



SOCIETY for  
INDUSTRIAL and  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGY

SCIENCE FOR A SMARTER WORKPLACE

## **Tips for Writing a Press Release:**

### **1. Choose a Newsworthy Topic**

Take a critical look at your presentation, research, or story idea. Ask yourself why you think others would be interested in what you have to say. Why would anyone care about this? A story is generally considered newsworthy if it includes one of the core news values. Ask yourself:

- Is any NEW information presented in this research?
- Is there anything unusual or unexpected about your research? Are the results, for example, not what people would normally expect? Are the results inconsistent with the current method or practice of doing something?
- Do your research findings affect a large number of people or relate to something timely? For example, does your research relate to a topic that has recently been in the news or something that most people have to deal with on a daily basis?

### **2. Write a Great Headline**

Journalists are busy people who receive a lot of emails each day. In order to stand out from the other press releases that come in, you need a great headline. Make it short and sweet. Include the main point of the research. You can be clever with the headline or straightforward. You can also include a shorter, clever headline with a longer, more descriptive subheading below it.

### **3. Use the Inverted Pyramid and Lead with the Results**

Since journalists are so busy, they may look at your press release and only skim through the first few lines before deciding whether they would like to pursue the idea. Because of this, you want to try to put the most important “basics” in the beginning of your story. These are also known as the 5 W’s: who, what, when, where, and why. If your press release is about an event, for example, you will want to include the time, date, and place as early in the story as possible. For a research presentation, this is a little different. You will want to give the basics about your research at the beginning, leading with the results, followed by the methods and the implications. Give the bottom line so the reporter knows right away what your research found. As you get further along in your press release, you should see the less important information so that anyone reading the first few lines will not miss something that was placed at the end of the release.

### **4. Be Concise and Avoid Jargon or Overly Academic Language**

Ideally, your press release will be no more than one to one or one and a half pages, including the contact information, headline(s), and a few descriptive paragraphs about the research.

Remember, the reporters just need to know the basics of the research, and most importantly, the findings. You do not need to go into depth about the technicalities methodology (most non-I-O psychologists will not fully understand it anyway) or the background. A few sentences about who was studied and how will suffice. When translating the findings, try to avoid I-O psychology

jargon and overly academic language. Remember that the person reading this press release is not a psychologist. Describe the research the way you would describe it to a friend at a party, but in a professional manner.

### **5. Use Quotes from Experts and Researchers**

This is not always necessary, but it does give some personality to your press release. If the quotes are from particularly impressive experts, that is even better. You may want to use the quotes to give examples of why this research is important or the impact that it will have.

Researchers can tell the story through their quotes and explain in their own words how their research will affect the workplace, why people should care, and other noteworthy information that cannot be determined simply from the results.

### **6. Add Contact Information**

A reporter is going to be much more likely to write an article when he/she has an expert source readily available. By providing the names and contact information at the end of the press release, you are making it much easier for a reporter to write an article about your research. Be sure to use the heading “Contacts,” “Contact Information,” “Sources” or something similar, bolding and/or underlining it so it stands out. You only need to include an email address and/or phone number for each source and may want to include the affiliation after the name of the source. Be sure that whoever you list will actually be free to take reporters’ calls. There is nothing worse than listing a person who plans to be out of the country and unavailable for interviews for three months after your press release goes out.