



**How to Write Effective Press Releases**  
*... and Use Them to Drive Web Traffic*

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## Introduction

Are you ready to drive hoards of traffic to your web site? Have you got REAL news about your product, service or company? If the answer is yes to both of these questions, then what you are about to read is good news for you.

You are going to find out how to get hundreds of potential new customers flocking to your site, and best of all – it's free (well it can be)!

Here you'll learn how to write a good press release and where to send it. We will even give you some sample templates to make it easy to follow and adapt to your own news.

### First of All, Just What Makes a Good Press Release?

That's easy to answer and very important for you to know. Ready? Your press release must contain a **NEWS slant**. In other words, editors don't care that you built a new site, but they do care if your new site is, for example, a free service allowing consumers to find out what sex offenders are registered in their area. Above all else, it must be *newsworthy*.

It's critical that you have news that will interest not just the editors, but more importantly, the people reading their news publication. And, your press release must be written in a way that clearly depicts how your product, service or company provides a solution, or solves their problem.

Let's take a look at an example. I recently wrote a press release for a client of mine that is a Credit Damage expert. Right now, identity theft is an incredibly hot news issue as the percentage of Americans suffering from ID theft continues to grow each year. So I developed a news slant that you can easily see reflected in the title of this release, and then wrote the release to show how my client's services, credit damage measurement, can help solve this problem. (Just as a side note, this press release immediately got my client booked on a radio show and a call from a potential television program).

Take a look on the next page to see this highly effective press release:

**For Immediate Release**

### **Victims of Identity Theft Can Fight Back**

February 2, 2005 – Orange County, CA – Victims of identity theft have more recourse today than ever before. The Federal Trade Commission issued an account stating that in 2003, Americans reported losses in excess of \$437 million to identity theft and Internet fraud. The FTC estimated that over the same period of time, one in eight US adults was affected by identity theft.

But consumers are becoming more aware and have more options to fight back than ever before. Georg Finder, CEO of CM Financial based in Fullerton, CA explains, “My expert witness business has been built in part because of consumers that have been damaged by credit problems often stemming from identity theft. The good news is that it’s now possible to measure credit damages and, as a result, the consumer is more capable than ever of recouping these losses in court.”

Identity theft isn’t the only cause of credit damage, however. Other victims include individuals involved in an acrimonious divorce, breach of contract, employees of wrongful termination cases, as well as personal injury and medical malpractice situations.

“Measuring credit damages, as referred to by Mr. Finder,” explains Thomas Key, Attorney at Law, who has worked with Finder in the past, “is the only court-proven compensable method of measuring credit damage available today that I know of.”

Finder elaborates on a prior case, “I recently testified for a plaintiff that discovered the defendant had stolen approximately \$40,000 of his credit capacity and caused negative remarks to appear on his credit report, significantly affecting the plaintiff’s borrowing ability. In this case, the Los Angeles Superior court ruled in favor of the plaintiff to the tune of \$170,000. Consumers don’t have to be victims any more if they know the credit laws.”

CM Financial, Fullerton, CA is owned and operated by Georg Finder, an expert witness on credit damage and an Independent Credit Examiner. Georg provides the only MCLE-accredited seminar so all attorneys can recognize the signs of credit damage called, *Credit Damages: Evaluation and Compensation*. More information can be found at [www.creditdamage.com](http://www.creditdamage.com)

**Company Contact: Georg Finder 714 441-0900**  
**PR Contact: Cathy Taylor 949 635-4923**

## Let's Break Down the Important Components of a Press Release

All effective press releases—like the ones shown in this eBook—are composed of certain component parts. Make sure you include all of these parts, and you'll be well on your way to producing a great press release!

1. **Start out a press release with “For Immediate Release” somewhere at the top.** I've seen this part done in several different ways. Sometimes you will see the contact information just below this line, but I always put contact information at the bottom. I don't like to add anything upfront that can take away from the title of your release – or the first line. These two sentences serve as your hook and are the most important lines you will write.
2. **Add a headline and 2 to 3 introductory sentences in the first paragraph that are strong enough to “hook” the editor's attention within six seconds.** That's about all the time you have. Every bit of newsworthy information should be jam-packed into your title and first line of the news release. Then you use 2-3 lines to elaborate on how your product or service solves the problem identified in the hook.
3. **Introduce the founder or CEO of the company with a quote in the second paragraph.** A quotation gives important details about the culture of the company, its owners, and what they have to offer.
4. **In the third paragraph, provide some explanatory background information about the problem that elaborates a little more about what this news piece is referring to.** It's typically a problem that numerous people are dealing with and that is why it's in the news. Give them background information and resources.
5. **Include testimonials.** Next, include a quote from someone who has worked with the company, product, or service being profiled. A testimonial is a very powerful tool; don't hesitate to use it often.
6. **Include another quote or more background information.** In the previous example, I used another quote by the founder, but this could have been more background information. You have to decide what's more important based on what action you want the editor to take. In this case, I wanted editors to contact us to interview my client and get the word out about his unique service.

