



**NORTH STAR**  
MARKETING, INC.

## Writing An Effective News Release & Getting Press

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North Star Marketing, Inc.

December, 20 2007

Public Relations takes an investment of time – advertising takes an investment of dollars. If not for its cost effectiveness alone, effective PR practices can also help your business rise above your competition and build lucrative credibility in your company.

### **Some of PRs more strategic benefits can include:**

- Establishing you, or a member of your team, as an expert.
- Giving potential clients a long, close look at your business.
- Rallying public support to your cause.
- Counteracting stereotypes.
- Getting your message across in a seemingly objective manner.
- Making you eligible for professional recognition.
- Providing the occasion for outrageous fun!

The profitable, and sometimes unexpected, opportunities that result from great PR are essential for any small business' success, and becoming a PR extraordinaire is doable if you follow some guidelines and have the time to build the necessary relationships.

### **PR's Key Component – The News Release**

- One or two page, typed document of news or information about a company and its activities.
- Distributed to various media outlets for public relations purposes.

### **Defining the Goal of Your News Release**

- Which of the following do you want – credibility and prestige; customers, clients, donors, or attendees; changed or open minds?
- Where, geographically, does it make sense for you to aim – nationally, regionally, or locally?
- Who, specifically, are you hoping to reach?
- Are you hoping to sell a particular product?
- Will you welcome any and all publicity opportunities, or will you want to pick and choose among opportunities to maintain a certain image and focus?
- Do you have reason to lean more to one medium than another?
- Will you embrace social networking?

### **Your News Release Angle**

- What is new about your business or organization?
  - Just opened
  - Posted record quarterly profits
  - Received a grant
  - Lowered prices



- Surpassed previous year's donations
- Hiring or promoting people
- Giving recognition awards
- Relocating
- Offering new service or product
- Serving new areas
- Charitable donations  
(You can contact the media 3-4 times per year with this type of information)
- What is different or distinctive about your business?
- Do you have an event you could create or publicize?
- Can you make your products or expertise relevant by piggybacking on current news?
- Have you done or could you do some research to merit coverage?
- Could you sponsor an interesting contest or award?
- Is there a holiday or anniversary that you could hook onto?
- Is there a trend in the general population or some particular population that relates to your offering?
- Can you suggest a surprising twist on received opinions?
- Can you provide a pretext for a light, witty report?
- Can you be an expert resource on a specific topic in your industry?

## **Six Steps to Writing an Effective News Release**

1. Find a news angle.
2. Present the basic facts for the angle of your headline in Paragraph One – answer the Journalist's 5w's.
3. Gather or create a lively quote that elaborates on the basic facts for Paragraph Two.
4. Elaborate further in Paragraph Three.
5. End with the nitty-gritty details (prices, addresses, dates, phone numbers, how to register, etc.)
6. Send it out.

## **Are You Sure that's News?**

Plenty of News Releases get scrapped by editors because the content isn't really news. Here are some factors that can help your News Release get attention and garner a precious media hit.

- Make sure that the subject of your news release is important to the publication's readers.
- Make sure that your release is really news and not just an advertisement in disguise.
- Write your release so that the publication's readers benefit from it.



### *Additional tips for getting the most miles out of your press release*

- Keep the tone objective, not promotional.
- Proofread vigorously.
- Produce different versions of your release for separate, distinct audiences.
- Plan to be available after you distribute your release.
- Write for a specific editorial department: news, lifestyles, real estate, etc.
- Cut out fluff and stick to newsworthy information.
- Keep the news up-front.
- Keep it short and to the point.

### **Key News Release Elements**

- **Contact information:** Company name, name of individual the editor should contact for more information, and phone number of that person.
- **Release Date:** A specific date the information can be released. If timing is not critical, just type the words "For Immediate Release."
- **Headline:** Designed to get the editor's attention and get him or her to start reading.  
*Tip: Inject news into the headline whenever possible and type the headline in boldface.*
- **Body:** What you want the media to know about your product or service.  
*Tip: If it looks like a paragraph will have to continue onto the next page of your release, move the entire paragraph to the next page, as editors will literally cut up your release to rearrange the content.*
- **Response Information:** How the reader can get in touch with you for more information on your product or service.  
*Tip: This information is critical! If you don't include it in the release, the editor may leave it out of the story, dramatically decreasing inquiries generated as a result of your media hit.*
- **Boilerplate:** Paragraph that includes a standard description of the company and its products or services.

NEWS RELEASE EXAMPLE - NEXT PAGE



## News Release Example:

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Joseph A. Stirt, M.D.

