

# **Your 4-step plan to securing £1000s of free PR!**

## **A free report just for you...**

**by**

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self development & person centred marketing



[www.personcentredmarketing.co.uk](http://www.personcentredmarketing.co.uk)

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Hi there

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to download this free report. As most of you will be aware, I am a qualified counsellor. I qualified in 2005 and I have always managed to ensure I have an income doing what I love, an income from being a therapist. I have worked in the voluntary sector managing counselling services, as well as maintaining a small private practice. I have also set up and delivered training and workshops as well as running large scale events with over 300 people. What I am going to share with you in this free report can be used by all therapists, and can help you to grow your business, especially if you have any events or training you wish to promote. I have used the contents of this report in my therapy business as well as my RagHeroes and Person-centred Marketing business.

As a therapist in private practice I know that money can be a real issue for many small businesses, especially when it comes to a budget for PR. In all honesty, since starting my first business in 2010 I have never once paid for any publicity.

So...back to free PR. In the last few years **I've had over £30,000 worth of free PR**. I've actually stopped counting now, as it takes up time and I find it difficult to keep track of!

What I'd like to do now is to just get straight to the point and tell you exactly how you can achieve this for your business. I've spent a little time thinking about this and have put it into a simple 4 step process that you can easily follow. I'll then show you the best way to structure a press release, providing you with a template you can use and a selection of my stories that have been published for you to take some ideas from 😊

But first let's look briefly at **'what is PR and why is it important to our businesses?'**

So you are probably aware that PR stands for *Public Relations*. It is about gaining exposure to your audience via an appropriate means, to promote your product, service, event, etc. Public relations is not just about having articles and news published by Newspapers, it is also about speaking on the radio, appearing on TV, guest speaking at events and promotion to other companies. However, although I have been invited to do radio interviews and to guest speak, etc. for the purpose of this report and what I feel is most relevant to my Newsletter audience I'm going to talk about the free PR I have gained working with the press, e.g. getting your news published in newspapers, magazines and other publications both on and off line.

It is important to do this in our businesses as it helps us to keep the public informed about what we are doing, helping us to promote our products and services and in turn make an income (hopefully!) by targeting the right people at the right time. It can also help us to sell tickets to an event, for example, or to promote a competition or find new clients.

# THE 4 STEPS

## Step 1 – Planning

You need to think about how many press releases you want to write. When I talk to people they often think that they can only promote what they are doing once or can only do so before an actual product or service launches or before an event. This couldn't be further from the truth. There's always an opportunity to be published somewhere! If you are running an event for example you need to think about before, during and after event publicity, and this all needs to be planned and ready to go before the actual event. I'll explain more about this in just a moment.

So let's focus on gaining exposure for a certain event or workshop you may be running. You need to think about the following beforehand.

Where do you want your press release publishing and do you want to approach TV and radio stations too? Not planning properly is the number one mistake I see people making. I can't stress enough how much you need to set time aside to plan. Lack of planning is disastrous as by the time people actually get around to planning and realise what they are doing their event is almost imminent and it's too late for the press release to be actually published! So, here is a list of what you need to do around two weeks in advance of actually approaching anyone, allowing a further two weeks before the event for communications with the publisher, so a total of 4 weeks before the event you should start planning the following:

- a. Work out exactly where you want to be published and why, write a list.
- b. Write your press release in full so it's ready to go the moment you speak to anyone. It's common now for journalists to expect a press release to already be written for them. You are making their job easier and as they are so busy they are more likely to include something that is already completed for them.
- c. Work out who you need to speak to. Do your research and make contact with the right person. You want to be speaking directly to the person who will publish your article. Find out their **direct contact number**. If it's not on the website you can usually get this by ringing the news desk or via the enquiry line.
- d. **ALWAYS ring the relevant contact before sending any press release** to them so they're expecting it. The NUMBER 2 mistake I see is people just emailing their press release to the enquiry email or news desk, getting no response and then giving up. If you do this it is unlikely to work, unless you have some mega story like a personal invite to lunch from the Queen! By ringing in advance you can also tell if they are interested in your story or not. If not you can move onto the next contact without wasting any time.
- e. Once you have agreed with your contact that they will look at your story you then need to email it to them as soon as you put the phone down. Do not send your press

release as an attachment, instead just copy and paste the press release into the actual body of the email. Journalists are really busy people and the less steps they need to take the better!