7. **The last paragraph is referred to as a boilerplate.** It typically is the same information on each release and gives information on the company's mission, vision, and contact information. It can also be a call to action.
8. **Finally, include contact information for the main company contact as well as the public relations contact.** If you have a photograph of a person or product, be sure to include it.

On the next page is another example from a different client who developed a website for parents to know what sex offenders were registered in their communities. Make note of how each of the component parts above were included.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**APSCREEN Provides Free Searches  
On National Sex Offender Registry Website**

March 9, 2004 – Newport Beach, California - APScreen, the world's leading full-service Consumer Reporting Agency, announced that beginning in March 2004, it will provide free searches to consumers as a public service on a newly created website called the National Sex Offender Registry. In the past, this information has been used exclusively for commercial and law enforcement purposes.

Tom Lawson, CFE, CII & Founder of APScreen, comments, "I've been working in the investigative research field since 1980. In fact, APScreen practically invented background screening at a time when few even knew what that term meant. Because we feel so strongly about the protection and safety of our children, we are providing this free service so people can easily know whether they have a sex offender living in their area. There are still state and local governments that deny public access to this vital information, so we compiled all of the available databases of sex offenders throughout the nation and are offering this information absolutely free to the public; this is not a profit center for our company."

There is no registration or fee for the service and anyone who has a computer and access to the Internet and a web browser can use it. Should a person have any reason to suspect that someone in their neighborhood, school district or community might have a sex crime history they can go directly to [www.nationalsexoffenderregistry.net](http://www.nationalsexoffenderregistry.net) and enter the name of the subject and have a good chance of locating information about a sex offender's past. Currently the database covers 34 states and 12 local areas for a total of 46 jurisdictions. Most of the time, the sex crime records contain enough personal information to verify the identity of a suspect, or provide a lead to pursue further research.

Former FBI Special Agent in Charge, Richard Rogge, known for his work on the Kennedy assassination, says this about the service, "I've done business with Tom Lawson for 24 years now, and I can honestly say he is one of the most stand-up guys I've ever met. His has integrity and his work is impeccable. Deciding to offer this service free to the public, at his own expense, is just another example of the good work he has been doing for over 24 years now."

APScreen ([www.Apscreen.com](http://www.Apscreen.com)), founded in 1980, is the originator of the modern-day factual employment-screening concept. Other services include asset discovery, permissible credit reporting, motor vehicle records, and fraud examination. Tom Lawson is a certified fraud examiner, certified international investigator, expert witness and holds key positions in several national trade associations. Lawson is available for public speaking engagements and white papers can be obtained by calling 1 800 277-2733.

*Company Contact: Tom Lawson (949) 646-4003*

*Public Relations Contact: Cathy Taylor (949) 635-4923*

## Writing Your Press Release

So, you're ready to sit down and start writing your next press release. Where do you start? Well, first you need to establish the **newsworthy** reason for your press release, or the hook...

### How to Choose the “Hook” for Your Press Release

Do you have trouble coming up with a hypnotic subject—or hook—for your press release? Well, here you go ...

### 28 Good Reasons to Send out a Press Release

*(Be creative, I'm sure you can come up with more!)*

1. Starting a new business
2. Introducing a new product or service
3. Announce a company restructure
4. Announcing a partnership
5. Opening a branch or satellite office
6. Hiring a prestigious person
7. Celebrating an anniversary
8. Publishing a series for articles
9. You or your company received an award
10. Changing a company or product name
11. A company member receives recognition in a publication
12. Participation in a philanthropic event
13. Forming a new strategic alliance
14. Talking about future business trends
15. Sponsoring a workshop or seminar of interest
16. Launching a website
17. Signing a contract with a significant customer
18. Expanding or renovating an existing business
19. Establishing a unique agreement with a vendor
20. Announce that you're available to speak on particular subjects
21. Announce a public appearance of television, radio or in person
22. Let people know you have valuable, free information available

