

Writing a great press article to catch the Editor's eye

How To Guide from January and March 2021

Public Image Workshop January and March 2021

Writing a great press release that gets noticed



From an Editors point of view

Editors/ Journalists are always looking to fill space. Produce something that is readable and newsworthy and the chances are that it will get used in some way either in print or online. The job of the person sending the news is to make the editor/journalist's life as easy as possible.

Some of the options for creating news

New members, Paul Harris Awards, Club birthdays, Amount raised in year, Individual donations, Projects / Events, Speaker announcements, Speaker reviews

Elements of a successful press release

Compelling headline, Sub Headline, Informative first paragraph, Quotations, Clear call to action, Additional information (Editors Notes), Photograph, Timing, Follow Up

Advertising is saying you're good - PR is getting someone else to say that you're good. However, the template for a successful press release is very similar to that for an effective advert

The Headline

Start with a clear message, Write the strongest headline possible, Raise the eyebrows!

Google will show only the first 50-60 characters so bear that in mind.

An example of a headline - New Rotary Zoom seminars a massive hit

Why is a headline so important?

8 out of 10 people will read a headline, but only 2 out of 10 will read all the rest.

Top copywriters say that you should spend 50% of your time on the headline

A Sub-Headline

Not always used, but can be longer than the headline. Used to create additional impact. Almost a precis of your first paragraph

Gives you a 'second bite at the cherry'

Here's a Sub-Headline added to our headline...

Over 95% of attendees rate new educational sessions an excellent way to learn

The first paragraph

Capture 100% of the attention in the first few lines. Is it strong enough to maintain interest? First impressions really do count

Here's the first paragraph for our release...

A new programme of online learning is proving to be a huge success, with 95.4% of all users giving it the highest rating possible. Over 500 Rotarians have now taken part in the nationwide scheme which provides free of charge, one hour sessions on subjects ranging from how to practice your golf swing indoors to hot tips on how to secure a food home delivery slot.

Creating the personal touch

Quotes make it personal - Quotes make it more believable - Quotes make it more interesting

Here's a couple of quotes to add to the news item...

Rotary's President of online learning, Mr Des Ktop says: "We are absolutely delighted with the take up of the seminars and the reaction to them. Clearly introducing the programme at a time when people have nowhere to go, have no painting or cleaning left to do and are getting very bored was a good move"

He added: "We have received some excellent feedback, including a spontaneous 5 minute standing ovation for the presenter of the press release workshop which was very moving."

Make sure of a strong finish (Call to action)

Don't make the editor/reader have to work for it

Make the next steps absolutely clear

Option to add code to call to action to track response levels

Here is the closing paragraph for the release...

The popular educational sessions are available completely free of charge to all Rotarians and take place every Saturday. To register interest go to www.rotaryonline.co.uk or email education@rotary.co.uk.

Adding additional information (Editors Notes)

Use 'Editors Notes' to provide more information

Use for background details

Use to promote Rotary generally

BUT – Don't go overboard – Information overload

Here's the Editors Notes for our press release...

Editors Notes

The new online learning programme from Rotary includes 8 different subjects.

A Chicago attorney. Paul Harris, formed the first Rotary Club in Chicago in 1905. Rotary is now a global network with 1.2 million members in over 35,000 clubs.

One of Rotary's big projects is the fight against polio which started in 1979 with the aim to immunize 6 million children in the Philippines. Today, polio remains endemic in only three countries – down from 125 in 1988.

Here's the complete press release...



New Rotary Zoom seminars a massive hit

Over 95% of attendees rate new educational sessions an excellent way to learn

A new programme of online learning is proving to be a huge success, with 95.4% of all users giving it the highest rating possible. Over 500 Rotarians have now taken part in the nationwide scheme which provides free of charge, one hour sessions on subjects ranging from how to practice your golf swing indoors to hot tips on how to secure a food home delivery slot.

Rotary's President of online learning, Mr Des Ktop says: "We are absolutely delighted with the take up of the seminars and the reaction to them. Clearly introducing the programme at a time when people have nowhere to go, have no painting or cleaning left to do and are getting very bored was a good move"

He added: "We have received some excellent feedback, including a spontaneous 5 minute standing ovation for the presenter of the press release workshop which was very moving."

The popular educational sessions are available completely free of charge to all Rotarians and take place every Saturday. To register interest go to www.rotaryonline.co.uk or email education@rotary.co.uk.

Photo Caption:

Rotary members enjoy one of the new free of charge educational seminars on offer

Editors Notes

The new online learning programme from Rotary includes 8 different subjects. For further information call ***** on *****.

