

The background of the entire page is a blue-tinted photograph of a woman with curly hair, smiling and looking at a laptop. She is sitting at a desk in what appears to be an office or newsroom setting. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid clearly.

GUIDE TO THE

ULTIMATE PRESS RELEASE

Getting Maximum Reach &
Coverage with Your Press Release



CRAFT YOUR PERFECT PRESS RELEASE

You want to create and share a press release that is successful, so where do you start? Always begin with identifying who your audience is for this release; obviously you'll have a slightly different tone if you're writing to shareholders vs. the general public, and the "success" of the release will depend on what specifically you're trying to achieve with the release and how much budget you have to work with.

We've broken down these questions further so you can really dig into your next release with the right framework:

WHAT ARE YOUR COMMUNICATION GOALS?


Is your PR or Marketing team interested in brand awareness, media coverage, website traffic, or a different objective? In other words, what do you want your intended audience to do with this news?

WHO IS THE INTENDED AUDIENCE?

Is your press release intended for the media? Consumers? Analysts? Investors? Most wire services have targeted distribution lists that can help you reach the audience that is most important to your news or brand. Craft your message in alignment with what you know about your audience's goals and interests.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU SPEND?

You'll need to establish your budget for distribution, including adding any optional media like photos and videos.



From headline to contact information, press releases require certain essentials to make them distribution-ready. However, in order to capture online attention and increase the chances for earned media opportunities, you also need the right formatting and digital components. Take this balance into consideration to help spread your news and improve audience impact, as you put together your next press release.

GRAB YOUR READERS' ATTENTION WITH A COMPELLING HEADLINE

- Adhere to AP style; it is the preferred standard used in news distribution (remember percentages have changed!).
- Consider including your organisation name, for SEO purposes as well as clear attribution.
- Craft headlines that include the most important information/keywords in the first 65-70 words. Your headline should include 150 characters at the most for optimum social sharing.
- Write your release with natural keywords to boost searchability online.
- Never repeat a previously used headline; search engines mark duplicates and push them down in search results.
- Include a dateline: Where is your company's headquarters located, or where is your news originating from? Be sure to include the city in your release.



QUALITY CONTENT

The definition of “newsworthy” has expanded in the age of search engines, meaning press releases are no longer only read by or written for journalists. However, reputable newswire services are still evaluating press releases to ensure content quality before distribution. In general, content that is purposeful, well-written and connects with a target audience will be rewarded by search engines and shared by readers.

LEAD WITH YOUR HOOK

Search engine results reveal just how concise your information needs to be. You have the headline, sub-headline and a portion of the first paragraph to convince readers to invest time in reading your news. Your lead paragraph should quickly answer the classic five Ws: who, what, when, where and why. It should also include the company name.

BUILDING BETTER COPY

Once you've grabbed your readers' attention, start adding in the details. Be aware that Google rewards substance: press releases written in natural language rank higher in search results. Avoid keyword stuffing and jargon. Instead, use short sentences and bullet points to break up the text for visual interest.

STAND OUT WITH MULTIMEDIA

Visual and audio elements drive audience engagement through visual storytelling and social sharing. Journalists tend to publish what they consume, and they want engaging content that includes immersive visuals and data: [27% want images included and 18% want to see infographics](#).

Here are some tips to consider when creating and/or including these multimedia elements:

