**How to Write a Press Release *for* Print and Social Media**

Years ago we all depended on the local daily newspapers for what was happening and relevant news. Today, a vast majority of customers and our potential patients and referral sources scan headlines on Twitter or see what’s going on in their newspaper of choice or Facebook feed. Depending on the setting you work in (hospital, private practice, physician office, skilled care facility…) you may have an opportunity to work together with the marketing person or department, communications team or a colleague to roll out a well written press release.

Think of a press release as an opportunity to connect to the audiences you care about -- including, but not limited to reporters, referral sources, hospital administrators, potential patients, colleagues and community resources. A creative and human touch angle will often help carry your content and increase the likelihood of social sharing.  A press release can be a valued tool for communicating news to your audiences. However, it needs to be readable, relevant, and relatable.

A press release is a written statement to the media. It can announce a range of news items, including scheduled health care events, community talks, staff new hires, promotions, advanced certifications and degrees, new programs and services, etc. It can also be used to generate a feature story such as a patient success story / outcome. The information below is a guideline to consider for a newspaper and a social media press release.

**Print Media Press Release Checklist**

* Does the **news have value** to your target audience?
* Research the appropriate print media ) local newspapers, journals, health care and business publications to get a sense of which one(s) fit your goals, pricing and deadline.
* Identify the **key facts** of your content– ask who, what, why, where, when, how?
* **Draft** a template structure for your release.
* If you will be using quotes, consider who would be the best person to draw a reader in? (Physician, therapist, patient, hospital administrator, community leader)
* Would a **photo** support the release and enhance its draw?

**What should go into a print media press release?**

Answer the following questions about your news:

* **Who?** Who are the key players — your company, anyone else involved with the product, service? Who does your news affect/who does it benefit?
* **What?** What is new or important about it? (I.e. a well-trained hand therapist has just moved to the area and has been hired by your organization or you’re adding an additional site that will now offer a Women’s health program…)
* **Why?** Why is this important news — what does it provide that is different?
* **Where?** Where is this happening/is there a geographical angle/is the location relevant?
* **When?** What is the timing of this? Does this add significance?
* **How?** How did this come about?
* **Contact?** Where can an interested reader find more information about this information? Provide as much information as you can including contact information, websites, links to social media etc.

**Social Media Press Release Checklist**

Once you've determined that you need to write a press release incorporating social media, it shouldn't be hard to grasp the essential elements that need to be included.

* **Subject Line:** Short and to the point. Get to the point and don't try to be too creative. A few keywords should draw attention to your information.
* **Summary:** A very brief summary of the release. These words should draw the reader into your story. Keep it short, use keywords and put careful thought into every single sentence.
* **Content:** The content should be the news/information you want read. Present facts.
* **Facts:** Present data or bullet points to back up your content. This information should be easily shareable so if someone wanted to pull this right out of your release, they could.
* **About the Company:** Very brief company bio with a link to your website, Twitter feed and Facebook page.
* **Multimedia links:** The social aspect of the release, this should include videos on YouTube, images, RSS feeds and more. You don't want people to be driven away from your message, but you want to be seen as a useful resource with best practices.
* **Relevant links:** This is a good way to promote your company and your profession. If you have related releases, include links to them here.
* **Tags:** Recommended sharing methods, whether via social bookmarking sites, Twitter, hashtags or Facebook pages.
* **Contact:** Don't forget to include your name, company info, email, Twitter alias and more. It may lend more credibility.
* **Engage:** If someone asks a question about the content, respond quickly.

**What to Avoid with social media releases**

* The release is too focused on your company/service/product and not on how the consumer can benefit from the information. Let the user learn about your information and entice them to want to visit your website.
* Content is full of marketing lingo rather than being conversational/shareable
* Not engaging or answering questions or comments that have been made on your release.