

Writing Press Releases

Press releases allow you to provide an official statement, information or announcement to the general public using the media. Although a traditional tool, press releases can be highly effective as part of a well-rounded public relations strategy to share information regarding occupational therapy.

Here are top tips to create a winning press release:

Assess if something is newsworthy.

Select your news carefully. Consider what makes good news. There are many factors to take into consideration when deciding whether to run with a particular story, including:

Relevance: How is the news relevant and important to occupational therapy, your organisation or the people within it?

Significance: The more people your news affects or relates to, the more it's likely to be read. Does the story illustrate a larger problem or situation in society?

Timing: A story must be new or involve a new angle to be considered 'news'.

Human interest: Human interest stories don't date as quickly and need not affect a large number of people. It also may not matter where in the world the story takes place.

Prominence: Does your news involve a well-known person or institution?

First is best: The media is often interested in first ever stories. If you have a legitimate claim to innovation, this should be the heart of your pitch.

Compile your press release

Answer questions: Provide information to answer what, when, why, where, who and how.

Use a show-stopping headline: Your headline should be concise, succinct and powerful - no more than 80 characters. It is the element which is going to either draw your readers in or cause them to delete your work and move on to the next item in their inbox.

Get your facts straight: Present your facts in a strong introductory paragraph.

Get visual: Images can help to tell your story and vastly improve the results of a press campaign. Including videos and imagery means your public relations material is 3.5 times more likely to get shared. Consider converting your news into an infographic for statistical reviews, survey results, comparison messages and items for a multilingual audience.

"Include quotes": Including thoughts and opinions from leaders or important figures related to your story delivers vital legitimacy and a human element. Keep your quotes conversational and jargon-free.

Remember the obvious stuff: Don't forget your organisation's information and contact details.

Spell it out for your readers: We all love acronyms but remember that not everyone will know what your organisation is called, or what other acronyms used in occupational therapy mean.

Send, share, socialise

Get your contacts on board: Send your news release to a carefully-crafted contact list. Your contacts offer you a fantastic pool of people who have colleagues, students, and peers to share your message - so make the most of them. Build a database and continue to add to it when you make additional contacts.

Broaden your contacts: Your contacts should not just include your professional colleagues and members but also journalists working in relevant fields, trade/industry magazine and publications, prominent bloggers in the field and much more.

Share on all possible social media outlets: Be sociable – get online and see who's out there who might be interested and send it along.

Work with your organizations: Ask membership organisations to share your news. Developing relationships with partner organisations via social media and mutual sharing can be very productive.

Follow up to your press release: Name a person to address inquiries. Ensure you are accessible to answer and follow up with contacts if they have questions or need more information.