PHOTOS

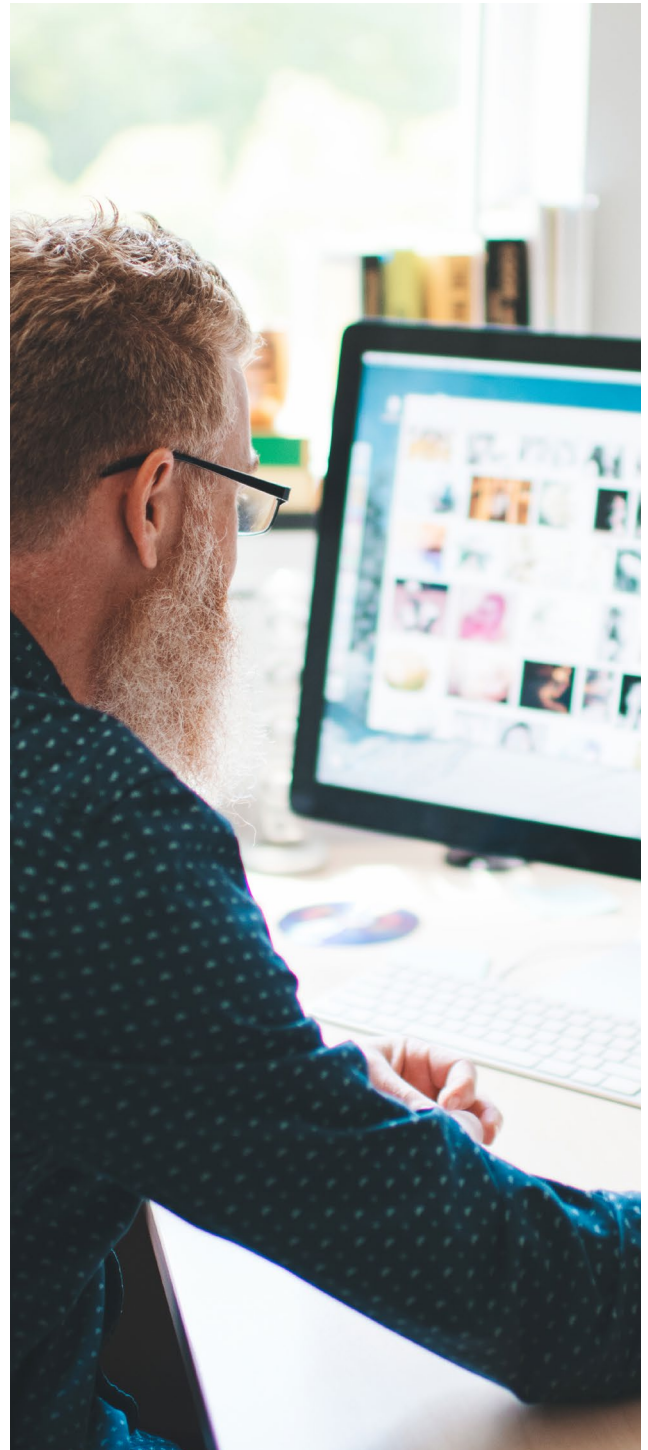
Photographs and graphics are perhaps the easiest way to bring your story to life. Image tips:

- Provide the highest resolution image possible to allow journalists and your audience to resize the media for different channels.
- Multimedia must be yours or be free and properly licensed.

VIDEOS (INCLUDING YOUTUBE)

You don't need a video production expert on your marketing/ communications team to experiment with videos (however our [MultiVu](#) team can assist you if you want professional help). Here are some tips to get you started:

- **Keep it short and sweet:** Most marketing videos should be two minutes or less according to [Vidyard](#); and videos have been getting shorter over the years, not longer.
- **Make sure the message matches your audience:** Video can be a great communication format and vehicle for any audience. But before you shoot, have a clear understanding of who you are speaking to and what you are trying to say. Developing a script- and even a storyboard beforehand- can help ensure your message comes across as intended. An exception would be a live event, where you want to document exactly what happened in real time.





ESTABLISH THOUGHT LEADERSHIP WITH QUOTES

Journalists are generally in a time crunch and do not always have the time to reach out for a unique quote. Help them out by including quotes from your spokesperson that they can reference or include in their coverage. Make sure your quotes have a conversational tone and use words your spokesperson would actually say out loud. Looking for a multimedia opportunity? Turn your quote into a video or sound bite that can be shared across social platforms.

INCLUDE A CALL TO ACTION (CTA)

Do you want readers to visit your company blog, download an e-book or republish an infographic? A strong CTA will guide readers to take a certain action over another. Stick to a single CTA to avoid reader confusion and help focus results, and include it high up in the release content—preferably in the first or second paragraph.

