

TEXT 7 - Persuasion in Public Relations

The 'spin-doctors'

Organisations and companies who specialise in public relations have a very clear purpose: to promote a business/voluntary organisation/politician in the best possible light before the public.

Public relations organisations manage launches of new products, issue press releases on current or upcoming events, and disseminate information to media organisations with their particular 'spin' or viewpoint on events and situations. Their main aim, therefore, is to build, manage and maintain positive relationships with members of the public.

Good public relations may have a considerable bearing on the public's perception of numerous political, social and economic events that are occurring in the community. People's attitude and feelings toward the health service, the work of doctors, the effectiveness of politicians, the integrity of companies, the standards in our schools and so on, can be significantly influenced by the success or otherwise of public relations campaigns.

Public relations companies, for example, may advise politicians on what to say, when to say it, and how to say it, in order to maximise a positive public image or to minimise damage to their reputation. Public relations, consequently, is concerned with public perception. Sometimes, if a company is faced with adverse publicity, the PR machine will counter such information and attempt to change any negative perception that emerged.

Some of the main tasks of a PR company include calling a Press Conference, issuing Press Releases, arranging promotional events or launches, rehearsing and setting up interviews between a client and the press.

Look over the homepage of a PR Company called Those Two Girls PR. It provides interesting information on the activities and roles of a modern PR company.

Welcome to Those Two Girls PR



Those Two Girls PR is a dynamic, young company offering public relations and event management services that position and promote businesses. We have developed a reputation for excellence in PR, communications and events and have become known for our innovative thinking, creative campaigns and commitment to your success.

What can we do for your business?

- Help your company and its products, or services, become known among your target audience
- Help you win more business
- Drive up sales and profits
- Create opportunities for coverage in the media
- Help you organise successful events

Commercial success or failure can rest on the way a company is perceived. PR is a vital business tool for building a company's profile and looking after its reputation. Whether you want to promote a specific product or service, build company awareness or hold an event, Those Two Girls provide a full range of services to achieve your goals.

Press Release



Press Release

RENAULT

For Immediate Publication

June 28th, 2005

Euro NCAP tests confirm Renault's expertise

Clio III is the eighth Renault to win five stars from Euro NCAP

After Modus in 2004, Clio III has achieved the maximum five stars in crash tests carried out by the independent body Euro NCAP, with a score of 32.67 points out of a possible 37. Like Modus, the car also secured the maximum four stars for child protection, confirming its family orientation.

Clio III has benefited from all Renault's safety expertise and demonstrates the company's determination to offer "safety for all". As the only automaker to have eight vehicles with five-star rating from Euro NCAP, Renault underscores its leading position in the field of safety.

Throughout the various tests, Euro NCAP inspectors emphasized the excellent level of occupant protection afforded by Clio III. The car's structure crumpled perfectly, dissipating energy and preventing any intrusion into the cabin. Analysis showed that the damage sustained by dummies demonstrated the effectiveness of its restraint system, particularly the two-stage adaptive front airbags and anti-submarining system.

This Press Release shows how persuasive such texts can be. While it is 'news', in effect the press release is another form of advertising. The company would be delighted to release it to motoring journalists who may include it in their newspaper columns, with little added except a by-line.

PR and Press Releases

One of the key tasks of PR companies is to issue Press Releases to reach a wide audience through the media [newspapers, radio, television] that announce some significant event that has or is about to happen.

These Press releases are ‘released’ to journalists and may give a particular ‘spin’ on a story or event. Such releases may be reprinted by journalists in newspapers or appear in edited form. Ultimately, the press release is designed to be persuasive, or, in the case of the sample release below, reassuring.

The following Press Release is typical of the way in which companies use PR to maintain customer loyalty to a particular product, following a recall of a particular product from the shelves.

Choco Dream Product Recall

12rd April 2007

Mrs. Browne’s Ltd., the manufacturer of the Choco Dream range of chocolate bars, is conducting a recall of each of the three products in this particular range that are available in shops throughout Ireland.

The products affected are:

250 gram – Choco Dream Kids

250 gram – Choco Dream Delight

350 gram – Chunky Choco

These products are being recalled as a precautionary measure, as some of the products may contain unacceptably high traces of nuts. *Mrs. Browne’s* has identified the source of the problem and is determined that no other products will be affected in the future.

In the meantime, all products in the Choco Dream range will no longer be for sale in shops until further notice. *Mrs. Browne’s* is committed to producing the tastiest chocolate in Ireland and the company looks forward to releasing your favourite Choco Dream products back into shops very soon.

Shannon Browne, the Managing Director of *Mrs. Browne’s* said, “Our company has produced the tastiest chocolate in Ireland for almost twenty years now, and we will not compromise on taste and quality. We are a responsible company who value our customers dearly, and we will ensure that only top quality products are offered to our chocolate lovers at the point of sale.”

Mrs. Browne’s thanks all its loyal customers for their understanding during this recall and the company offers apologies for any inconvenience during the recall.