AnesthesiologyExpert.com

2809 Magnolia Drive

Charlottesville, VA 22901

Phone: 804-242-4990

<http://www.anesthesiologyexpert.com>

[info@anesthesiologyexpert.com](mailto:info@anesthesiologyexpert.com)

### **Anesthesiologist M.D. Offers Expert Defense/Plaintiff Case Analysis of Potential Medical Malpractice**

Charlottesville, VA -- April 12, 2001 -- Before you invest time and money defending or proceeding with an anesthesia-related medical malpractice case, check with expert board-certified anesthesiologist Joseph A. Stirt, M.D. Whether you are a defense or plaintiff attorney, Dr. Stirt can not only tell you if you have a case but also how best to structure it, based on a detailed medical review.

No newcomer to cases involving possible anesthesia-related malpractice, Dr. Stirt has 15 years of experience. Presented orally or as a written report, his in-depth analysis can save you hours of preparation and thousands of dollars. He is prepared to step in at the last minute when another expert suddenly withdraws from a case. Availability and rapid response make his service unique.

According to Dr. Stirt, "The question I get most often is, 'Is it malpractice?' My job is to sort out the bad outcomes due to occurrences that fall within the standard of care from those that do not. The question of whether a case involves negligence is one that looms over every potential malpractice action. If answered correctly, it can save both defendants and plaintiffs from mental anguish and ill-advised pursuit of a defense or lawsuit."

Dr. Stirt serves on the faculty of a major U.S. medical school affiliated with a top-rated tertiary care medical center. He sits on state medical boards as an expert reviewer and expert witness in anesthesiology. He has written books, book chapters, and numerous scientific papers, as well as articles in the medical-legal literature, received honors and awards in medical teaching and scholarship, and has 18 years of academic anesthesia experience ranging from Post Anesthesia Care Unit Director and Outpatient Surgical Unit Director to his current position as Clinical Associate Professor of Anesthesiology.

Dr. Stirt is a diplomat of the American Board of Anesthesiology and the National Board of Medical Examiners. He has been an invited reviewer and lecturer in anesthesiology throughout the U.S. and Europe and has appeared on CNBC.

Accessibility is a unique and important aspect of Dr. Stirt's services. His expertise in anesthesiology is available at any time. He does not work on a contingency fee basis. Your initial telephone consultation is free.

For information: <http://www.anesthesiologyexpert.com> or

Contact: [info@anesthesiologyexpert.com](mailto:info@anesthesiologyexpert.com)

Phone: 804-242-4990

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## **Sending Out Your News Release**

- Read your local papers and find out who writes about your kind of work.
- What trade journals and publications do your clients, prospective clients and TPRs read?
- Go to your library and look up editors and publications:
  - Bacon's Newspaper/Magazine Directory
  - Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media
  - Newsletters in Print
  - Encyclopedia of Associations
  - Chamber of Commerce Media guides
  - Imediafax

## **Following-up**

- Some reporters will call but the majority will not follow-up with a phone call.
- Email is great for an unobtrusive way to communicate with editors and writers who are often on deadlines.

## **When You Hear From The Reporter**

- Getting Reporters on your side
  - If you miss the call, call the reporter back ASAP.
  - Discuss a mutually agreeable time and place for an interview.
  - Feel free to set time limits in advance.
  - Ask the reporter's agenda.
  - Know your own agenda and prepare.
  - Be cooperative during the interview and grateful afterwards.
  - Be specific and enthusiastic during the interview.
  - Have talking points in front of you during the interview and stick to them.
  - Spell out and/or explain any unusual terms or names.
  - Don't say anything that you don't want to appear in print.
  - Don't answer questions you feel uncomfortable answering.
  - Repeat your main points.
  - Don't ask to approve the story before it is printed.
  - Ask to be identified in a way that allows the readers to find you.
  - Don't ask for payment.
  - Fax or send collateral information.



## **Always Have Press Kits on Hand**

- Press Kits generally include:
  - 5x7 or 8x10 black and white glossy photo
  - A Bio of you or your business or both (in paragraph form)
  - Articles by or about you
  - Tip Sheets by You
  - Press Releases
  - Other Marketing Material or Publicity Material
  - Media Contact sheet
  - Quote Sheet
  - Fact Sheet
  - Talking Points
  - Client List
  - Photo or sample of product

## **How To Stretch Out Your Moment In Fame**

- Create and maintain relationships with the media
  - Thank You notes (less than 1% does this)
  - Send more information about you from time to time
  - Connect the editor with other people she could write about
- Don't turn down publicity opportunities
- Make yourself as available as you can
- Post News Release on your website
- Distribute News Release in your eNewsletter
- Keep a file of clippings
  - Post press on the wall or mail it to your database
- Do a Tip Sheet for readers to get in touch with you
- Try to maintain a stable address
- Recycle your publicity materials
  - Tip Sheet, seminar...
- Assess your success
  - What went right?



