

Press Releases – General Information

Properly done, publicity can have more credibility than advertising because the editor chooses to run your message for its news value. Publicity can greatly enhance your chapter's recognition and create an aura of professionalism that can set your members apart from others in the field. Best of all, publicizing your chapter and NARPM can be easier and less expensive than you may think. But you have to know how to get that message across.

In an ad, you pay for the privilege of putting your message across, which runs as presented. In a press release, you don't pay for coverage--in fact, even suggesting the idea is bad form. But the editor may change your wording to meet the reader's needs--and if the message does not clearly have value for the readers, the message may not run at all. Your job is to make the value of your message obvious and the format easy for the editor to use.

You have received NARPM's model of a press release announcing the National President's visit to your local chapter. Follow this model as closely as possible, filling in your name where indicated.

Reach the right editor to reach the right readers.

If your message is to promote your local NARPM chapter and get name recognition readers of the business, local news, real estate and home sections should be interested. So, just as you put your listing in the appropriate sections of the Yellow Pages, you need to direct your release to the appropriate section editors.

You may have more than one paper to contact, so take a little time to research which media will say it best to the most people you want to attract. Start by reading the business section of your local daily newspaper. If you have two or more newspapers serving your area, which one gives the most in-depth coverage and highlights the accomplishments of local business leaders? Which one regularly features "people on the move" in business? Which one does a better job of covering housing issues and regularly features home improvement? Which one has a better circulation among business, community and special interest groups? Answers to these questions will help you determine which newspaper to choose. Use these same questions if you wish to include TV and radio stations on your media list.

If you live in and service an area that is associated with two larger cities such as Arlington, Texas between Dallas and Ft. Worth; or Auburn, Washington between Seattle and Tacoma, you would want to let both the larger cities know about you, as well as the local Arlington or Auburn papers. Other outlets to consider are hometown newspapers, college newspapers or specific trade journals.

For example, contact the publications that prominent companies who consistently move people in and out of your area use. Military installation newspapers and specific neighborhood weeklies are especially helpful in certain target markets. Visit your local library for *Ayers Directory of Publications* or *Bacon's Publicity Checker*, which offer comprehensive listings of every publication type around the country.

Once you come up with a list of media you want to use, call the paper's office to get the name of the specific editor of the newspaper section where you want your story to appear. (Editor turnover is high, so don't rely on the reference books for editors' names.) Ask for the name of the business editor, the home style editor, the city editor or the real estate editor, and how to spell it. If you are unable to get through, some papers publish editors' names in the mast (the block at the front that identifies, the paper, editor, publisher, etc.). If all else fails, send your release to the "Business Editor, "Real Estate Editor" or "Home Style Editor."

You now have a valuable, customized list of media and the names or positions of the editors whose readers will be interested in your news. Keep this reference current.

Put your important, basic information up front.

When writing a press release, your first paragraph or first two paragraphs should answer six questions: Who, What, When, Where, How and Why. Look at the model National NARPM President Visits press release for a sample. Editors are busy, so if your lead paragraph doesn't answer these six questions, your release may fail the "so what?" test. Make sure it's clear, up front, and says why the editor and readers should care.

Follow the standard release format.

Keep your release to two pages or less.

Always double space the body.

Follow the NARPM model release for proper page-heading format for page 1.

For subsequent pages, create a header in the upper left corner that consists of a short form of the title (a "slug"). For example, if your President Visit's release was two-pages, you could slug the second page "National President Visit's."

Below the "slug", type "add 1" for the second page (meaning it's the first additional page), "add 2" for the third page, etc.

If your release runs more than a page, type "more" at the bottom of each page except the last one.

At the bottom of the last page of the release, type the pound symbol three times, and center them.

Additional sample releases and techniques can be found in *The New York Times Style Book*, the *Associated Press Style Book*, and numerous style books in your local library or book store.

Timing matters.

When an editor gets your release is almost **as** important as what it **says, so** follow these tips:

Consider dating the release two days after the release is mailed, giving the impression that the release is fresh news for the day the editor receives it.

As a rule, schedule release dates for a weekday. If you mail the release on a Thursday or Friday, make the release date for the following Monday. Editors often overlook releases that arrive too close to the weekend when their workload is geared for the weekend and large Sunday editions.

"For Immediate Release" is usually appropriate to place on your release.

Occasionally, you may have reason to hold the information later release. If "For Immediate Release" isn't appropriate, put "For Release After (Date)" instead.

It's wise to send a cover letter with the release, especially when you have additional information that is not important to the story, but may be of interest to one or another publication's readers, i.e. hometown or college paper.

Use photos to help "sell" your story.

Should you include a photo? The answer is yes, if the newspaper uses them in the normal course of events. For example, the *Denver Post* uses photos of "business leaders on the move" each Monday in the Business Section. If you send a photo, make it a recently posed, 5 x 7 print that can easily be cropped for size as necessary. If you are sending a group photo, be sure to easily identify the individuals in the photo with a caption, typed on a separate piece of paper and taped to the back of the photo.

Follow-up—with care.

Should you follow up with editors? The answer is yes. If the editor has not seen your release, he or she may well ask you to tell him or her about it, which increase the chances of your information being published.

Don't ask the editor to send you a copy of the issue that the story appears. Read the publication regularly to find your information. If your submitting to several, you can hire a clipping bureau to read it for you. To obtain a copies of the issue that the story appears in, write the publication requesting a copy of that issue and include payment, if appropriate payment.

You can send your release to more than one editor, for example, both the business editor and the real estate or home style editor. If you do that, let each one know that you have sent the release to the other editor as well.

Keep track of your efforts.

File copies of your press releases to maintain a record of what information has been released, when and to whom. Also file the mailing list used for each release and story clippings. This also provides a valuable file of information,

such

as when a property manager joined your local chapter, when projects were started and other historical information on your chapter. You can easily set up a tracking chart that goes something like this:

<i>Release Title</i>	<i>Date Mailed</i>	<i>Distribution</i>	<i>Use</i>
<i>President Visit's</i>	Oct. 1,2005	<u>Denver Post</u>	Oct. 6, Business People on The Move

Evaluate results for long term name recognition.

You can't evaluate results of a press release the way you can advertising or mailing, and it's even more difficult to measure how many new owners are obtained or tenants placed. But publicity does have long term effects and, when done consistently, keeps you "up front" in the eyes of other businesses and the public at large.

Plan future public relation campaigns.

Once your President Visit's press release has been published, begin a steady public relations campaign. Use the same kind of marketing thinking for your public relations positioning as you did for your direct mail or advertising. For example, write a series of releases on choosing a property manager or what to look for when renting single-family housing.