

Press releases that POP!

Spear Communications

Understand. Be understood.

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... Have an effective headline

The headline is your answer to the questions “Why should anyone care?” and “What’s in it for the audience?”

So put some thought into who you are trying to communicate with—the needs and feelings of your audience that your message should connect with.

Build your headline around these.

Unless cute and clever are part of your brand, stick to facts. Your headline should be clear, accurate, economical, and compelling.

Get the headline right, and you’ll hook your reader. Get it wrong, and no one will read your press release, no matter how brilliant it is.

PRO TIP. Write as many variations of your headline as

possible—ten, twenty, or even fifty. Do this and you’ll notice that some phrasings are inherently more interesting than others.

Keep going until you find the headline that grabs.

... Get to the point

The first paragraph is the second-most-important part of your press release. It answers the question “What is it?”

A press release is not a suspense novel, so don’t hold back. Get right to the point.

Hit them on the nostrils with your key message.

Use clear, simple direct language to tell your reader the What of your message. The opening paragraph should be no more than 2 well-crafted sentences.

... Stay on message

Here’s where many press releases go wrong.

They answer the question What, then they launch into a history of the company and industry, the life story of the CEO, the future plans of the company, and the thoughts of respective board members.

I call this Infosausage, and I see it all the time in press releases.

Now that you’ve introduced the What in your first paragraph, your second paragraph answers the question Why does the What matter?

As always, be succinct. You want to give enough information so that your reader is intrigued and engaged.

In order for them to be so, they need some context.

In brief and simple terms, you need to tell your reader who you are helping, and how.

Often a press release will provide this information in the form of a spokesperson quote.

This makes intuitive sense: when you are talking about the real-world value of your services, a human voice, speaking in a conversational tone, is a good way to go.

... Provide only necessary information about the company

The problem with many press releases is that they've been formulated by the organization's insiders—people who are experts about the company and its industry.

Experts possess enormous, detailed information about their products and services.

These experts think that everything they know is fascinating and important.

That's how they got to be experts—by being fascinated with their field of business.

Your audience doesn't need or want 95% of this information, so don't include it.

Take off your expert hat, and put on your audience hat.

Think of your press release as a map. You set out at the top of the map and reach your destination at the bottom.

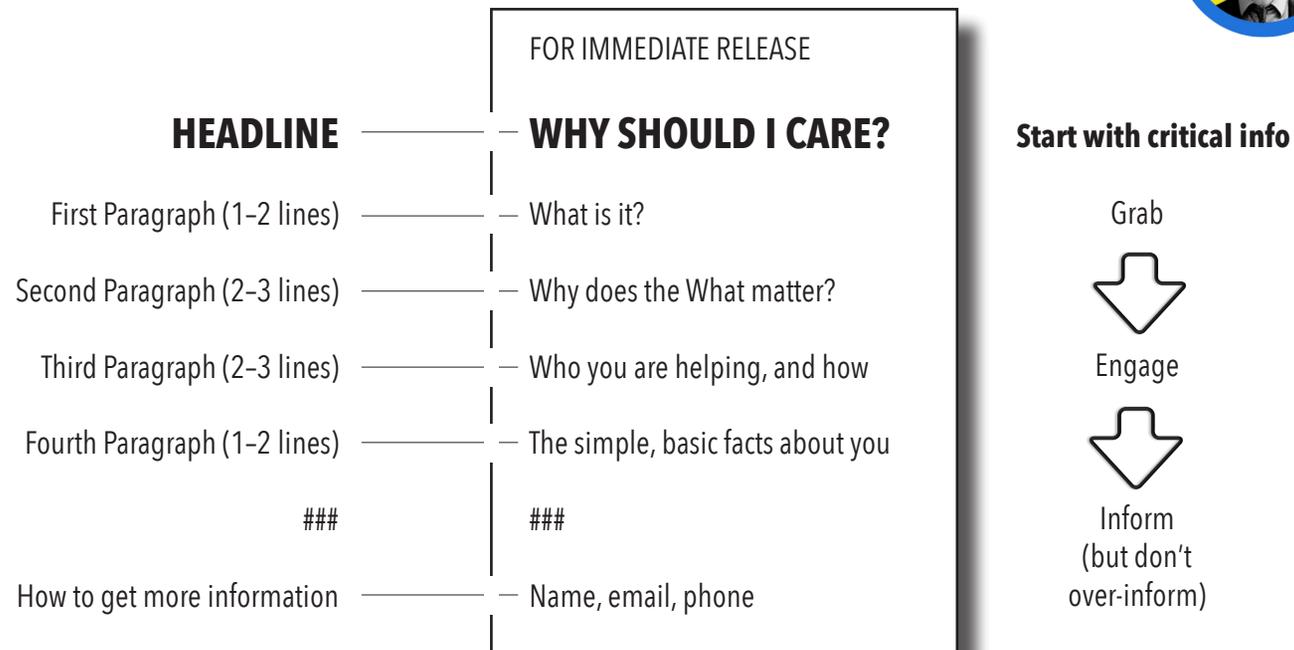
You want to bring the audience along on the journey, right?

Good. So follow each step of the map on the next page and answer the question which pertains to that stage of the trip.



The Press Release Map

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- Wayne K. Spear is the Founder and President of Spear Communications. This article is part of his ongoing series called "Thought Bombs."