A Chicago attorney, Paul Harris, formed the first Rotary Club in Chicago in 1905. Rotary is now a global network with 1.2 million members in over 35,000 clubs.

One of Rotary's big projects is the fight against polio which started in 1979 with the aim to immunize 6 million children in the Philippines. Today, polio remains endemic in only three countries – down from 125 in 1988.

Hold the front page!

Aim high if you think you have a great photo opportunity

Talk to the media in advance

Sell the idea – they may even do the job for you

Be aware of how the front page works – size and shape

Think about the timing of your releases

Can you use any topical connections?

Can you connect your item to a current news event?

Can you take advantage of Newsjacking!

Options - Awareness Days, weeks, months

Pro-active funding of local Charities and organisations linked to national awareness campaigns

The writing process

Bullet points for the important details

The first paragraph – get that right

Complete the first draft

Create a headline and sub headline

Leave it alone for a while

What did you miss out?

What can you take out?

Read it out loud

Work on making it more compelling

Test it out

Give yourself plenty of time

The writing style

Keep it simple

Steer clear of technical terms

Assume the readers know nothing

Be careful not to overstate, repeat, bang on!

Don't stray into 'selling' territory

If you have to check what a word means, don't use it!

Remember to write for the reader, not you or your Club

Write as though you are speaking

Natural...normal...everyday

On keeping it simple...

"It is a mistake to use highfalutin language. I once used the word OBSOLETE in a headline, only to discover that 43% of customers had no idea what it meant. In another headline, I used the word INEFFABLE, only to discover that I didn't know what it meant myself." David Ogilvy

Questions to ask yourself

Is it really newsworthy?

Is it interesting enough?

Can the reader tell what it is about in the first few lines?

Is it well-written and easy to read?

Have you left any questions unanswered?

Is it strong enough to be used?

Have I told the reader what I want them to do next?

Before you send it

Get someone else to read it – Do they understand it?

Proof read it and then proof read it!!

How to use your press release

Send to as many targeted local media contacts as possible

Send to District newsletter

Send to Rotary magazine

Add to website

Use on Facebook

Twitter, LinkedIn etc

Send to members

Send to supporters

How to send your news

Send individually rather than to the whole list

Send an attachment and also in body of email

Make it personal – use name of contact and publication

Option to call or email first to introduce

Making the most of your news

How far can you make it stretch?

You could use different releases to cover:

What you are going to do

What you are doing

What you did

Giving interviews

Ask for the questions in advance

Make a list of the things you want to say

Try to not go 'off-piste'

Make sure you know the message to give at the end

Practice

Get comfortable and relaxed – free the time

Have water handy

Same as the writing – natural, normal, everyday

Use 'SLOW' notes

Listen back to learn

Printed media – request to see proof

As part of the session, a couple of examples of writing releases in a different way were shown based on content kindly provided by Rotary members.

Example 1

ROTARY GARDEN CREATED AT STONE CROSS

Hambleton District Council has long appreciated and supported the work of Northallerton Rotarians in the community. The two Rotary Clubs of Northallerton and Northallerton Mowbray, comprising a total of over 70 members, frequently get involved in projects to help local people, groups, charities and businesses, through a variety of activities ranging from fund raising to physical support.

Both Clubs contain a wide spectrum of experience from the diverse backgrounds of their members, which collectively becomes a powerful force for good in the community. Rotary is an international organisation of like-minded people, and the two Northallerton Clubs also contribute regularly to projects around the world to help those in need.

The major achievement of Rotary International has been its work with the World Health Organisation to eradicate Polio in the world. In 1985 most countries were afflicted by this terrible disease, but now only 2 countries have a small incidence, and the continent of Africa has just been declared Polio-free.

In recognition of this selfless contribution, Hambleton District Council last year renamed the road around their headquarters at Stone Cross, which is now called Rotary Way. Recently, permission has also been given to create a Rotary garden to one side of the main entrance to the Stone Cross building. Rotarians from both Clubs have been busy preparing a bed of ornamental rocks and bushes, including a feature stone with the Rotary rondel and a plaque displayed on it. To either side of this bed bulbs of daffodils and crocuses have been planted. The crocuses are purple, which is the colour of the Polio inoculation programme, and they have been planted in a large circle to reflect the Rotary symbol.

Hopefully the new Rotary garden will give pleasure to everyone visiting Hambleton District Council. The Rotary Clubs are extremely grateful to the Council for permitting this prominent display to mark the strong bond between the Council and Rotary. Anyone can help in our projects without becoming a member, but new members are always most welcome to join. For more information, visit the websites for the two Rotary Clubs and Facebook.

Photo: Members of the work team who prepared the Rotary Garden.