Mrs. Browne’s would like to assure customers that enhancements to quality control in our factory will ensure that only the very best chocolate leaves our factory for your enjoyment.

What you can do

If you have purchased any of the products in the range, please return the products to your local store where they were purchased. You will receive a full refund.

- Alternatively, you may post the products directly to us at:

Mrs. Browne’s,
Glenallan Industrial Park,
Derrybegan,
Co. Wexford.

Mark your envelope FREEPOST

- Or, you can phone our Helpline number – 053 – 923333333 , Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm.

What's the Point?

SKILL BUILD COMPREHENDING

– activities to develop your comprehension skills

1. What is your first reaction to this press release?
2. Mrs. Browne's are obviously keen to maintain their customer loyalty. How does the company suggest that it places great value on its customers?
3. Describe the tone of the press release? Is it one of denial? Is it apologetic? Do you think the tone would influence whether the public would be reassured or not by the press release?
4. As a company, Mrs. Browne's Ltd. appears to have built up a very positive image with its customers. Do you think this press release manages to restore/preserve that image? Explain your views.

If you had purchased some of the products mentioned in this recall, do you think you would do so again in the future? Explain how the PR release successfully/unsuccessfully persuaded you to do so?

What's the Point?

SKILL BUILD COMPREHENDING

– activities to develop your composing skills

Model Answer

An organic food company, OrganicTaste, has just discovered that many of its products (breads, pastries, etc. have, in fact, been made with non-organic raw materials. The company is eager to issue a press release before journalists get the story first.

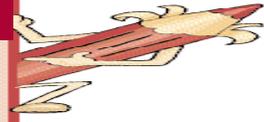
Your task is to write a press release explaining what has happened, how it happened, and what OrganicTaste are doing to remedy the situation. You may also need to persuade the public that there is no danger to their health and perhaps offer an apology for any inconvenience caused.

If it is helpful, you may model your press release on the text above.

1. The Minister for Education and Science is to arrive at your school next Friday to officially open the school's new gymnasium. Write a press release for the event.
2. Sony Ireland is about to release a new flat screen television/mp3 player/dvd player [your choice] onto the Irish market. Write a press release for the company to announce the forthcoming launch to the general public.
3. Imagine you are running for the position of Student Council President in your school. Compose a PR announcement encouraging students to vote for you. It should outline your own leadership qualities and the changes you would like to introduce into your school.

Top Tip!

Writing an effective Press Release.



An effective Public relations Press release has many of the following features:

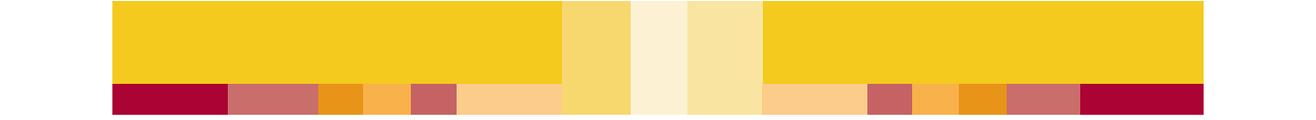
- All press releases should be dated.
- If the press release is urgent, it should be marked with FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION, 24th. March 2008. This informs newspaper and other editors that the story may be run without delay.

For Immediate Release, 24th. March, 2008

- Sometimes a press release asks that a journalist/newspaper doesn't run the story until a future date. This is called an embargo. If you wish that the story should not run until a few days time, insert this request at the top left of your release. For example,

Embargo until 5 p.m. Thursday 24th July, 2008

- Public Relations organisations think very carefully about when to organise a Press release. If the news is 'good', they will want it to receive maximum exposure on the main daily newspapers and radio and television news programmes. If the news is less appetising, they



may release it during a major World Cup soccer match or after an All Ireland Final when the media spotlight is on other events. In this way, job closures and so on may be ‘buried’ beneath other headlines, resulting in less public outcry.

- Press releases should be concise; and as with a newspaper article, an interesting headline will attract more attention – this is only recommended for imparting good news however!
- If the event has already transpired, don’t write the headline in the past tense – it makes the story seem jaded and tired. Very few people want to read old news or yesterday’s papers. Write the heading in the present tense: Minister announces 350 new jobs.
- If the event is to occur very soon, the heading should read: Minister to announce 350 new jobs.
- Begin by informing the reader about what happened, who was involved, when it occurred, where it occurred. In later paragraphs you may have to suggest why and how the event occurred.
- Use active rather than passive verbs – this gives the articles a sense of immediacy and increases interest in what is happening.
- Use quotations. These will add a human element to your story. Conveying information through quotations can be more interesting for a reader.
- Quotations can also be used very effectively to increase the persuasive impact of the press release.
- If you include interesting photos, make sure they are correctly captioned and labeled with location, titles, names, and all with correct spellings.
- At the bottom of your press release, write in block capitals