

US Junior Chamber

Action Guide:

Writing a Press Release

Reporters and editors receive countless press releases so it is important to communicate quickly why they should cover an event.

They want facts, not persuasion. If they find the event newsworthy they will cover it, so look at the event from the reporter's point of view. Ask yourself why it's newsworthy and why their audience would want to know about it.

Follow-up with the organization after sending the press release. Ask if they plan to cover the event. If the answer is yes, arrange for your media contact to speak with the reporter at the event.

About Press Releases

A press release is a short, written document that tells the media why an event or group is newsworthy. Press releases answer the basic news questions (Who, what, when, where, why, and how). Use this tactic for projects that will naturally get the attention of the community. It is important to send the press release while the news is still fresh. After selecting the media outlets to target, look at their production schedule - daily, weekly or monthly -- and send them the press release with plenty of time for them to schedule a reporter to cover the event.

Getting Started

Start your press release by answering basic questions (*Who, What, etc*). Use simple vocabulary and avoid jargon and acronyms that will confuse individuals unfamiliar with the organization. Ask a friend or co-worker read it over to make sure it is clear. Be sure to use the official name of the organization, the United States Junior Chamber.

Above All, Be Brief

A good press release will be one half page or three-quarters of a page double-spaced. If you have a small description of a sponsor or partner organization you can add that at the bottom, in which case you should limit the length to one full page double-spaced. Always make your answers as short as possible.

Reaching the Right Audience

Where to send the press release will depend on the scope of the event you are describing. For local events, local newspapers and organizations will be most appropriate. For state and national events, larger newspapers and metro radio stations will be relevant. Consider business journals, relevant trade publications, and other mission-centered organizations. Personally contact reporters who have covered similar stories or organizations with matching values.

Grab the Reader with the Headline

You have a small section of words to grab the attention of the news editor. The headline needs to prepare the editor for the content but also be exciting. Depending on the focus you want, you can use the headline to emphasize different aspects of the story.

An Example

Here is an example of how to write a press release for Top Outstanding Young Texans competition. Start by answering the basic questions.

Who? Texas Jaycees and the award winners. Consider the backgrounds of the honorees and their accomplishments as well as their hometowns.

What? Texas Jaycees have selected individuals based upon the following criteria: (list criteria) Like the accomplishments, use the criteria to position the story as newsworthy. What criteria would be most interesting to the audience of the media who you want covering your event?

When? Time and place of ceremonies

Where? Texas, Time and place of ceremonies

Why? The United State Junior Chamber's mission is to empower young people to create positive change. By showcasing the most outstanding young people in Texas, the Texas Jaycees inspire people everywhere to create positive change. (remember to ask yourself why it is newsworthy)

How? Include background information about the judges and why their opinion matters

[on letterhead]

date

Texas Jaycees Shine Light on Outstanding Young People

City, State-Yesterday the Texas Junior Chamber of Commerce (also known as the Texas Jaycees) announced the winners of their annual Outstanding Top Young Texan competition. Winners include John Doe, Jr., Sally Smith, Carl Carlson, Jane Smith, and Jane Doe. Their excellence in the arts, human rights, business and leadership exemplify the mission of their national affiliate, United States Junior Chamber (USJC), to offer young people opportunities to create positive change. By showcasing the most outstanding young people in Texas, the Texas Jaycees inspire people everywhere to create positive change, leading to community improvement on the local and national level. Judges included Sally Owens, a professor emeritus of Texas College, William Williams, a noted philanthropist and founder of His Famous Foundation. The winners from all over the state will be honored at a banquet at 8 p.m. February 16, 2011 at the Smith Business Center.

The Texas Junior Chamber of Commerce is a membership association of 18 to 40 year olds dedicated to making positive change in their communities and world.

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Name, Phone Number and Email of Media Contact