23. Mention of philanthropic, charitable activities by your company
24. Acknowledge that your company has reached a major milestone
25. Restructuring your business or its model
26. Setting up a customer advisory group
27. Announcing results of research or surveys
28. Mention of an employee serving in a leadership or charitable position

### A Few More Tips for PR Writing

- **Stick to the facts.** A press release should be fact-based, without fluff or hype. It is NOT a sales letter. Don't make exaggerated claims unless you can back them up with hard, cold facts. If it sounds like an advertisement, it won't get published.
- **Write concisely.** There's a lot to be said for economy of words. Use only enough words to tell your story. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, flowery language, or redundant expressions such as "added bonus" or "first time ever." If you can tell your story with fewer words, do it. Wordiness distracts from your story. Don't use jargon, and keep it short and simple. Make each word count.
- **Answer the 5 essential questions of news writing.** What are they? Who? What? Where? Why? When? And maybe even a sixth question—how?

### What If You Don't Have the Confidence to Write Your Own PR?

If you're passionate or at least very knowledgeable about the subject of your press release, you should be able to write a few paragraphs about it without too much trouble. However, I know that not everyone likes to write or has confidence in his or her own writing ability.

So, if you can't write a good release yourself, consider hiring a pro to do it for you. Writers charge anything from \$50 to \$250 a page. Some charge thousands. But remember, you can gain many thousands of dollars of free publicity/ advertising from the right release. Just make sure that it's something the media will consider is news.

Here are a few places where you can find writers to hire for your press releases:

- [www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com)
- [www.guru.com](http://www.guru.com)
- [www.rentacoder.com](http://www.rentacoder.com)
- [www.smarterwork.com](http://www.smarterwork.com)

## How to Get Your Press Release Distributed

Now you have a good press release in your hands, and you need to know how to get it out to the right places, correct? There are a variety of ways to “get the word out” about your news. First, you need to know where to send your press release. One way is to identify specific, individual targets in the media who might be interested in publishing your press release.

### Targeting Magazine Editors

It’s good to take a targeted approach to sending out press releases. One way to do that is by email that national magazine editors typically respond well to. There are two easy ways to find the magazines that would be interested in your subject.

1. Go to the Yahoo directories at [http://dir.yahoo.com/News\\_and\\_Media/Magazines/](http://dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media/Magazines/)  
You’ll find hundreds of publications in your industry with email contact information.
2. Another source is [www.magazinesatoz.com](http://www.magazinesatoz.com)

### Here’s how to write your email to the magazine editor:

Always personalize when you can. Editors like it when you take the time to find out who the right person is to receive your release.

*Dear <name>*

*Our company, Apscreen, has a new service that we are confident your readers will be very interested in. For parents and anyone concerned about our children, we offer a FREE service that locates national sex offenders who could be living in your area. You can review the site at <http://www.nationalsexoffenderregistry.net>*

*If you need further information, please email me or call 949 635-4923 any time.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Include your press release announcing service here*

*Sincerely,  
Name and contact information goes here*

## Other Sources for Media Contacts

- **Direct Contact** sells up-to-date media email addresses on disc or in a book. You can buy a list for \$99 from Direct Contact at 1-800-457-8746.
- [Gebbie Press](#) – Lots of tips and tricks about public relations and internet marketing. Plus 7000 links to print and electronic media on the internet, 2800 email addresses for radio and TV stations, and 200 links to internet and computer related magazines. You can either click on the links and visit all 7000 newspapers listed and try to find their email address, or you can buy a disc with the addresses, or buy mailing labels.
- [Idea Site for Business](#) – Free access to email address of over 1,800 American Journalists.
- [Mediafinder.com](#) – Detailed information on 72,000 U.S. and Canadian periodicals including (print): magazines, journals, newsletters, newspapers, tabloids, catalogs, college publications, directories and yearbooks. Shows things like editor's names, readership, a paragraph on the aims of the publication, phone and fax number. No addresses, and very few have email addresses.
- [Media List](#) – A pay site with low fees. Site has a searchable database of media contacts and allows a user to browse by industry, create downloadable files, and generate an email mailing to any industry segment.
- [Mediapost.com](#) – An easy way to connect with people in the media through email. Directory of 13,000 stations, 8,000 publications, and 3,000 websites including radio, TV, cable, internet, magazines, newspapers, and agencies.
- [Click Press Direct](#) - Free access to the email addresses of over 1,800 American journalists. This site is especially helpful because it contains direct links to the editors and reporters who determine content for their publications.
- [MIT Usenet](#) - Resource for finding people's email addresses by searching Usenet postings. Journalists use Usenet too. Try searching for "nbc.com" and take a look at the media contacts you get!

