

## [ CLOSING THE SALE ] READ ALL ABOUT IT

Extra, extra! Here's how to turn your company's news into everyone's business

If you've been in business for a while (or even if you haven't), you're likely familiar with many of the tried-and-true methods of promoting your products or services: advertising in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. And entrepreneurs have long taken advantage of billboards, fliers, and brochures to keep old customers informed and to attract new ones. But one tool companies frequently overlook is the press release. Even small businesses can benefit from this timeless news generator.

First, you need to understand exactly what a press release is. "A press release is not a flier, an advertisement, a letter, or a poem," says Dante Lee, president of Columbus, Ohio-based Diversity City Media. Diversity City runs *BlackNews.com* and *BlackPR.com*, sites that distribute news and information with an African American focus to media outlets. "A press release is a brief text announcement of an event, development, or other newsworthy item," he explains.

Lee says sending your press release to online publications may be preferable to sending it to newspapers and magazines



or television and radio outlets because Websites tend to post information faster than printed publications, and the information may be available for a longer period of time—weeks, months, or even years after it is first posted.

Greg King, "ring leader" of The Big Balloon Communications, a Los Angeles-based public relations and marketing firm, points out that a press release can increase business-to-business outreach as well as business-to-consumer outreach because other businesses and consumers can find out more about you." And quotes are key, he says: "Quotes validate the story."

According to King, when he distributes a press release, he follows up with a call to the publication. "Become familiar with the publications you send your releases to. Call the publication and find out who the appropriate editor is and find out whether they prefer to get releases via e-mail or fax. After you send the release, follow up with a phone call," he advises. Remind the editor that you sent the release and provide more information, present a pitch, says King. "If they say they never got the release, tell them you will send out another copy immediately and then follow up with a phone call the next day."

King says you should send out press releases only when something newsworthy is happening in your company. Don't get in the habit of sending out a press release every month or every few weeks. —Robert Janis

### Keep it Short and Sweet

Lee offers these tips for writing press releases that get you noticed:

- **Give your press release a short but interesting headline.** Write your release as if you were writing an article for a newspaper: Write in the third person and be sure to check for grammatical and spelling errors. Most entrepreneurs aren't skilled at this kind of writing, so you may want to consider hiring a professional or seeking out skilled journalism students at a local university.
- **Mention how your announcement relates to the publication's audience.** Keep it short. A single page should suffice.
- **Include high-quality color photos.**



### [ SAVVY SOLUTIONS ]

## CAPITALIZING ON CLUTTER

**QA** I was watching a television show that profiled a professional organizer. Can you help me learn more about how to start a business as a professional organizer?

—M. Edmond  
Brooklyn

Being organized is a definite asset to becoming a professional organizer. But operating a business in this field will require more than having a knack for keeping things orderly. You will need to concentrate on creating customized organization solutions for your clients.

Most professional organizers specialize in a variety of skills and services, including home and office organizing, space planning, time management, and budgeting. Make sure you learn the essentials of preparing proposals and setting pricing for your services. This will come in handy when marketing your business to individuals and companies.

Here are some resources I found that could help you:

**1. *Getorganizednow.com*:** Sign up for a free monthly newsletter that offers tips on how to be successful as a professional organizer. You can also purchase a book called *The Ultimate Guide for Professional Organizers* by Maria Gracia on the site.

**2. The National Association of Professional Organizers ([www.napo.net](http://www.napo.net))** is dedicated to promoting organizers and the organizing industry.

**3. Check out *The Professional Organizer's Complete Business Guide*** by Lisa Steinbacher (Eternity Publishing; \$29.95) and *A Manual for Professional Organizers* by Cyndi Seidler (Banter Books; \$32.00). —James C. Johnson

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