human touch” – so make sure you include quotes from a local spokesperson and also images if you have them.
- Double and triple check your accuracy of names, dates, times, places etc - the last thing you want is for an article to be printed with the wrong information!
- Include a quote from a reputable source if possible.
- Include accurate and appropriate contact details for the journalist to obtain more information if needed. The person listed needs to be knowledgeable about the project and readily available to talk. Include a website if possible and appropriate.
- Have photos available if possible – a good photo can be very hard to resist!

(adapted from www.exult.co.nz)

MEDIA RELEASE TEMPLATE

Title – short, snappy, explains what your story is about
Release date – when the media can print the story (usually state here “Press release for immediate use” unless there is a reason why they need to wait until a specified date.
First (summary) paragraph – Includes the most important and newsworthy bits of your project to “hook” the reader in. Many people only read the first paragraph of a story so this paragraph is vital.
Second paragraph – Your key project messages – why is it important, what will it achieve, when is it.
Third paragraph – Include a quote from a project spokesperson that reiterates the importance of the project and what it will achieve.
Fourth paragraph – Include a quote from a supporter if possible (e.g. your main sponsor)
Final paragraph – Add any additional pieces of information that are less important (e.g. project supporters, website, location)
Photo – send a good quality photo that shows the core elements of your project
Ends - (text you include to indicate the end of the information)
For more information contact: Include the name and contact number of the project spokesperson
Links: List any other websites or reference documents that may be relevant
About Us: Include key facts about your organisation (e.g. objectives/goals, length of time operating, location)

(from Meridian Community Fund Communications Guidelines)

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

A few tips for when you are being interviewed by the media:

- Be clear in your head about what information you want to get across in the interview beforehand. If you know 2 or 3 key messages that you want to convey you can make the most of the interview no matter what the interviewer asks.
- Only answer questions that you know the answer to – if you are not sure then say so. You can use statements like “as far as I’m aware...” or “to the best of my knowledge...”
- Make sure you know all figures and statistics that will be discussed.
- Practise bridging phrases that you can use to bring the interview back to your key phrases or messages – e.g. “That highlights why we are...”
- Remember that there is really no such thing as “off the record” – don’t say anything that you don’t want anyone else to know.
- Be concise with your answers – preparation is key so you don’t give long winded responses.

Information prepared by



LINKS / WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.exult.co.nz
www.write.co.nz

For more information or help you can also contact your local
Community Development Planner at Venture Southland:
143 Spey Street, Invercargill
Ph: 03 211 1400
enquiry@venturesouthland.co.nz
www.southlandnz.com