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There's an art to a good press release

Here at the Daily News, our email in baskets typically are full of press releases each day. Nothing surprising about that because there are many organizations, individuals and businesses that seek to share information about what they are doing, what they're planning and what they've accomplished.

Part of our job is determining what is worthy of publishing in print and online as a news story and what falls more under the paid advertisement side of things. It can be a judgment call.

But there's no question that a well-written press release — one without jargon and indecipherable acronyms — increases the chances of a press release being published. So I thought it might be helpful to share some tips I came across recently from a public relations firm on how to write a good press release.

Here are some of the ideas the PR firm suggested:

1. Grab attention with a good headline.

The beginning of a press release is the most im-

portant. A strong headline (and, for that matter, email subject line when the release is sent out) will pull in journalists seeking good stories. Your headline should be as engaging as it is accurate.

2. Get right to the point in the first paragraph.

Because journalists are busy people, one must assume that they will only

read the first sentence and then scan the rest. So, get the message of a press release out quickly. Every important point should be addressed in the first few sentences. The subsequent paragraphs should be for supporting information.

3. Include hard numbers.

It's easy to fill up a page with a creative, colorful narrative. Leave the artistry to the writers — pack a press release with hard numbers that support the significance of a product or announcement. If claiming a trend, supply proof to back it up. Quantify an argument and it will become much more compelling.

4. Make it grammatically flawless.

Proofread a press release — and let a few other people proofread it as well — before sending it out. Just one error can leave a bad impression.

5. Include quotes whenever possible.

There is a source of natural color that cannot be replicated: quotes. Including a good quote from someone in the company or close to the product/event can give a human element to the press release, as well as being a source of information in its own right.

6. Include contact information.

A common oversight that can render a press release ineffectual is a lack of contact information for reporters to follow up with. Don't forget to include an email address and phone number on the release (preferably at the top of the page).

7. One page is best — and two is the maximum.

As with most good writing, shorter is usually better. Limit a press release to one page, though two pages is acceptable. This will translate into a more readable document — something journalists are always looking for.

8. Provide access to more information.

Although it's wise to limit a press release to one page (or two), but that doesn't mean it can't show people how to learn more. Providing links to a company or organization website, where prospective writers can learn more, is a crucial element to the release.

A press release that is limited to one page in length will translate into a more readable document.