- Mail reprints to your prospects, customers, and referral sources
- Distribute reprints at trade shows

## **Supplement Your News Release with a Tip Sheet**

You can use a tip sheet to include details that would otherwise clutter your News Release. The title should clearly indicate the content and there should be an introduction followed by numbered tips. (Hint: 8 & 12 have more pizzazz than 9 & 11) Also, it will look more professional if you have it type set in 2 or 3 columns.

### **Examples of Tip Sheet Titles:**

- 12 ways to save on Property Taxes - Legally
- How to catch a rich husband in less than a year
- 10 tips to make your home more salable
- 6 ways to ensure your skin will always look its youngest
- 12 questions to ask yourself before you start a web site

### **How Tip Sheets can earn you free publicity:**

1. Written proof of your expertise
2. A handout that you provide at seminars and meetings
3. Material that you offer as a "freebie" to attract and identify potential clients
4. Something you can send off to be published
5. Use a tip sheet as a panel of a brochure
6. Make it timely (Recession proof business strategies during a recession)

### **Pitch Letters**

1. If you have a personal connection with a publication, lead the pitch letter with a short statement of the link. Then make your pitch (concisely), explain your qualifications, and close the letter.
2. Another publicity strategy involving a customized pitch letter is agreeing with or disagreeing with a newspaper or magazine columnist.
3. A third strategy is to write and introduce you as a general source on a topic.

PITCH LETTER EXAMPLE - NEXT PAGE



## **Pitch Letter Example:**

Dear Editor:

Anxiety, indecision, intimidation and agony are common feelings that surface whenever you begin the process of decorating your home. Do you tackle a big room in the house – the kitchen – or start with something smaller like reorganizing the closets? What simple home accessories can you use to brighten up the look of your living room? What type of storage do you have to keep your space from looking cluttered?

IKEA has quick and simple decoration solutions to all of these questions that are frequently asked when taking on the daunting task of decorating your home.

Enclosed, please find examples of before and after visuals with easy and affordable tips on how to reorganize the closet as well as redo a kitchen. Also included is an anxiety fact sheet and an IKEA 2000 Catalog.

An IKEA spokesperson is available to demonstrate simple and quick makeover steps for the kitchen, living room, bathroom, closets, and any other room in the home. We will literally create these rooms on your set with “before” and “after” displays that are simple, fun, creative and affordable – and most importantly – will not cause anxiety and fear about decorating a room.

I will follow up with you later this week. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to contact me at 212-645-6900 x128.

Regards,

Jeanette Chin

## **Making the Time for PR**

If you have the time, make PR part of your weekly schedule. You can choose to set a recurring date to review your business goals and see if you have any news to share. It's also a great idea to make deadlines for yourself to make sure your news gets out in a timely fashion. Keep a PR idea notebook and keep all of your ideas in one place, and if possible, let a coworker in on your efforts to keep your ideas fresh and establish a PR buddy system.



# About North Star Marketing

## What We Do

We are strong believers in integrated communications – no one-trick ponies here. We combine marketing expertise with PR expertise, PR tools with marketing tools. The most successful public relations campaigns are those that work side-by-side with a company's marketing plan. You get the picture. As a team, we bring a variety of solutions to all marketing challenges. Among our strongest capabilities:

**Direct:** Direct Mail | Catalog | Print Advertising

**Design:** Corporate Identity | Logos | Collateral | Annual Reports

**Brand:** Brand Strategy | Messaging | Brand Audits

**Strategy & Research:** Planning | Customer Audits | Marketing Research | Online Surveys

**Promotion:** Sales Promotion | Events | Product Launches

**Public Relations:** Press Releases | Public Service Announcements | Reputation Management | Press Kits

**Media & Community Relations:** Training | Media Tours | Press Conferences | Speaking Opportunities

**Interactive:** Website Development | Email Marketing | Podcasts | Blogs | Landing Pages | SMS | Search Engine Optimization

## About April Williams



April is our President and Visionary with over 18 years of marketing experience. April's marketing career began in 1989 in the hospitality industry. In 1994, April took her marketing skills to the world of investments and money management where she developed marketing strategies to reach women investors in the Rhode Island and Southern New England marketplace. Seeing a need for a firm that understood marketing as it pertained to the service industries in Rhode Island, April started North Star Marketing in 1997. The company quickly grew to a firm that worked with retail, manufacturing, and B2B companies as well as her original focus on the service industry.

April brings her skills of creative and innovative marketing strategies to the team allowing her to listen to the client, to see where they want to go and then to chart the best paths to take them there. She loves to think outside the box and challenges the team to continually "WOW" their clients. April is a member of the American Marketing Association and the Public Relations Society of America.