- f. Move onto the next call. Just because one publication has agreed to publish your story doesn't mean that others won't. I've had the same story published in The Journal, Evening Chronicle and The Sunderland Echo, both on and offline all at the same time! The worst they can say is 'no, you've already given it to such and such,' but don't tell them that unless they ask! You can also suggest you change it slightly if it is a concern for them.
- g. Two or three days before your story is due to be published contact the person again just to make sure it is going in. You can just say, *'Hi, I'm just checking that my story will be published on (date) as agreed? I'd just like to make sure I get a copy for my record. Also, can you let me know if it will be being published online too?'* More often than not they'll get back to you and say 'yes.' I've also had a couple of journalists email me back and thank them for the reminder as they would have otherwise forgot to hand it in, usually because they've been called out to cover a big story on the same day. So always call to make sure it's going ahead. The main reason I say to do this two to three days in advance is that the journalist needs to hand it in before the deadline and you are giving them enough time to do this within this time scale.
- h. Go out and buy a copy of the paper for your records. Also keep any links to online publications.
- i. Share, share, share. People love to see what you've been up to and being published also gives you an air of authority in your business sector too.
- j. Email the journalist and thank them for publishing your story. This is for two reasons. Firstly, it helps build up a positive relationship with that particular journalist and they're more likely to remember you if you approach them in the future. Secondly, if you are running an event or workshop, it allows you to ask if they would be interested in publishing an article after the event, known as a 'follow-up.' Tell them the advantage of this, e.g. there'll be 100 local women at my event and I can get you pictures, quotes relevant to local business/finance, etc. or whatever your event is about. Also tell them that you can get a press release to them on the day of the event, or the next day if your event runs into late afternoon or evening. The reason you must do this is that 'old news is no news.' News need to be fresh and relevant, so your press release needs to say something like, '100 women gathered in Eldon Square yesterday to tell the local public all about the advantages of working from home.' Obviously yours will be different but that's the first thing that came into my head!

### **Tips (for planned events, training and workshops).**

Make sure your article is published at least a week in advance of whatever you are planning. You'll need to contact the relevant journalist at least two weeks in advance, with a follow up

email, just before it is due to be published, to gently remind them it's to go in. The worst thing in this case is that the article is published after the event, which has actually happened to me before!

Have someone around during the event who can write a press release for you for immediate release afterwards. They will need to speak to people at the event, include quotes and be observant enough to accurately report on what is happening throughout the event. Give them a thorough brief beforehand as well as a quote from yourself too.

Make sure you have excellent photographs. This is so important that I've mentioned it as a step below.

### **Step 2 – Preparing yourself to make the phone call and send the follow up emails.**

It is so important to take a half hour or so to prepare yourself to contact people. Before you contact anyone you need to 'get into the zone.' Turn off all distractions and get to know your story inside out. You should have already written your press release so read through this several times until it is fresh in your mind. Practice saying it out loud so you become confident with your own voice. The more confident you sound the more likely they will be to listen to what you have to say. Know exactly what you are saying and keep it brief and to the point as journalists are very busy, so don't feel offended if you feel like they are trying to rush you, they probably have 101 things to do. If one phone call doesn't go to plan, don't panic, you have a list, or you should have. Simply, take 5 minutes to refocus and move on.

During the phone call make sure you ask for their personal email to send your press release to and ask when is the best time to call them back or email info over to them, e.g. when are they most likely to be at their desk.

If after sending the email you don't get a response within a day or two you can follow up with a quick call to say it has been sent if you wish to, just ensure they actually received it.

**REMEMBER** - Nothing you say is EVER off the record to a journalist, if they can use it they will, so DO NOT share anything you wouldn't want the whole world to know about!

### **Step 3 – Photographs**

For one off articles, e.g. if you are writing about a particular product or service you offer, always include a suitable headshot of yourself, making sure it is professional or related to what is happening. Publications love pictures so it's worth investing in a professional photographer if you can. For events and workshops you'll probably need a photographer on hand to take these for you throughout the event.

Here are a couple of examples of photos which made front page stories for me.

1. Pitching my RagHero business to Sir Richard Branson.



The newspaper loved this image of me and my family with the dolls we made, can you spot Jacob in front of me? They also loved seeing Richard with the doll too! The dolls were used in several nurseries around the North East to help children overcome separation anxiety, this allowed me to mention my private practice too, gaining exposure for two businesses at once!



2. Building the world's biggest rag doll with North East kids.

Newspapers loved the photos with kids taking part, such as the ones below.

**'Military' make their mark with re-enactment event**  
 PAGE 39

**£10 GIFT VOUCHER FROM THE ORIGINAL FACTORY SHOP**  
 WHEN YOU SPEND £20 OR MORE ONLINE  
 SEE PAGE 38 FOR FURTHER DETAILS

**Pupils paint, draw and sow rag doll**  
 Youngsters from a 16th school have been helping to create the world's biggest rag doll.  
 Newham Primary school pupils in Essex joined with the Rag Doll Project.  
 Newham is one of several schools and youth organisations from around the region taking part in the project.  
 They will use their own artwork to create a section of the doll.  
 The project is a joint venture between the school and the Rag Doll Project.  
 It is hoped once complete it will be included in the Guinness World Records.  
 Visit [www.ragdoll.com.uk/projectragdoll](http://www.ragdoll.com.uk/projectragdoll) for more information.



Newham Primary School with sponsor Diane Wilkinson working on the rag doll project.

