# How to write a Press Release

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### How to write a Press Release

First Edition. Published March, 2012.

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Published by Interloper, Inc. 13901 Midway Road, Suite 102102 Dallas, TX 75244, USA.

### About the author



Najeeullah Khan Babar is an MBA in marketing and based in Dallas, Texas, USA. He is the founder of Interloper Inc., a specialty computer company and Interloper Golf, a custom golf company.

His businesses are web based or e-commerce sites. As he likes to state, 'I have been earning 100% of my livelihood through the internet for 16 years now'.

Commenting on this publication:

'It bothers me that most small businesses and self employed people ignore press releases to their detriment. They think it is too complex and is better left to the bigger companies. That could not be farther from the truth. It is very easy to write press releases and the traffic boost that it gives your store or website is just unmatched by other marketing activities. Hopefully this publication will convince people to start writing and distributing press releases.'

# **Table of contents**

- 1. Preface
- 2. <u>Section I: Writing for the Media</u> The traditional Press Release
- 3. The Layout of a Press Release
- 4. Sample Press Release I
- 5. <u>Section II: Going Direct</u> Writing for search engines
- 6. Elements of a Press Release for search engines
- 7. Sample Press Release II
- 8. <u>Results</u>
- 9. Where to submit Press Releases

# Preface

Having been self employed for over 20 years, I have gotten the most bang for the buck through Press Releases in promoting my businesses. When I ventured out on my own, the internet was not around as a commercial medium and we had to send out Press Releases the good old postal mail way or by fax. We would copy images on to floppies and attach them to our Press Releases. Only the section reporter or editor saw the press release and it had to be news worthy. In addition you tried to include expert opinion and avoid editorializing yourself. You had to sell your story to the editor. If the editors liked the release, they would publish it and that meant thousands of dollars worth of free publicity.

The media publishes press releases as a news story so the readers do not filter it as much as they would an advertisement. Your story carries more authenticity if it gets published as a news story.

Times have changed and now we send out press releases via email with images as attachments but one thing hasn't changed. We still send out press releases. Why? Because they are effective.

The internet has added a new wrinkle to press releases. Not only is your press release intended for the readers of a publication but also for search engine crawlers / spiders. Search engines want to index the freshest content to impress their users and where can they find the freshest content, news and news distribution sites.

Today, press releases not only deliver you direct readers and prospects, it also improves your websites ranking on search engines.

You don't have to wait for something major to report. You can submit press releases on minor updates and upgrades too. The more often you send out press releases, the more material is out there pointing to your site. Talk about backlinking on the cheap.

The irony is that small businesses who can benefit the most from press releases don't send out press releases. They think it is something very technical that only an expensive editor / consultant can write for them and consequently don't write press releases. That couldn't be farther from the truth. A press release is easier to write than a two page brochure and in most cases will out pull your brochure at next to nothing in cost. It's one of the few areas where a small business is at par with large behemoth corporations.

This book has two sections, one the traditional press release and one for online search engine consumption. Pay attention to both. The core is the same but in one you try to catch the eye of the editor while in the other, you want the search engine to give you some love.

# Section I: Writing for the Media:

### The traditional Press Release

A press release is a standardized format for initiating contact with the media. The format has been around for over a century and traditional media still follows it.

### **Key points:**

- 1. Use your company / organization letterhead where applicable.
- 2. Depending upon how big the publication is, your press release will go to the editor, section editor or reporter relevant to your story. Get to know your local media or your trade publications. Write down who / which editor is responsible for the type of stories you will be sending them. Some publications make it easy on you and tell you in their publications where to send press releases to. Others you have to do a little digging with an email or call to see who the right person is for your news release. News Release and Press Release are the same thing. Make a list of the publications, TV and radio stations that are applicable to you be they local, national or international, who the relevant editors are and how best to deliver them press releases.
- 3. Editors get a lot of press releases a day and yours will be one of them. Your first job is to sell it to the editor. Put yourself in his shoes and see if your press release would be of interest to him.
- 4. Keep it short. Your press release should ideally be one or two pages but not longer than that. Their time is precious and they are almost always up against a deadline.

