

Hold the front page

The press can be your friend and *The Broker* offers some pointers on engaging in media relations

It may get bad press but there are many benefits to engaging with the media, from sharing news including stories like an important new hire, announcing an acquisition or promoting a local charity partnership. You may also want to broadcast information that is in the public interest such as protecting properties against escape of water. Positive media coverage in both the regional and trade press can boost internal morale and highlight your credentials to existing and potential customers, partners, suppliers and future top talent.

Be it amongst a certain customer segment or in your local town, press engagement offers a chance to be an expert voice in the community. Tell people you're hiring; tell people you're investing in the area with a new office; most of all, show their readers that you understand and are close to your customers.

But where do you begin? And what should brokers think about when contacting journalists?

The first step is to plan out what you want to say and to whom. This frequently takes the form of a press release. It sounds obvious, but journalists look for news all the time – and it has to be new, relevant to their readers, and easy to understand.

Journalists may want to ask some additional questions. Make sure you include your contact details and be ready for these, and available to answer them on the day you send out your release.

In addition, a broker's expertise can be a great way of providing timely commentary. For example, following an incident like a factory fire: you can offer advice about how companies can manage their own risk of fire, and if the worst happens what the claims process entails.



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Members of the press are hungry for content! Position yourself as the local expert and think about investing time in getting to know some journalists who will then call on you first when they have a tight deadline.

Golden rules for writing a media release

- Get your key point right at the top
- Keep it simple.
- Use plain English.
- Avoid insurance-speak acronyms and jargon.
- Ensure it is relevant to your chosen media's audience, be it trade or local press.

Be personable - not technical. Think how you would explain the topic it to a friend and get straight to the point. Focus on the benefits it will bring to readers rather than the technical details. Or for local charity/community initiatives, explain what it brings to the area and include a call to action.

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Think before you send

Before you press send:

- Tell your employees;
- Ensure you have sign off from any other companies or people quoted or mentioned in the release;
- Decide and let your team know who is authorised to speak to the press – and that they will be available at the time of release.
- Check out online tips about speaking to the press.

Finally, don't expect to be able to check copy before it is published; the journalist may be offended if you ask and the reality is that it is the editor who decides what angle the story will take.

You can only get total control of your content by publishing via social channels and your own website, but these are likely to have considerably less reach.