

Writing a News Release

Any communication plan usually includes writing a news or press release - a brief summary giving reporters information about your event or cause. News releases should be short (never more than a page or two), and should contain all the vital facts - including the name of your organisation, its purpose, background, and who to contact for further information.

It's important to remember that a news release that isn't addressed to a specific person will usually end up in the newsroom recycling bin. You must target the information to specific contacts at your local media outlets. Call them first to invite them personally to your event, and tell them you'll be sending some additional information. Then, when you've faxed or emailed your news release, call them again to make sure they've received it and to answer any questions they might have.

Elements of a News Release

Logo: Your logo, if your Association or club has one, usually goes in the top left-hand corner. Your logo is a visual reminder of your club/Association, so you should use it on all materials you distribute to the public.

Headline: Your headline is the first thing an editor will read. You want to draw the editor in, using your headline as a "hook." Your headline should be informative and inviting, though never sensational or shocking.

Date: Date your news releases for the day you plan to distribute them. News releases with last week's date on them could be mistakenly be perceived as "old news."

Lead: Your lead is the first sentence of your news release. Like the headline, your lead has to be both catchy and informative.

Body: Your body paragraphs should answer the questions, What? Why? Who? When? Where? How? For instance, the sample news release below announces an upcoming event or story. The body of the release explains why this event is being organised, who's organising it, and gives details on when and where.

Photos: Photos can add a great deal to the story. This is particularly true when you are reporting on an event. Photos can add a 'feel good' factor to the story. Ensure the names and descriptions of supplied photographs are correct. Have a supply of photos handy for when you need them. 300 dpi (dots per inch) is preferable for print and 96 dpi for web. If you require photos of a particular player feel free to email SNZ as we may have the photo you require.

Contact information: Always include information on how to reach you with any questions. The most basic contact information should be a name and a phone number. You may also choose to include a second number (home, office, school, cell phone or pager), a fax number, an email address or a Web page address.

The news release, below, is a good example of proper structure.

NEWS RELEASE

Softballer's working hard to raise funds for Junior World Series

Sept. 9, 2010 – Members of the Panthers Softball Club who have recently been selected for the Boys Junior World Series in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA are planning a coaching session for under 14 year old Boys and Girls in order to raise awareness and raise funds towards expenses of the trip.

Organiser Joe Longball says the event is a great opportunity for our athletes to give back to the game as role models and to demonstrate the skills that have been passed down to them. It will also be an opportunity for anyone on the day to make a donation to support these athletes who are attempting to raise a player levy \$5,500 each, he says.

The club has been extremely successful in recent years with a number of players making the New Zealand Under 19 team in both genders. We are very proud of what the club has achieved in its existence.

The coaching session will be held Saturday Nov. 14 at the Panthers Softball Clubrooms. It will be an open event for any young charger wishing to improve their Softball skills, media are invited to attend at 3:30 p.m., when players will be available for interviews. For more information, contact:

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