- 5. Why do editors accept and print press releases in the first place? They are trying to sell their publication / air time to their audience and they want to show the people that they print / air information that is current, relevant, interesting and news worthy. That keeps the readers / viewers loyal and they keep renewing their subscriptions.
- 6. Do not include unsubstantiated claims in your press release. Be factual and honest and avoid hype.
- 7. Describe your product just like a good simple presentation would, i.e., feature function benefit. What's the feature, what does it do and how does it help.
- 8. Most editors are always on a deadline. If you make his job easy, you have a better chance of getting some ink. If the editor can at a glance get the gist of your story, he may pursue it further. If it is in the right format, he does not have to struggle with it. He has space to fill and you just provided him good content. What's not to like.
- 9. A story sells better especially if it is a human interest story. Scandals and controversies also get better coverage. That does not mean that your new internal combustion engine cannot get press coverage but if you can find a human interest angle in addition to your new light weight but hardy sprockets, you have a better chance of getting published.
- 10.Provide pictures as attachments if emailing and on DVD if sending via the postal service. Don't send your press release as an attachment if emailing. Send it in the body - just attach pictures and other related documents if you feel they may be needed. You can also send videos especially if the video is nicely produced. Online channels don't mind using videos as it saves them a lot of hassle. If there is a photo shoot opportunity, let the editors know that if they want to

take pictures or make a video, they can expect a video shoot opportunity at a specific time and they can coordinate with you.

- 11.Proofread your press release or better yet, let somebody else proofread it.
- 12.If you can somehow involve a local celebrity also, you will really improve the chances of the media showing up with cameras and camcorders.
- 13.Follow up with a phone call. Most likely you will get voice mail and that is fine. Just leave a short message with your name and phone # like ' This is John with ABC engineering. I sent you a press release about our new hybrid engine. Just checking to see if you got it and if you need any additional information. My telephone # is 123-555-1212.

Remember, you are providing them content, that is, you are helping them do their job. So don't be shy.

### The Layout of a Press Release:

- 1. Top left: It should read:
  - a. PRESS RELEASE
  - b. For release: date, time. If you want it published at the first opportunity, just say 'For immediate release'. If you want it embargoed till a certain date and time, mention that. For example, you may have set a date and time for a product announcement and don't want information getting out before that. You have now provided the information to the editor with an alert that this is not to be released before that time. There is no guarantee that they will honor that at all but you can try. I would not send them the press release unless I want it released immediately. Why make life tougher for the editor and reduce my chances of getting published.
  - c. Contact: Name, company name, phone number: Enter the name and # of the person who can handle press inquiries. Make sure that person is aware of it too.
- 2. Headline:

Make it interesting. Let's look at some headlines and see which one is more interesting:

- a. New titanium driver announced by InterloperGolf that is lighter by 10 grams.
- b. New lighter faster driver by InterloperGolf for greater distance
- c. Thin crown technology helps InterloperGolf produce a lighter longer driver

'c' would most likely catch the editors attention. He in turn is thinking what would catch my readers eye. You are trying to promote your cause, your product, your service to the end user, to the target audience but through the editor. You have to sell it to the editor first.

3. Sub-Heading:

It's not a must be it helps. In the above example, let's follow the heading with a sub-heading:

Thin crown technology helps InterloperGolf produce a lighter longer driver

The 10 grams saved helps you swing the club faster

Remember you are helping the editor with content. The less he has to alter the text, the less time he has to spend on it the more he likes you.

4. Paragraph # 1: City, State — Release Date. Then the first paragraph. The City, State/province (if applicable) and release date are required. This is your lead paragraph, that is, it leads the reader into your story. Spend some time on it.

Your first paragraph needs to answer the five W's of press releases, that is:

- a. Who is this news release about?
- b. What has happened that is newsworthy?
- c. Where did the newsworthy event take place?
- d. When did this happen?
- e. How is this newsworthy? and
- f. Why should readers care?