**More horses identified to be micro-chipped**  
 A second session of free micro-chipping and passporting took place this week in a bid to secure the future of the horse industry.  
 The session, organised by the RSPCA, is supported by the RSPCA, British Horse Society (BHS) and county council animal welfare teams.  
 Owners who took their horses to Lymington on Thursday were offered half price micro-chipping and passporting.  
 A horse castration service was also available.  
 This follows an earlier session last month in North

**Painted fabric squares to be used on biggest rag doll**  
 Little helpers go for world record  
 By KATY WHEELER  
 LITTLE artists have been getting crafty to try to be record-breakers.  
 They are helping to create the world's biggest rag doll.  
 The project is a joint venture between the school and the Rag Doll Project.  
 It is hoped once complete it will be included in the Guinness World Records.  
 Visit [www.ragdoll.com.uk/projectragdoll](http://www.ragdoll.com.uk/projectragdoll) for more information.

JOIN THE RAG DOLL PROJECT  
 Louise, Emily, and Adam

COLOURFUL FUR!  
 Emma Mawgill and son Thomas, two.

**Remember** - Newspapers LOVE pictures that show local people taking part in things, so make sure that you take a selection throughout the event you can send to them.

**Hiring a photographer.**

Always give any photographer a comprehensive brief of exactly what you want, the style of the images and the message you wish to portray.

Always take photos with lots of people in them, it makes your event look busy and people can pick up on the atmosphere from looking at these, they'll feel the excitement or the buzz in the room.

Always request photos back from the photographer the same day so you can use them for any immediate follow up. Remember 'old news is no news,' so get your press release AND your photos to the reporter within 24 hours.

If you have children in your photos you need to ensure you have parental/carer permission.

Photographs should be at least 300dpi.

#### **Step 4 – Keeping it all going.**

People often think that once their story has been published then that is that. This is simply not true. Here are a few suggestions you could take note of to help maintain the momentum.

1. Put any links to the published articles on your own websites and social media profiles, so people can see what you've been doing throughout the years. By doing this you are starting to build up a media library that people can refer back to.
2. Write a blog. There's nothing to say you can't shout about what you have achieved. It's a good idea to write a blog letting people know about what you've been up to.
3. Send out an email to your Newsletter list and use the article to promote future services, products or events. For example you could send out a newsletter saying, 'last month we put on an amazing workshop in central London which attracted over 100 business women. There was such a buzz about the day, read what these local women had to say in (enter the publication here), also here's a few photos of what we got up to too!'
4. Link in with other businesses and bloggers. For example, did you gather research about your local community, maybe a certain magazine, or even a certain establishment? Some other bloggers or businesses may want to send this out in their newsletter or blog and reference back to you.

#### **Tip**

I now set aside time each month to focus on what I can do to secure free and regular PR. I've built this into my business model. It is my aim to make it into a publication at least once every 3 months. The more exposure you can get the better, so when I'm thinking of any new project or service I am always thinking about how I can get some free PR to promote it. You should do this too!



## HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

### STRUCTURE

There is a basic structure you should follow when writing a press release. I've listed the stages below and then provided you with a template showing an actual press release in the middle. I've put an example of my most recent project which involves building the world's biggest rag doll. I've done this to show you the type of content people like, and how it is broken up into the following stages. Following this process makes a press release easy and simple to write. Feel free to use this template as a guide and amend and use for yourself 😊

1. For release date.
2. Headline.
3. Sub headline.
4. Opening paragraph – this should include the most important info..... who, why, what, when, purpose, etc.
5. 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph – your personal details.
6. Other paragraphs – event details, quotes, any other relevant info.
7. Closing paragraph – final information about yourself, where you can be contacted or website address.
8. The end – sometimes referred to as the 'boiler plate.' (See below for example.)

### TEMPLATE

**-Starts-**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE or TO PUBLISH ON: Day/month/year.

**Headline** e.g. "Entrepreneur looks to break world record"

- An entrepreneur from the borough has launched a world record attempt to build the world's biggest rag doll – with the help of children across the north east.

**Headline**



**Sub-headline**

**Other paragraphs inc quote!**

**Opening paragraph**

**2nd paragraph personal details**

**Close - your details**

- Ends -

*The information below should be added directly onto the end of your press release right under '-Ends-', just as it is below BUT obviously with your information there.*

**Media Contacts**

For more information, photographs or interview requests please contact:

Your name

Your business

Mobile number

Email address

Notes to editors

- List any sources here that you may have used for statistics or quotes etc.

**About (put your business name here)**

This is a chance to include a paragraph or two about your business. Tell them anything that may be relevant to the press release and which they can easily access if they need more information without needing to contact you directly.

For more information, go to WEBSITE (insert website url here)

**About - full name (insert your full name here)**

Here you can include a more detailed description of yourself, either anything personal that is relevant or linked to your business.

If you have a personal website you can insert that link here too.

**THANKS FOR READING!**

So that's it, I've shared everything with you that I have personally done myself and which has led to £1000s of free PR. I hope you can apply it to your business too.

Please do let me know how you get on and share any success stories over on my Facebook page [www.facebook.com/mariaalbertsen.co.uk](http://www.facebook.com/mariaalbertsen.co.uk). I'd love to know how well this works for you too.

As always you can find me online at [www.personcentredmarketing.co.uk](http://www.personcentredmarketing.co.uk). I'd love to connect with you, so please do get in touch.

Have fun and happy publishing!

Maria x