

KILLER PRESS KITS

**by Nancy Trent
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A press kit is an integral component of any publicity campaign, but it's not going to get your company in the news. The purpose of a press kit is to help a reporter so they can spread your message.

So what exactly is a press kit?

It's a publicity tool – a collection of materials designed to give a reporter what they need to do a better job reporting on your story.

Whether hard copy or electronic, the focus of the press kit should be on the content, not the cover.

Press kits can be given to journalists electronically or in hard copy. They can be emailed, posted on your company Web site, saved to a portable hard drive, memory stick, DVD or CD. If distributed in hard copy, it is customary to contain the press kit materials in a folder with inside pockets with the company identity on the cover. Depending on the company budget this can be custom designed and printed, or simply identified with a sticker.

Press kit should contain the following:

Contact Information – The company name and press contact should be on every piece of paper in the press kit in case it is removed.

Stand-alone Press Release – A press kit should always include at least one timely, relevant and newsworthy announcement in the format of a press release which informs the reporter of who, what, where, when and why.

Backgrounder – A concise history of the company making the announcement. It should include key highlights about the organization to help establish its reputation.

Biographies – Information on organization officials, leaders, and spokesperson relevant to the news announcement.

Story Ideas/Quotes – This is an excellent way to plant seeds for article ideas and expand a news story written by a reporter. Have fun with this. Identify timely angles that are relevant to the outlet's audience and suggest possible article routes.

Fact Sheets – A fact sheet can substitute for a press release when it includes all the "who, what, where, when, why and how" in bullet point format. If it is to accompany a press release it should provide interesting facts and figures to enhance the story.

Lists – Prices, retailers, or celebrity clients – include details you think reporters will want to know.

Photography –

- In addition to professional headshots for the biographies, the photos in a press kit should help tell the story.
- Photos should be taken professionally.
- Photos should be in editorial format – straight product shots without backdrops or settings.
- Photos should be saved as JPEGs no smaller than 300 DPI (dots per image) and 5 by 7 in size.
- Digital photos should be outlined in a line sheet so reporters know what is available for them without having to open it.
- Photos can also be made available for reporters to download from your Web site or FTP site. Companies often provide passwords for editorial purposes upon request.

Everything in the press kit should be written well and appeal to journalists. Here are few tips for writing a good press release:

- Grab a reporter's attention with the headline – summarize the news and stand out.
- Tell the story in the lead – Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.
- Give the details are in the Body – Everything else the reporter needs to know to complete a story.
- Close with the contact – product details, company name, spokesperson to interview, retailer, Web site, email address, phone number.

While press kits provide as much information about your company as possible, it's wise to top the press kit with a pitch tailored specifically to the journalist you are giving it to. A pitch is an informative letter that briefly explains what's inside and offers to provide any additional information needed.

Some companies may already have publicity reprints that they include in sales kits. Be selective when it comes to including reprints in press kits. Your goal is to convince a reporter to write about your company. Why would they do that if all their competitors have already broke the story?

In some cases, your press kit is your first impression, but it's not what is going to get a reporter to write a story about your company. It provides the details they need once they have decided to tell your story.

Make your press kit work for you by targeting the right media, following up, and pitching great story ideas about your company.

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