Your first paragraph should tell a complete story. If the editor has very limited print space and he can just include the first paragraph, that should be good enough to inform the reader about what's happening. It should also help the reader make a decision to read further or skip the rest of your story.

- 5. Paragraph # 2: Here you will explain a little more and again close such that the story is complete.
- 6. Paragraph # 3 and on: Unfold your story a further. It's like

un-rolling a scroll. You let the editor decide where to cut but keep revealing more and more in case he has more space. Provide references to research, quote authorities, provide comparisons and reviews to make your story a compelling read and for your readers to have enough of a reason to contact your company for further information or to place an order or participate in your cause.

- 7. At the end, provide boilerplate information that is pretty much standard for all your press releases and includes:
  - a. About the company
  - b. Contact Name
  - c. Phone number
  - d. Company name
  - e. Website, Facebook, Twitter etc.
  - f. Notes for editors
  - g. Details of the people or companies involved
  - h. Key facts and figures related to press release
  - i. References to past stories they have run on this topic
  - j. References to similar stories appearing in other publications
- 8. You provide this additional material in case you have really piqued the editors interest in your story. He may want to do a more detailed report on the subject and that would be even better for you if you or your company features prominently in that.
- 9. Where your press release ends, place three hash marks '###'. Center them if you can. The three hash marks indicate end of Press Release.

On your website, create a section for Press Releases. Post all your press releases there also. Some of your customers and prospects would like to read more about you and a press release provides good fresh content. Search engines will also index them and you may get some indirect traffic. \_\_\_\_\_

# Sample Press Release - I

Press Release

For immediate release Vivian Hastings InterloperGolf.com Tel: 469-555-1212 Email: press@interlopergolf.com

### Thinner crown helps InterloperGolf produce a lighter longer driver

## New production techniques help shave off weight from the top

Dallas, TX - Feb 23, 2012. InterloperGolf announces the all new XF Leggera driver using thinner crown technology, a lighter shaft and a lighter grip for a total weight of 275 grams. That is 45 grams less than a conventional driver resulting in faster swing speeds for longer drives.

A regular modern driver weighs about 320g. According to Ms. Hastings, spokesperson for InterloperGolf, using the innovative thin crown technology helps the XF Leggera shed 10 grams from the top of the crown. Engineering ensures the center of gravity is in the right place. to create those monstrous drives. By pairing the XF Leggera with a lightweight shaft and a lightweight grip, the total weight is reduced to around 275 grams. That is a big difference. The result is a driver that produces a faster swing speed that generally translates to longer drives.

According to Ms. Hastings, lighter shafts have been available for a

few years but the heads were still the same weight making them a bit unwieldy when paired together. A lighter head alleviates that problem. The introduction of light grips from several manufacturers also helps bring down the total weight even further.

Many golfers will opt for a longer shaft further helping with distance as per Ms. Hastings. Most modern drivers are 44" to 45" in length. The lighter weight encourages golfers to add an extra inch to their shaft without compromising control. It opens up quite a few options and possibilities and those who like to tinker and tweak their clubs are going to have a jolly good time improving their distance off the tee.

InterloperGolf focuses on customized golf clubs for golfers who are a little more knowledgeable than the beginner golfer. They provide reviews, comparisons and ratings of golf clubs on their website at http://interlopergolf.com.

Contact:

- 1. Vivian Hastings
- 2. Tel: 469-555-1212
- 3. Email: press@interlopergolf.com
- 4. InterloperGolf.com, Dallas, TX, USA
- 5. http://interlopergolf.com
- 6. Twitter: @interlopergolf

###

Note to editor:

I have attached three pictures. If you need more, let me know.

# Notes:

- 1. Why did I cross out 'longer' in the headline, 'for longer drives' in the first paragraph and 'to create those monstrous drives' in the body. Because that is editorializing, that is my opinion and editors generally don't like such puffed up statements. Why risk it.
- 2. But I included 'that generally translates to longer drives' in the second paragraph. Why? If the editor has read this far, I am willing to relax a little too.
- 3. If sending by mail, include pictures on a DVD.
- 4. If sending by email, send pictures as attachments. Try to keep the file size small. Use .jpg or .gif or .png files whichever gives you the smallest file size. Whenever editors have space, they like to include pictures. It makes their publication more pleasing to the eye and by providing them pictures, you are making their job easy.

