

## **SilverFox training: TOP TIPS SERIES**

### **EFFECTIVE NEWS RELEASES**

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‘Is this newsworthy?’ That is the first question editors ask when they receive a news release. You have one paragraph, perhaps 20 seconds maximum, to seize the editor’s attention or the release goes in the waste bin. ‘Newsworthy’ means your story is about something that the editor’s listeners, viewers or readers will find interesting. Before composing a news release, make sure you have something worthwhile to say. Tackle the main point immediately in the first paragraph, and make it with absolute clarity.

Your release will be one of many received by the news desk, so it must make an impact straight away. Here are 10 general tips to improve your chances of having your release reported in the media:

- Make sure your subject is ‘newsworthy’. Try to give it a sense of immediacy.
- Use news release paper, or write ‘news release’ at the top of the first page which should be on letterhead paper.
- Present the essential facts immediately in the first paragraph, especially the ‘who’ and ‘what’. Always write your release so that it makes sense if the editor is short of space and deletes paragraphs from the bottom up.
- Use a punchy, factual, eye-catching headline. News editors skim read 50 or 60 stories a minute, so your story must grab attention immediately.
- Adopt a simple, plain language style. Avoid jargon, and ensure the information is easy to understand. Clarity is a must. Fancy, pretentious writing will obscure your message and reduce your chances of gaining coverage.
- Keep your release concise, informative and interesting. Use one and a half or double line spacing. Do not go to more than two pages.
- Keep each paragraph tight, with no more than four short sentences.
- Put the date at the top of the release so news editors know that the story is still current.
- Leave adequate space at the top and in the margins for the sub-editor to make any changes.
- Do not underline words. This is an instruction for journalists to use italics.

**Other points to remember!**

- Be prepared to cut & paste the story into the body of your e-mail
- For local media, your story should always have a local angle;
- Human interest stories or unusual angles interest the media;
- Journalists are not paid to use the material you supply;
- You cannot dictate how much of the copy will be used or when it will appear
- The amount of space or air time a publication or radio station gives you is *their* editorial decision
- You are not entitled to see the finished copy!