

Hotel P.R. Professionals - It's Time to Modernize the Content and Structure of Our Press Release - By

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In today's electronic age of information and communication, it's time for hotel public relations practitioners to update the structure and content of press releases

Traditional Press Release Writing: When I attended graduate school for my masters in public relations 20 years ago, very capable teachers and public relations practitioners taught me how to write a well-crafted press release. Assembling words into the 'reverse pyramid' or 'newspaper' structure of press release writing was critical. Your most important 'who, what, when, where, why and how's' were in the lead, followed by the less important details and ultimately the quotes from the executives, and finally, boiler plate paragraphs that shared as much information about your organization as one could imagine.

In today's electronic age of information and communication, it is no surprise to anyone that the quality of writing has deteriorated. Grammar, excellence in vocabulary, punctuation, and the quality of content is simply not what it used to be. Writing for the web, emailed press releases or press 'itches' have become sloppy and inaccurate, in part because companies are not asking educated p.r. professionals to communicate with press. In addition, since emails, text and instant messages encourage speed of information and their own acronyms for vocabulary, accuracy and quality are sacrificed.

Social Media: The concept of how to work with 'social media' is integral to your PR activities. In fact, our clients' and guests' ability to comment on hotel service and performance through blogs or other electronic venues has become more powerful than the number of diamonds or stars your hotel has earned. Our need to communicate with traditional press through email, as well as to a new generation of press or 'bloggers' is also important, and now a new part of our public relations tactics. While 'bloggers' are comprised of both 'civilian' and professionally trained journalists, the fact is they are all voices speaking in cyberspace and we want to encourage positive conversation about our respective hotels.

Suggested Practices: As a member of the Travel & Tourism section of the Public Relations Society of America and the Big Apple Chapter (New York City) of HSMAI (Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International), I've attended numerous seminars and discussions over the last year pertaining to electronic marketing and public relations. I have often heard member of the press, especially bloggers encourage p.r. people to simply email the facts:

Enough of the contrived, fluffy quotes that we create for our CEO. Journalists and bloggers may want to get their own quote from the executive with some more substance.

If you are quoting an executive, insert pertinent details, numbers or statistics into the quote, and not the 'fluff' that everyone can read through. Electronic messages are very transparent today and it is obvious when a quote is just too easily contrived.

Enough of the boiler plate paragraphs at the end of each release which go on in endless detail about the company or ownership and detract from the main message of the press release in the first place.

Use hyperlinks. Enable the hyperlinks within your text versions of the press releases to direct the reader to your website's press page. Let the boiler plate paragraph be present on your website only.

If your hotel company is listing various assets in the press release, hyperlink each asset name to their respective websites, so that the press person can get more information from what should be the main source of information about that property in the first place - its own website.

Insure that the press release is in the text section of the email, to enable press to cut and paste information directly into their articles. NO ATTACHMENTS - that's the rule.

We must use Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to gain exposure. Consider whenever appropriate the use of keywords and phrases so that our press release is in the best possible position for more traffic and visibility on the web.

Insure that your text font is legible, clean and eye appealing.

Of course, do not forget to include an active link to the email of the contact for more information, so the press can immediately email you with any additional questions.

Quality: As you modify the look and content of your releases for today's electronic media, quality should remain high. Your spelling, grammar, punctuation, detail of information and quality of content must remain strong. It's simply simplifying. It's time to modify the look and content of our releases for today's electronic media. We need to be accessible through the electronic media and through our press release.

If they haven't already, journalism schools and PR program should seriously consider updating their courses in press release writing. Until they do, why don't we just take the lead and modify our traditional releases to work better for the communications methods of the 21st Century?

For public relations and publicity support for your hotel or company, please contact Leora Lanz, HVS Sales & Marketing Services at 516-248-8828 x 278 or at llanz@hvs.com.

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