# **Section II: Going Direct:**

# Writing for search engines

With the ubiquitous internet, information dissemination and retrieval has changed. If you are a business person, a marketing professional, a PR practitioner or work for a non-profit, the internet allows you to re-package the good old press release, feed it human growth hormones and transform it into a multi headed hydra. You can:

- Still reach the conventional media through the mechanics described in section I. You are simply augmenting your reach without giving away the traditional methods.
- Reach the reader directly and bypass the gatekeeper the editor
- Better channel the reader to specific pages you have made for specific promotions
- Improve your website's search engine ranking
- Siphon traffic from search engines
- Reach new customers who are looking for what you provide that's why they are searching in the first place.

Bottom line: It allows you to compete more vigorously with the big boys. It's like Popeye's spinach.

The marketer today has more options to push and the reader has more alternatives to pull in what he wants to read. A reasonably internet savvy person creates his own news streams by subscribing to various feeds and getting them on his news reader. He can also set alerts that notify him when news are available in his area of interest. He decides what to read and when to read and does not want any editor to decide that for him.

When you subscribe to news feeds, where is the information coming from? Straight from the source. That is, if you can't wait to hear about new products coming out of Nintendo, you subscribe to their feed. No middle man involved. You get the information straight from the horses mouth. But that would mean going to a ton of feeds every day. Not really. You just add them once to your feed reader and anytime there is a new post in that feed, you will get it.

What does that mean? That means the editor has no clout with such a person. The editor is no longer his gatekeeper or at least not on non-traditional media.

A reader can also setup Google Alerts to collect information from anywhere and everywhere based on user defined keywords. Google keeps collecting information all day long - that is what search engines do - and sends an excerpt to the news reader or to the users email box. If he wants to read the detailed article or story or maybe its your press release, he can click on the embedded link and go straight to the source - which could be your website. How cool is that!

In this internet dependent world of ours, when an individual decides to find out something, he goes to his favorite search engine and does a little search. The search engine brings up pages it has indexed previously and its algorithm decides if they are the best match to his search phrase. Gone are the days of relying on telephone directories, dictionaries, reference books and AAA trip ticks - remember them?

What is the underlying theme here? What has changed for you, the marketer, the business owner, the PR person?

Two things have changed.

- 1. The Reader Direct. You can reach the ultimate reader, the prospect, the customer, the voter, the donor, directly if he so chooses through news feeds.
- 2. In addition to your editor for traditional media, you have a new kind of gatekeeper, the search engine. It is inanimate, it is programmed by humans, remembers you and your doings and like the traditional editor is heartless. Sorry couldn't help take a swipe. :)

Reader Direct is easier. He likes the types of items you sell, the

type of information you provide, the type of causes you champion or shares your values etc. Give him what he wants and in detail. Maintain a section on your website for your press releases as a certain section of readers and researchers prefer it that way but for your precious Reader Direct, provide your information in blog form. Whether you use WordPress, or Blogger or any of the 25+ blogging platforms, post your information in the form of a blog post. Blogs come with a news feed built-in. You don't have to create a feed. Once you post to your blog, the feed has information to share with feed readers and reaches your Reader Direct.

If you would rather not use a blog and want to stay with your conventional website, there are tools available to convert a static page to a feed.

A blog is better suited for free flow of information. You can be more conversational and provide a level of detail that conventional press releases don't allow. Besides, your reader can post comments, give his opinion and ask questions at his leisure. A blog engenders a stronger bond between Reader Direct and you.

Blogging by itself is a separate subject and we won't cover it in this publication.

Now let's tackle the big monster, the search engine. What is the search engine trying to do? It is trying to be the editor, the gatekeeper - it is trying to please the user so he will keep coming back to it whenever he has something on his mind. The more often the user visits, the more Ads it can serve him and the more money it makes.

