

Getting the Word Out – Organizing a Media Kit

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Every business can benefit from writing and organizing a media kit. While larger companies tend to use press kits on a more regular basis, smaller companies may still have occasions to use them. Preparing one in advance can ensure that you are ready when the need arises.

The contents of the kit will vary depending upon the type of business and the particular use of the kit. In addition, contents will surely change over time as our business grows and expands. There are basic ingredients however, outlined here:

- **Bios**

Write biographies for each of the key players in your firm. You can put several on one page with a paragraph or two for each, or create more extensive bios with one on each page, and even incorporate a photo onto the page. (A black and white or color photo will reproduce very well on a color copier and make a nice insert.)

- **Company backgrounder**

Prepare a one-page summary of your company, including how it was started, how it progressed to where it is today, an overview of the products and services you provide as well as the geographic area you serve.

- **Fact sheet**

A fact sheet contains clear information about a particular product or service that you provide. This should be simple and not overwhelm the reader.

- **Q&A**

A question & answer sheet provides answers to commonly asked questions about your company or your products and allows the media to quickly scan the page for questions they may have. It is also a good place to answer controversial questions.

- **Calendar of events or timeline**

If your organization is involved in or will host several events throughout the year, you should prepare a calendar so the media will be aware of them. In addition, if you are announcing a project that will have several phases, this is a good place to include the timeline.

- **Past newspaper articles**

If you have already had articles written about your company, you should include a few in the kit. Don't include too many as you don't want the media to think you have already been "over exposed" already. If you are sending the kit to television or radio contacts, however, you will want to include several clips, as producers like to see that print media have already checked out and written about you or your company. It gives them a confidence level. Remember to obtain permission to use reprints.. In some cases, the newspaper will provide you with reprints or you can cut and paste the article yourself and have it scanned. Try making color copies if color was used in the article as these can have more of an impact.

- **Sell sheets and brochures**

You can include sell sheets about a particular product you are highlighting or a brochure from your company in your media kit as well. This should provide more detailed information not already covered in the previous sheets.

- **Product photos or head shots**

If you don't have a professional head shot of yourself or other important executives, have one done. Use a professional photographer (do not have your wife, sister-in-law or friend take the photo!). The media like to have head shots on file and will often use them in a feature article or in an article where they quote you. If you are using a headshot that is a few years old and your look has changed, invest in a new photo.

Professional product shots are important as well. Make sure that the photographs are representative of the product and are not cluttered with several products or a busy background. Expect to pay several hundred dollars, but the photographs should last you a while.

- **Product samples**

If it is possible to include a product sample in your press kit or with it, do so. This helps the media to understand the product better and they may use it to take their own photograph. You may also want to include a price list. Indicate if the prices are wholesale or retail.

- **Press releases**

You should include one or two press releases that are timely and relate to the reason you are sending the kit in the first place. Keep these to one or two pages double-spaced.

- **Tip sheets**

Preparing a tip sheet with five or ten tips based around your product or service can be a great resource for the media. Writers and editors are always looking for good advice to round out articles or use as a sidebar to a bigger article. Be sure your tip sheets are helpful and not just an advertisement for you and your business.

- **Cover letter**

If you are mailing press kits to the media, be sure to include a brief cover letter indicating your reason for sending it and offer them a reason to be interested (often referred to as the "hook"). Be sure that your phone number is clearly visible on each piece of the kit, which should be housed in a folder of some kind. If you can afford it, have folders designed and printed specifically for you, include your business card inside as often it may be the only thing the writer keeps! Some uses of the press kit are: trade shows, grand openings, news conferences, company expansions and new product announcements.

Risa Hoag founded GMG Public Relations, Inc. in 1991. She is a past president of the Westchester Association of Women Business Owners and before starting GMG was the Director of Public Relations with Ernst & Young in White Plains. She has presented numerous workshops and seminars on public relations You can reach her by visiting www.gmgpr.com calling 845-627-30000 or sending an E-mail to risa@gmgpr.com.

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