Is There Still a Need for Press Releases When Newspapers Are Going Extinct?

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I've been in PR for a long time now, and in that span, I've seen many things change. The magazines I used to write for are now virtually all online. The article interviews I used to conduct in person over lunch are now done over a computer screen. And the print newspapers in which I used to broadcast my clients' announcements and publicize their efforts are a dying breed.

So it's not surprising that a colleague recently asked me at a networking function, "Should I even bother with press releases for my company anymore?" The short answer is, "Yes!" Why the press release is still a valuable asset requires a longer explanation.

Combining the old and the new

Today's press release is still a highly strategic tool for any business; it's just that as the definition of "press" has changed, so too have the delivery mechanisms that distribute it and the platforms and products by which it's disseminated.

Not too long ago, AP and Reuters were household names. These news agencies are still central players, but readers can now access their output directly instead of waiting for it in the morning edition delivered to their doorstep or watching it on the evening news. And though the "newswire" remains the main artery through which the lifeblood of today's business

information flows, the wire mostly takes the form now of digital distribution services, software tools and PRM (public relations management) platforms like Cision, Muck Rack, Newswire and EIN Presswire. These vehicles share news as opposed to generating it.

So the national or international "headquarters" through which a group of reporters operates is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, but journalists – still the actual human resource fueling "the media" – are very much alive and kicking! They decide what does (and does not) get picked up for influential news outlets, popular websites and TV. They decide what news is newsworthy. And so appealing to journalists still matters. A lot.

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Press release version 2024

Enter the strategic press release to grab the media's attention. Remember when your mother's company issued a press release to herald the new incoming CEO or when your old boss commissioned a release to clarify a product's safety warning? Today's press release has a much broader – and more engaging – mission than just announcing a store opening or publishing fourth-quarter profits.

The modernized press release has a robust, multifaceted job:

- It **builds brand awareness** by garnering your business *attention* – the most coveted commodity in today's digital marketplace. Cision has reported that 68% of businesses experience improved visibility from published press releases, making it an excellent medium to increase brand familiarity.
- It **promotes brand credibility**, which is vital in terms

of creating trust with your market. Not only that, but the more reputable the publication that picks up your release, the more your reputation rises.

- It **establishes brand authority** by positioning you as a thought leader in your industry. You gain widespread influence when your company is perceived as an expert in your field.
- It lets you **control the narrative** you want to relate to. This is just one of the advantages of owned media (which you create yourself) over earned media (which others create about you).

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Tips on impactful press releases in today's market

1. **Outsource for cost-effectiveness.** The "wire" isn't free. You can't just go out there and post your own content and hope it shows up on HuffPost or the *Today* show. This method of mass distribution requires an annual subscription fee, ranging anywhere from $500 to $4,000. Most small businesses can't afford that for the occasional press release. But PR companies routinely subscribe because they're submitting multiple products for multiple clients all the time. Do yourself a favor and let an outside firm foot the bill for the wire while you pay for only the content transmitted to it.
2. **Know the difference between embargo vs. exclusive.** Some journalists regularly check sources on the wire while others purposely stay away from it, and there's also a demarcation between a press embargo and a press exclusive. The former is sent out and reserved for a later pub date, whereas the latter is sent to just one media source, offering exclusive rights to break your

news. Don’t want to become a specialist on the distinction? Again, bring in a professional to concentrate on your product or service.

3. **Include SEO.** The more functions your press release can serve, the deeper the mark it will make. It’s worth the effort of integrating SEO best practices and link building so that you’ll rank higher with search engines. Every click from every well-researched keyword can increase revenue and market presence, so don’t neglect the “technical” side even as you focus on the creative side.
4. **Don’t expect immediate results.** If you think one press release will lead to an explosion of growth, you will be disappointed. Like any worthwhile marketing endeavor, such as an ad campaign, this is not a one-and-done proposition. While your initial press release is perched on the wire in hopes of taking flight, use the time to continue learning about your client base and testing what works best in reaching them. Then bring those insights to even more refined versions of your press announcements. Just keep plugging away, and you’ll eventually get plugged in!

The AI effect

Let’s take a quick detour to acknowledge the change underway in journalism. Though it may be true that AI chatbots will drive the future of business writing, never forget that AI sources its content from already-written text on the internet. So we still need original content, and we’ll always need original content (even if AI gets better at masking its inherent plagiarism).

In this AI climate, the key to crafting an inventive press release is to personalize. The future of PR lies in reliance on ever more personal brands and personal connections. Make your press releases as personal as you’re comfortable doing –

that’s the way to make it stand out from a computer-generated piece.

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Last word: PR = public relations *and* press releases

Press releases have historically been used to deliver updates about product launches, mergers and other large-scale business news. In today’s digital media landscape, however, they serve a far more dynamic purpose.

That’s why your business should absolutely still invest in press releases. But like any asset investment, you want to amplify their impact by curating exciting content, customizing the messaging and conducting targeted sends. Don’t worry if it sounds overwhelming to try to take advantage of all the media relations software out there to share your good news farther and wider than it’s ever traveled before. You can use a top-notch PR outfit to implement the whole process for you – in fact, that’s what we’re here for!

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