Don't you feel like you are being used no matter what the technology. Yep. That's how it is. But you are on the other side. You are inviting the search engine to use you so you can use it to reach the end user. Ironic? Maybe. The search engine is trying to crawl fresh content so it can please it's user. You feed it fresh content via Press Release sites. Why not feed it directly? You do - by letting the search engine index our pages - but the search engine views a Press Release Distribution site as a more likely source for fresh content and crawls it several times a day. Besides, Google

gives a Press Release Distribution site more weightage or a higher page rank. That means a page originating from a PR site will carry greater weight. Quite often you will see your press release via a PR site show up high on searches with your own page nowhere in site.

A link or URL originating from a PR site carries greater weight. If your press release got published in 20 PR sites, those are 20 high ranking links pointing to your website. That is invaluable as the more links from high ranking sites pointing to your site raises the page rank of your site. When your site's page rank goes up, you start showing up higher on relevant searches.

Let's recap. By posting press releases to Press Release Distribution sites, you get traffic from:

- 1. Press Releases that show up in Google Alerts
- 2. Press Releases that show up in searches
- 3. Your own site showing up higher in searches

Convinced?

Now let's look at the elements of press releases designed for internet based press release distribution sites.

# **Elements of a Press Release for search engines:**

### 1. Title:

You are generally allowed 200 characters. Use them wisely. Remember, you don't have to play it to the editor. You have to contend with a search engine algorithm. You have to also think like the user. When a person conducts a search, what kind of keywords will he use?

2. Summary:

About 200 characters. This is just like a sub-headline. Make it one or two sentences.

3. Body:

10,000 characters or so. You don't have to start with City, State and Date. Describe your offering as best as you can. Some sites allow you to include pictures in the body, some allow you to include one picture in a specific location while others don't allow pictures at all.

Some sites allow you to include a link, others don't. Those that don't allow a link in the body generally have a section at the bottom where they allow a link. Some sites allow you using HTML, others prefer text only. Submit accordingly.

4. Tags:

Tags mean keywords. Most PR sites allow you four to six keywords. Mention those that most closely resemble your content.

5. Company and author information:

Describe your company and if you are the brand itself, say a few words about yourself.

6. Graphics

Upload graphics when allowed.

7. Link to website or story

Most sites allow a link to your site. Use it as that is how readers can reach your site by just following through with the story and that is how search engines retrace the story to your site.

This places an amazing level of power in the hands of the little guy. He can compete for the readers attention just like a giant conglomerate - well almost. With a little bit of understanding, he can have his own little media machinery to reach out and communicate with his base, his constituents, his customers.

# Sample Press Release - II:

Now let's look at our sample press release rejiggered for a press release distribution site. Notice the liberties taken with grammar and capitalization.

1. Title:

The longest driver of 2012 using Thin Crown Technology - Golf Reviews

2. Summary:

Light Weight Driver at 275 grams, the XF Leggera produces faster swing speeds for those monstrous drives off the tee. Best driver for 2012.

3. Body:

InterloperGolf announces the all new XF Leggera driver using thin crown technology, a lighter shaft and a lighter grip for a total weight of 275 grams. This light weight driver is 45 grams less than a conventional driver resulting in faster swing speeds for longer drives.

A regular modern driver weighs about 320g. According to Ms. Hastings, spokesperson for InterloperGolf, using the innovative thin crown technology helps the XF Leggera shed 10 grams from the top of the crown. Engineering ensures the center of gravity is in the right place to create those monstrous drives. By pairing the XF Leggera with a lightweight shaft and a lightweight grip, the total weight is reduced to around 275 grams. That is a big difference. The result is a driver that produces a faster swing speed that generally translates to longer drives. There is a reason we call it the longer driver of the year.

According to Ms. Hastings, lighter shafts have been available for a few years but the heads were still the same weight making them a bit unwieldy when paired together. A lighter head alleviates that problem. The introduction of light grips from several manufacturers helps bring down the total weight even further.