Comments: One of the suggestions during the session was to 'tighten' up the writing and that's what I have tried to do below. The original release didn't include a quote and so that has been added using the content.

Everything's looking rosy for Rotary

Members of the Rotary Clubs of Northallerton and Northallerton Mowbray, have been busy creating a Rotary garden of daffodils and crocuses at the headquarters of Hambleton District Council.

The garden, including a bed of ornamental rocks and bushes, a feature stone with the Rotary rondel and a plaque follows the Council decision last year to rename a

road around the headquarters Rotary Way in recognition of the contribution of both Rotary Clubs to the community.

Phil Roser, Press and publicity officer for The Rotary Club of Northallerton says that the purple crocuses represent the colour of Rotary's Polio inoculation programme: "The bulbs have been planted in a large circle to reflect the Rotary symbol. The major achievement of Rotary International has been its work with the World Health Organisation to eradicate Polio. In 1985 most countries were afflicted by this terrible disease, but now only 2 countries have a small incidence, and the continent of Africa has just been declared Polio-free."

He added: "We are extremely grateful to the Council for permitting this prominent display to mark the strong bond between the Council and Rotary. We hope that the new garden will give pleasure to everyone visiting the Council offices."

Phil concluded: "Anyone can help in our projects without becoming a member, but new members are always most welcome to join."

For more information, visit the websites for the two Rotary Clubs and Facebook.

Editors Notes

The two Rotary Clubs of Northallerton and Northallerton Mowbray, comprise a total of over 70 members who frequently get involved in projects to help local people, groups, charities and businesses, through a variety of activities ranging from fund raising to physical support.

Photograph caption: Members of the work team who prepared the Rotary Garden.

Example 2

Rotary Club of Scarborough-Helping those in devastated areas of the World

The Rotary Club of Scarborough have for nearly one hundred years raised much needed funding to help those in need both locally and internationally, especially those affected by natural and human disasters.

The Club has recently donated much needed funding to Lebanon to help those affected by the recent devastating incident.

On August 4, 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored at Beirut's port exploded, killing more than 220 people and injuring more than 6,500. Some 300,000 people have left homeless, with scores still reported missing. In the immediate aftermath of the explosion, efforts were focused on providing immediate lifesaving assistance and protection to those affected by the blast.

As the response moves into its second month, International Medical Corps continues to provide immediate health, mental health care and gender-based

violence (GBV) services while shifting the focus toward medium- and long-term projects and activities, including structure rehabilitation and repair, comprehensive and affordable primary healthcare, support for persons with disabilities, GBV case management, and longer-term mental health and psychosocial support.

In addition, Lebanon has seen a dramatic increase in the spread of COVID-19 since last month's explosion. Since the blast, the number of cases has increased by approximately 220%. The country has registered between 500 and 600 cases almost every day since mid-August. In response, government officials imposed a lockdown and curfew at the end of August; however, for the hundreds of thousands who have been displaced, these orders have been difficult to follow.

As the number of cases has increased, Lebanon's health system has been stretched to capacity. Damage to health infrastructure is significant. Three major hospitals were destroyed in the explosion and three others were partially damaged. The World Health Organization has reported that approximately 500 hospital beds were lost as a result of the explosion. In addition, primary healthcare centres (PHCCs) and dispensaries, private clinics, pharmacies and standalone laboratories were damaged in the blast. In a rapid assessment conducted by the World Bank, approximately 36% of health facilities were affected by the explosion, limiting their ability to provide care. In addition to the physical damage to health infrastructure and equipment, the facilities that are functional have experienced a radical increase in the number of patients, which has further depleted medical supply stock—especially personal protective equipment (PPE), which was already in severe shortage. This is particularly concerning, as the number of healthcare workers with COVID-19 has steadily increased throughout the crisis. So far, more than 670 healthcare workers have been diagnosed with COVID-19, with more than 80 new cases confirmed between August 30 and September 1 alone.

Chair of the Rotary Club's International Committee, David Oliver, said "The Club have been really touched by the plight of the Beirut people and have been minded to contribute some funding to help them in their time of need. The massive explosion and resulting devastation has compounded the immense difficulties faced by the people and we wanted to show them that they are not alone in dealing with the ongoing challenges".

Note to Editors

The Rotary Club of Scarborough was established in 1921 and so will soon be celebrating its Centenary Year. The Club is dual membership of male and female members representing the public, private and third sectors, meeting every Monday evening at 6.00pm for 6.30pm at The Scarborough Rugby Union Football Club, 569 Scalby Road, Silveroyd, Scarborough. YO13 0NL

For further information or to set up interviews please contact John Riby on 07532222474 or email jriby@outlook.com

Comments: There is a lot of information in the release and I have taken some of that out and added a sub-headline. The additional information could be added into Editors Notes if it was felt necessary. I have tried to make the start of the release a little punchier.