## Using Web-Based Distribution Services

There are many different web-based services that will distribute your well-written press release for you. Some are free or charge a small fee, while others are more expensive and clearly aimed at big business.

### Free or Inexpensive PR Distribution Services

- [PRWeb.com](http://PRWeb.com) – PR Web™ offers online press release distribution services. Caters to small- and medium-sized companies and organizations and has one of the largest online press release newswires. Costs range from Free to an \$80 contribution (also includes eMediaWire) and is a very inexpensive way to release to select PR targets and includes great tracking numbers.
- [eBookBroadcast](http://eBookBroadcast) – eBook Broadcast Bulletin is a source for ebook, electronic publishing and handhelds press releases. They accept press releases related to new eBooks, ePublisher announcements, and handhelds news. Free, unless you want priority handling, which costs \$9.95 per PR.

### Moderately Priced PR Distribution Services

- [Internet News Bureau](http://InternetNewsBureau) – Emails your message to over 2,000 journalists. Prices start at \$55 for a couple of paragraphs introducing your web site, and it costs around 3 times that for a longer press release.
- [Online Press Releases](http://OnlinePressReleases) – Software package that sends your press release to approximately 28,000 media contacts. Make sure it is constantly updated and what the charges are for this. At \$249.95, you would have to send quite a few releases to make this valuable.

### More Expensive PR Distribution Services

- [Businesswire](http://Businesswire) – For business or financial news, use Businesswire (mostly for large companies or those sending numerous releases per month). Again, they pump out hundreds of releases a day, and charge you around \$500 for the privilege of sending your release (plus a setup fee). They're so expensive because they have a great targeted list of business and finance writers they mail to. So if your release doesn't deal with those fields, forget Businesswire.
- [eReleases](http://eReleases) – Distributes your press release nationally to 30,000 opt-in journalists, including newswire distribution through their partner [PR Newswire](http://PRNewswire), with proof of press release distribution with their exclusive WireWatch™ service. No membership fees and no added charge for targeting your press release. Costs \$399.

- [Imediafax](#) – Another place to consider is Imediafax, where you email them your releases and they distribute it by fax for 25 cents a page. You can carefully target your audience to people in the field you are trying to reach, and it's reputed to bring great results. But at 25 cents a page, it soon adds up to big dollars.
- [PRNewswire](#) – For General News items try using PR Newswire (mostly for large companies or those sending numerous releases per month). They post hundreds of press releases a day so make sure that yours is good so that it stands out from the crowd. PR Newswire charge around \$300 to send out your release and there is an initial set up fee.

## Other Media and PR Resources

- [Publicity Forum](#) – Directory of press release related information.
- [Publicity Hound](#) – Free articles on how to get yourself free publicity.
- [Netnewstracker.com](#) - NetNews Tracker is a clipping service for Usenet newsgroups. It will search newsgroups twice daily for any phrases that you choose, then delivers any hits to you via e-mail. You can use it to monitor newsgroups for your name, company, product, URL, or any other topic of interest, and never miss any discussions on that subject.
- [AJR Newslink](#) has some great lists and helpful articles.
- [Bacon's Media Resources](#) – Comprehensive media database updated daily. Send emails and faxes online with MediaSource.
- [Cine Media](#) - bills itself as the largest film and media listing in the world with over 18,000 entries.
- [Links to Agencies](#) – List of worldwide news agencies, such as UPI and Reuters, you can't beat.
- [Media Info Link](#) - Online media directory
- [Online newspaper links](#) - Australian directory that has a page containing links to 3,000 online newspapers throughout the world.
- [PR Place](#) – A Free US Media Guide - One-Stop Directory for Names, Addresses and Phone Numbers of Major Print and Broadcast Media in the U.S. No email addresses, so no good for online press releases, but you can access the names, addresses and phone numbers of major U.S. media. You may print the lists as you see fit. They come from MDS's FREE "Pocket Media Guide," which you can order at the site.

Also has the Quick-Find Internet Source on Public Relations and it includes addresses and hot links to PR organizations and publications, on-line news services and databases, journalism interest groups, and more.