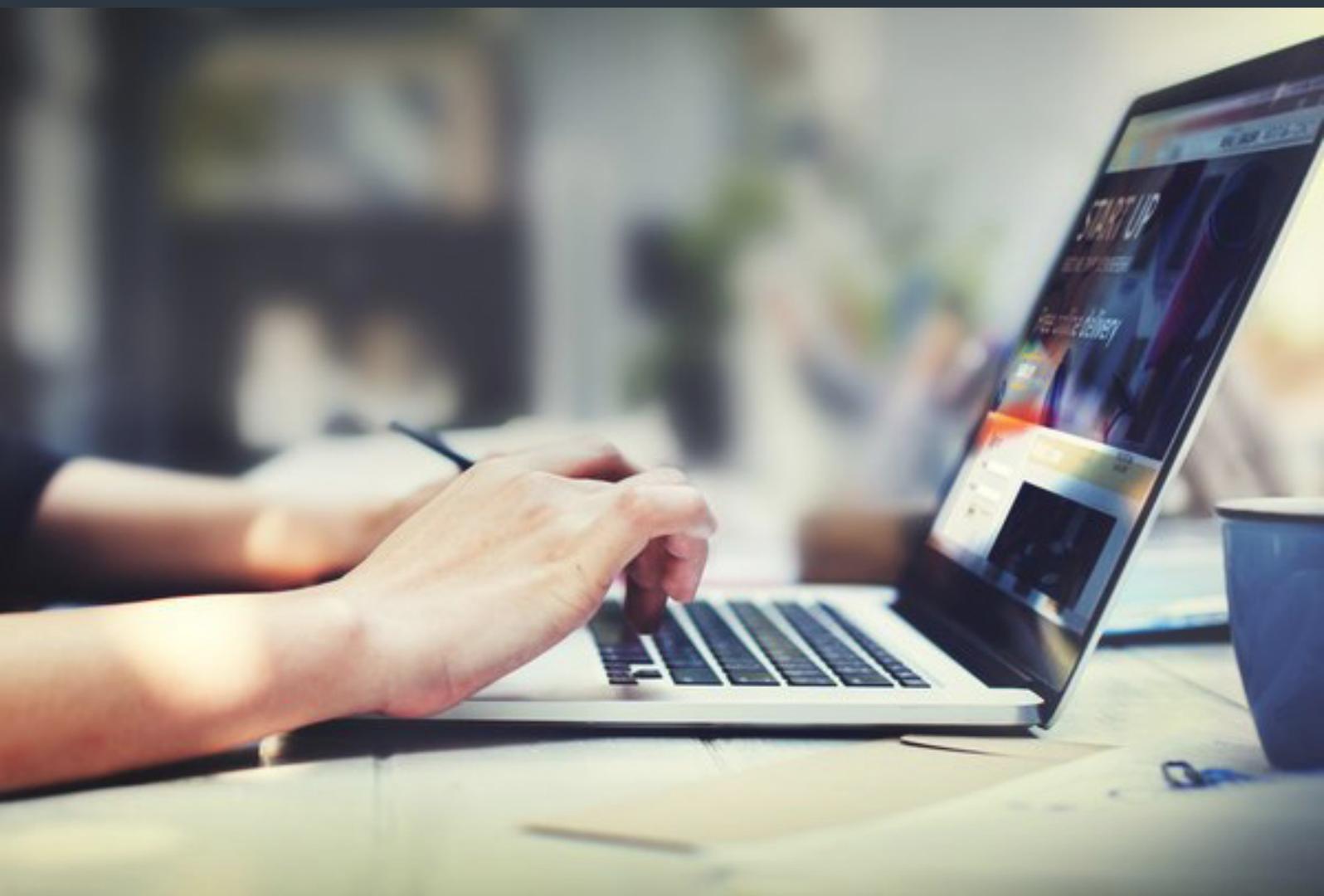


HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE LIKE A PR EXPERT



Introduction

The heart of a great press release lies in two qualities: Brevity and providing real news. The most effective press releases are short and to the point, using the fewest words required to tell the story. Remember, the journalist you're sending it to will be looking at hundreds of them every day. Therefore, you need to do them a favour and get to the point.

In addition, journalists are in the business of being read and shared, so you need to make your press release newsworthy. In other words, the content of the press release does well if it passes the gossip test, meaning people will want to read it and even better, share it. That's the ultimate test of whether your release is newsworthy.