USE HYPERLINKS WISELY

The customer content services team counsels three links per 1000 words, not counting boilerplate links and contact information. Too many links can result in search engines flagging your news as “SPAM.” Your links should be specific to the content in your press release. If you want readers to access your investor page, don’t send them to your homepage. If there is information that needs to be cited but you don’t have room for a link, consider a footnote instead. Additionally, track engagement with these links to determine your press releases’ impact on revenue.

INCLUDE YOUR BOILERPLATE

Close every press release with a standard company boilerplate. Keep it brief, avoid industry jargon or acronyms and include links to your website and social media accounts to help drive traffic.

INCLUDE A MEDIA CONTACT

Your media contact should be a credible spokesperson for your company that is readily available to answer media queries. Include their phone number and email address and social media handles so journalists and influencers have a variety of contact methods to choose from.

CONSIDER TRANSLATIONS/LOCALISATION

If your organisation, or the content of the press release, appeals to an international audience, this is an excellent opportunity to distinguish yourself from your competitors. When appropriate, consider localising your message for each unique market you want to capture and translating your message to connect with your audience through additional languages. The time required to translate your press release depends on its length (and Cision can help with this, if you need it).



SEND YOUR PRESS RELEASE TO THE EXPERTS

Now that you have considered and gathered all of the information required for your press release, it's time to reach out to Cision's press release distribution service, PR Newswire. You can save time by submitting your press release using the online member center, which asks for all necessary information needed for the project. Submitting your release online, rather than emailing in a release, will eliminate some of the manual work that happens behind the scenes, helping you to meet your deadlines more easily.

TIME FOR EXPERT REVIEW

Here's a list of all the things our Customer Content Services teams do to get press releases ready for distribution:

PROOFREADING

- Spelling mistakes, grammatical errors— we've seen it all. Your press release may have gone through several levels of review, but an extra set of eyes with editorial experience never hurts.
- Consistency is key; we review things like acronyms and the names of people and places to ensure that they are spelled consistently throughout your press release.



CONSULTATION

- Our team leverages their experience to share what works, what doesn't, and how a press release can be optimised to help an organisation meet their goals.
- We can offer insider tips and suggestions on how your press release can cut through the noise and make an impact. Just ask for an SEO consultation, and for any other tips to improve your chances for earned media pickup.



FORMATTING

- Press releases are converted from your word document to a "web-ready" HTML format in order to best be distributed online and to the media. This ensures your content renders well on a variety of different sites.
- If your press release contains any elements such as tables or multimedia, some additional time will be required to format these components so the content is readable.





SHARE YOUR PUBLISHED PRESS RELEASE WITH THE WORLD

By using a trusted distribution service like PR Newswire, you can have confidence that your press release will not only go to journalists to increase earned media opportunities, but it will also be posted to trusted websites for maximum online discoverability.

But distributing your press release isn't the end—you should share it on social media (not copy-pasted, but in the right format to grab attention on the platforms your audience hangs out on) to increase the chances that your audience and influencers will engage with it and share it.

You'll need top-notch tactics and strategies to lift your engagement and make the right social platforms work for you.

LEARN WHEN YOUR AUDIENCE IS MOST ACTIVE, AND SHARE YOUR CONTENT AT THAT TIME

Each social media platform has different peak hours, and each user group may use social media at different times. Test posts at different times of the day to see which ones get the most engagement to figure out when your audience is most active. In addition to tailoring your content to each platform, you'll have to tailor your delivery time as well.

Keep in mind that your particular audience may be active at times that aren't the recommended "best practice" times for posting, and that's okay. Also be sure to test again periodically, as people's preferences change over time.

UNDERSTAND TIMING ON DIFFERENT PLATFORMS

Your audience may come to expect and appreciate consistently timed posts on some platforms that are more static- like LinkedIn- and not mind as much if you test different posting times frequently on another more fast-paced platform like Twitter.

Be mindful of how often you post based on the algorithms each platform uses to surface and recommend content to users. While it's difficult to over-post on Twitter, it's easy to overwhelm a new Instagram follower if they are continually served your new content on their static feed. Keep your frequent Instagram updates on your Stories.