Many golfers will opt for a longer shaft further helping with distance as per Ms. Hastings. Most modern drivers are 44" to 45" in length. The lighter weight encourages golfers to add an extra inch to their shaft without compromising control. It opens up quite a few options and possibilities and those who like to tinker and tweak their clubs are going to have a jolly good time improving their distance off the tee.

If you are looking for golf driver reviews, visit <u>http://interlopergolf.com/the-longest-driver-of-them-all/52</u> and see why we call the XF Leggera the longest driver of the year.

4. Tags:

longest driver of 2012, best driver for 2012, latest golf drivers, longest driver of the year, golf drivers, golf driver reviews,

5. Company information:

InterloperGolf focuses on customized golf clubs for golfers who are a little more knowledgeable than the beginner golfer. They provide reviews, comparisons and ratings of golf clubs on their website at <u>http://interlopergolf.com</u>.

6. Graphics:

Upload the number of images allowed.

7. Link:

http://interlopergolf.com/the-longest-driver-of-them-all/52

# **Results:**

Now let's submit our press release to various sites. For a list of press release distribution sites, visit

http://bloggerkhan.com/resources. Most of these sites allow you to post for free.

That's it. Submit and you are done.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could look at some results also. Let's do it. I submitted the above press release around mid morning on Feb 26, 2012. Six hours later I did a search on Google using the keywords 'The longest driver of 2012' and we are on the first page of Google at number 10. See snapshot.

### Golf Drivers

### www.golftipsmag.com/equipment/drivers.html

2012 Buyer's Guide Preview ... This year's drivers are like the classics, but with modern engines ... Featuring a radical triangular design (buh-bye square), this driver is dubbed by Callaway as the company's longest and straightest driver ever.

### Car Magazine - 2012 Car News, 2013 Car Photos and 2012 Car ... 📢

www.roadandtrack.com/ Road & Track is the longest-running and most-trusted automotive magazine in the United States. ... Driving Impressions2012 Volkswagen CC Lux Limited » ...

### The longest driver of 2012 using Thin Crown Technology - Golt ....

www.live-pr.com/.../the-longest-driver.of.2012-using-r1049348431.... 26.02.2012 17:31:14 - Light Weight Driver at 275 grams, the XF Leggera produces faster swing speeds for those monstrous drives off the tee. Best driver for ...

Ads - Why these ads?

# The Real Hammer-Golf Site www.xfactordirect.com/ xfactordirect.com is rated \*\*\*\*\* 232 reviews Shipping Special from Jack Hamm Zolex Hammer Free Shipping Now! New Illegal Golf Driver www.scientificgolfclubs.com/ Patented, scientific design has mo- weights & secret coating; distance! Longest Non Conforming www.tpfgolf.com/ "A 25 yard increase in my distance" Maximum distance USA made Beta Ti



When I click on the live-pr link, I get to our press release on the live-pr.com site. Here is a snapshot.



See what's happening. Google is directing traffic to live-pr.com and that in turn is sending it to our website. See the link near the bottom - that is to our website. In addition to the traffic being

If you are looking for golf driver reviews, visit interlopergolf.com/the-longest-driver-ofthem-al., and see why we call the XF Leggers the longest driver of the year.

jolly good time improving their distance off the tee.

Press Information: InterloperGolf generated right now, live-pr has a page rank of 5. That means our page is getting a high quality backlink which is great for us. Win-Win-Win.

Get going. Start writing your press releases and start submitting. Your first one may take you a little time but then it gets easy. Whenever you have something to report, even if it is a minor improvement or update, write a press release and submit it to PR sites. Then sit back and watch your traffic rise.

Good Luck!

# Where to submit Press Releases:

- For a list of press release distribution sites, visit <u>http://bloggerkhan.com/resources</u>. The list changes over time so re-visit once in a while.
- At <u>http://bloggerkhan.com</u>, you will also find useful information related to SEO, backlinks, internet marketing and other business related topics.
- Feel free to join my mailing list about internet marketing. You will find the link on my blog.