Rotary Club steps in with aid for devastated region

Much needed funding sent to Lebanon to help those affected by the recent disaster.

When 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded at Beirut's port, killing more than 220 people and injuring more than 6,500, The Rotary Club of Scarborough stepped in with much needed assistance.

The incident left some 300,000 people homeless, with scores still reported missing. The World Health Organization has reported that approximately 500 hospital beds were lost as a result of the explosion and, according to an assessment conducted by the World Bank, approximately 36% of health facilities were affected by the explosion, limiting their ability to provide care.

In addition, Lebanon has seen a dramatic increase in the spread of COVID-19 since the explosion. Since the blast, the number of cases has increased by approximately 220%.

Commenting on the Rotary donation, Chair of the Rotary Club's International Committee, David Oliver, said "The Club have been really touched by the plight of the Beirut people and was happy to contribute some funding to help them in their time of need. The massive explosion and resulting devastation has compounded the immense difficulties faced by the people and we wanted to show them that they are not alone in dealing with the ongoing challenges".

The Rotary Club of Scarborough have for nearly one hundred years raised much needed funding to help those in need both locally and internationally, especially those affected by natural and human disasters.

You can find more information about The Rotary Club of Scarborough at <https://www.rotary-ribi.org/clubs/homepage.php?ClubID=236>

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Example 3

Free Online Chat with Santa

As you will know, Santa is very busy at the moment. He and his elves are working hard making and wrapping toys and gifts. However Santa is making some time in his hectic schedule and offering to have a short online chat with young children in the Barnsley area.

He will be available on Sunday 20th & Monday 21st December 2020 between 4:00 and 6:00 pm. **Mrs Claus will be with him on the Sunday.**

Because he is so busy, Santa has asked the Rotary Club of Stainborough to organise these meetings, via Zoom, and the club's President, Ray White will be the Zoom host.

The meetings with Santa will be by pre-arranged appointment only and should last for **2 or 3 minutes.**

If you have a child or children, 9 years old or younger, who'd like to have an online chat with Santa, please send an email to stainboroughrotary@gmail.com and you will be **sent a booking form.**

Comments: The Rotary Club was disappointed with the results from the release above. On the face of it there isn't anything too wrong with the news item. However, I wondered whether the **information in red may have been barriers to action? The mention of Mrs Claus may be confusing, maybe there isn't a need to talk about the host? The time limit might indicate it's not really worth actioning and the mention of a booking form adds to complications. I have changed it to below. However, it could also be that running it so close to Xmas Day meant that children would have already had interaction with Santa already?**

Fancy a private chat with Santa?

The Rotary Club of Stainborough has arranged a free online chat with the big man himself for children under the age of nine in the Barnsley area.

Taking place on Sunday 20th and Monday 21st December 2020 between 4:00 and 6:00 pm, the limited places can be booked now.

Rotary Club President Ray White explained: "Although Santa is very busy at the moment, he has kindly agreed to make some time in his hectic schedule to have a private online chat with young children in our area."

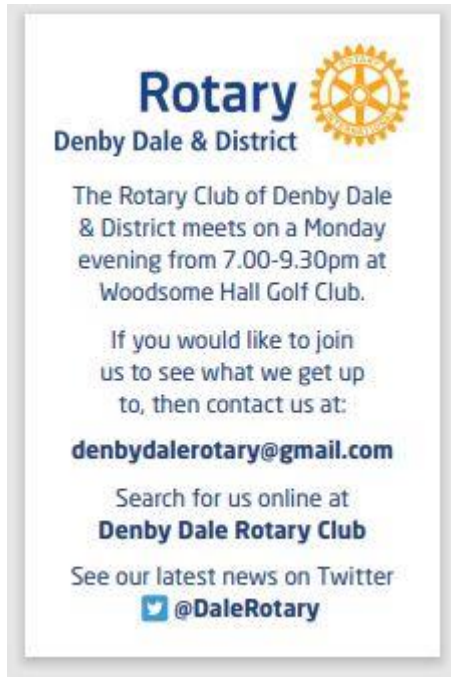
To arrange your own time slot for what will be one of the highlights of Xmas, simply email stainboroughrotary@gmail.com.

A final thought

"It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do a little.

Do what you can" Sydney Smith

Here is the front and the back of the business card that my Rotary Club use:



David N Russell

Denby Dale & District Rotary Club

Davidnr58@gmail.com

07825 084 111