DON'T TREAT YOUR FOLLOWERS LIKE ROBOTS

Just as you wish for your audience to recognise the humanity behind your brand, it's good to remember that followers are human beings first and numbers only in an aggregate abstract. Genuinely value their interactions and try to gauge their needs; they spent the time and energy to reach out and engage with your brand on social, after all! Be sure your content and presence appreciates the fact that these are real people with interesting thoughts and opinions and give them the best possible experience.



OPTIMIZE YOUR CONTENT TO BE CONVERSATIONAL

Companies use social media with the goal of talking directly to customers and getting them to talk back. An even better strategy is to get customers to converse with each other. Rather than just pushing out links and directing your audience away from your social media account, try to mix in conversational topics, polls, or certain asset types to social. Also, try different strategies on different platforms. See how polling performs with your Facebook audience, or take Instagram followers on a behind-the-scenes tour in your Instagram Stories.

GET MORE VISUAL - YOUR AUDIENCE EXPECTS IT

Leverage multimedia content to drive engagement and interaction, and consider posting videos, photos, and infographics more frequently. If you are linking to a blog post, be sure to add an accompanying image; this often takes up more visual real estate on social feeds which grabs the eye. We recommend posting multimedia that is unique, colourful and highly shareable— but still instantly recognisable as your brand.

Journalists are more prepared today to engage in a digital-first environment. This presents a huge opportunity for brands to tell newsworthy stories in a variety of formats; by doing so, they can use content as a tool for building brand credibility and thought leadership, educating and entertaining their audiences and driving the business forward with a carefully considered earned media strategy. When surveyed for the [2019 Cision State of the Media Report](#), journalists expect PR professionals to provide trustworthy, relevant and useful content.

- Journalists cited press releases and story leads as their #1 most valuable PR resource.
- Journalists value news releases and want brands to provide high-quality content.
- Journalists prefer engaging content that includes immersive visuals and data.

27% of journalists want images included with press releases, 18% site infographics and 16% personalised data analysis.

The rise in usage of multimedia caters to the changing media consumption preferences of their audiences. Brands should take note of this; by providing multimedia content to journalists you are increasing earned media opportunities and providing more engaging stories.



CREATE SOCIAL MEDIA POLLS BASED ON PRESS RELEASE DATA

Consumers often leverage press releases and social media to communicate new research, announcements or important data. According to Cision's 2019 State of the Media Report, 16% of journalists want personalised data analysis included in the press releases they receive.

Consider creating polls based on the data in your press release or research to further engage audiences, get them talking about your news and click through to your press release and owned sites.

TAKE QUOTES FROM THE PRESS RELEASE ONE STEP FURTHER

The people within your organisation are the ones who know your company best. If you've quoted them in the press release and made them available as a [HARO expert source](#), that's a good first step to capturing earned media opportunities. Next, ask them to be involved in Q&A sessions, real-time Twitter chats, and Facebook Live events to provide additional value and interaction opportunities for your prospects and customers.

Take your message even further by engaging influencers outside of your organisation who can offer a fresh perspective and can bring new eyes to your company. If you have connections who would be willing to participate in answering questions on a social media channel, reach out to them and leverage their knowledge or opinions.

Consider additional video on social media for in-depth responses. Try using video uploading services such as YouTube or Vimeo to create a short video response to consumer questions. If your audience is more active on Instagram, you can save a Q&A on your Story Highlights (seen on your profile). This can help ensure things are clarified for the user, especially if the question is coming from Twitter and the 280 character limit creates restrictions. Firing up the smartphone camera and answering a question is much easier than writing a response or clarifying at a later date—and your audience will appreciate the additional information.

Now that you are armed with the answers you need to distribute and share your press release with the world, it's time to get started.



DELIVER MAXIMUM REACH AND COVERAGE WITH PRESS RELEASES

POWER YOUR STORY WITH DATA-DRIVEN COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ENHANCED
CISION COMMUNICATIONS CLOUD™



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