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Backgrounder

An e-newsletter from Ellenbecker Communications focusing on the PR, marketing and creative needs of B2B equipment manufacturers

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Last year we posted an article called “4 sure-fire ways to annoy an editor with your press release,” and it was one of our most popular posts ever (mainly with editors, I’ll admit.) We’ve decided to share a few more, partly because it’s kind of fun, and partly because editors are still being annoyed by inappropriately written press releases. This isn’t about obeying finicky rules just for the sake of it—it’s about upping the odds that your company’s message will be read and that your relationship with the trade press is not harmed. This may be personally helpful if you or someone on your team writes the press releases for your company, or it can give you a few tips to consider when you analyze your agency’s work.

#1

You write a zero-content piece

This is usually a corporate puff piece that speaks in generalities and lacks pretty much any definitive statement. It’s not about a new product or anything that will impact your market. It says nothing that the publication’s readership cares about. It makes the company that sent it seem out of touch—and that not only annoys editors, it annoys readers, your potential customers.

#2

You misuse exclamation points!!!

There is no rational explanation for using an exclamation point in a press release. It is not an ad or a marketing brochure. It is a statement of facts, a report, a sober, business-like announcement. If you don’t have a shouted quote in your press release, you don’t need an exclamation point.

#3

You confuse marketing with a press release

This is one that editors see a lot. It usually happens because an executive is pressuring the marketing or communications department to “do a better job of selling” in their press releases. The trouble is, that’s not what a press release is for. The press release is essentially a no-cost service provided by the publication because they know that their readers want to know when something new comes down the pike. But those same publications know that their own reputations as trustworthy sources of news are put at risk when they print that a certain product is game-changing, revolutionary, the best in the world, or whatever other superlative the manufacturer conjures. That kind of language belongs in a paid ad.

#4

You Go on a random capitalization Rampage

We see this most often on company websites, when a press release is simply posted to the news tab of the site and has, too often, not had the benefit of a professional edit. Random capitalization is another of those mistakes that can make your press release look amateur, and that is not a message you want to communicate. There are a few basic rules to keep in mind:

- Capitalize proper names and proper nouns, including actual product names
- Capitalize the first word in a sentence
- Capitalize a title only if it comes before the name, as in President George Washington. But when it comes after the name, the title should not be capitalized.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Because editors are the gatekeepers who have the power to share your story with the wider world—their readers.



Matt Fueston is an Account Manager for Ellenbecker Communications, is responsible for new business development, and contributes as a staff writer. He believes in the intersection between Sales and Marketing.