

The News Release – How and when to use it.

The news release is probably the most effective tool for getting your message spread throughout the community. It is the cheapest and most common method used by public relation professionals to generate publicity. You too, can use it to spread the good news about your Toastmasters club. Newspapers are the most likely sources for publicizing your event. Reporters are always looking for stories, and they rely on press releases for information and ideas. However, to get your release printed, it should have an interesting “news hook” and be delivered to the correct person, ahead of deadlines and in an appropriate format.

Both editors and reporters receive releases. Direct your news release to the person who would be most likely to get it published.

Timing is important, old news is no news. Therefore the earlier you deliver your news release before deadline, the better your chances of getting it printed.

The news release is only effective if someone reads it. Using the correct format allows you to present the information in a clear, logical manner and adds visual appeal to your message. All releases should be typed, double-spaced and include your name, address and telephone number. It should be dated and have an attention-grabbing headline. Ensure the words “News Release” is printed on the top of the document.

Following is an example of standard news release format:

For Immediate Release

Date:

Contact: Name

Address:

Telephone Number (Day):

(Evening):

Headline:

The body of the news release should be accurate, concise and well written. Always double-check for accuracy all names, titles and dates. Begin with an attention-getting lead that includes the who, what, where, when and why of your message.

For example:

Who: Joy Lewis, District Governor, Georgia Toastmasters

What: Speech to local business leaders

When: Friday, October 5, 2007, at noon

Where: The Hilton Hotel, Meeting Room B

Why: To discuss the importance of verbal communication skills in business.

In subsequent paragraphs use supporting facts and details to expand on the lead. Try to put yourself in the reporter’s shoes and position the story according to the interest of the readers. Keep it no longer than two pages, double-spaced. Be brief; most newspapers will not publish your release but will rewrite it to suit the interest of their readers.

What topic could generate a release? Anything! The simple fact that your club exists is enough to warrant a feature article about overcoming fear of public speaking and how members are benefited by their improved communication skills. Other topics for news releases could include club and district events, anniversaries, visit by district or international officers, communication and leadership award recipients, educational recognition, officer elections, etc.

Follow up by calling or e-mailing the reporter to verify that the release was received and to offer any additional information that may be required. After this conversation, it is up to the editor and reporter to decide if your release will be used for a story.

Don’t be discouraged if your story isn’t printed. Be patient and persistent, and use what you have learned when planning for your next publicity campaign.

More information and samples of press releases can be found in the Publicity and Promotion handbook at <http://www.toastmasters.org/pdfs/1140.pdf> .