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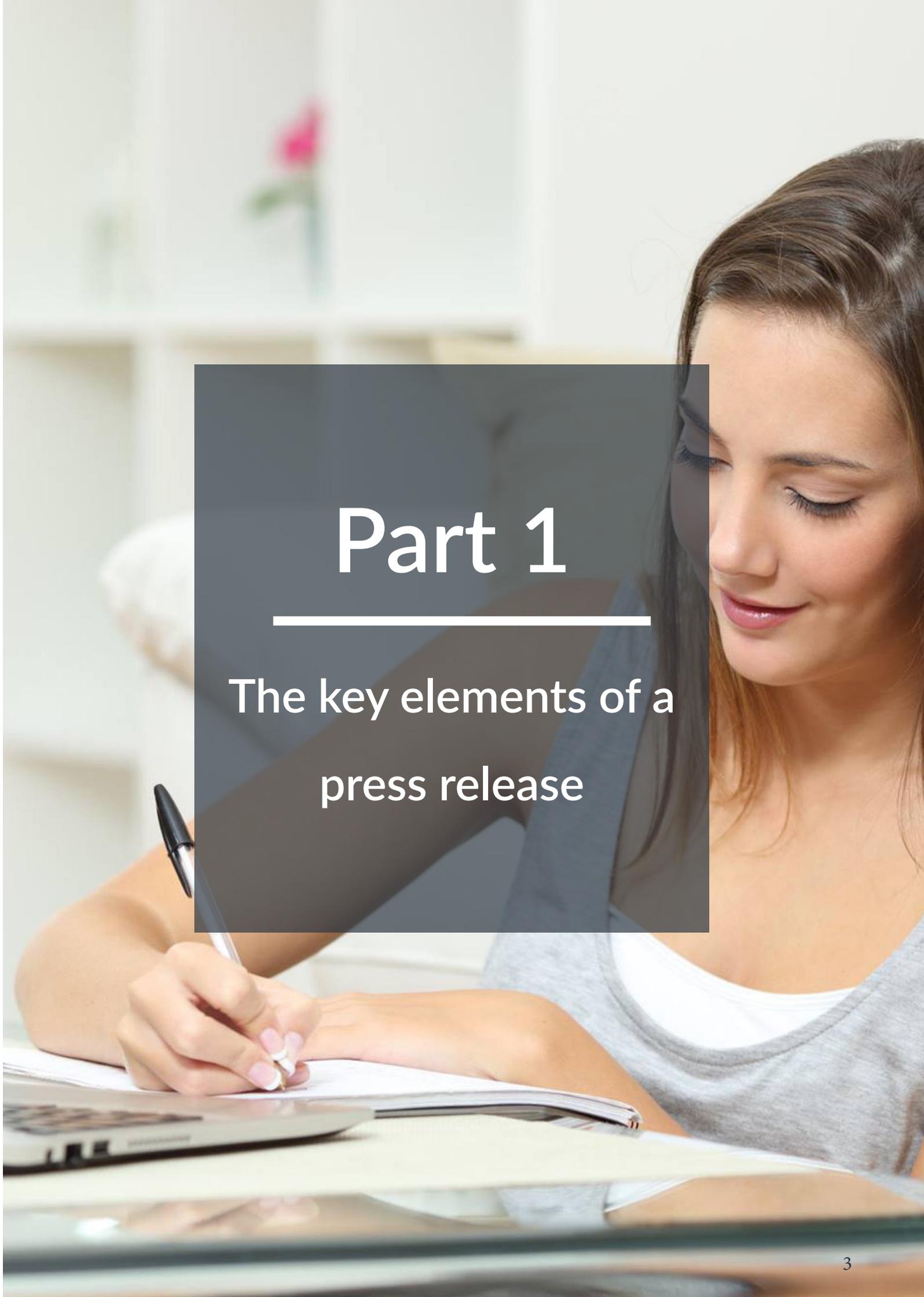
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Part 1

The key elements of a
press release

1. BIG IDEA

◆ Definition

First you need a big idea or news item that you want to share. If we were sending a press release about JournoLink, just telling them it's a PR platform gives the readers little information about what it does.

The big idea of any release is to share a solution to something that the users lack i.e. how will a PR platform satisfy them? That's what users really want to know. The difference the platform would make to their working lives, profits and public profile is what concerns them.

So the big idea could be the price point and the fact that startups can avoid spending a fortune on other PR services. It could be the ease of use, it could be the freedom to run your own story telling or it could be the training and support from our blogs and news about how to do PR. It could be any feature of the service, but you must decide the one big idea you want to convey in the press release and how that solves the customer's experience.

◆ Examples

Product launches, special offers, survey results, company associations, new hires, seasonal trends, seasonal developments and new value propositions all make excellent subject matter for press releases. Whatever you use, make sure that the news addresses some need that's lacking in the market or highlights some development that is significant in the market sector.

Timeliness is crucial because the news you put out should be relevant to, or sharply contradictory of, market events thus becoming newsworthy. Whatever you use as the big idea, show how it's significant by providing evidence of the importance, merit or impact on real people or customers in the market- don't just tell by describing. Quotes, pictures, statistics and personal stories in a few lines are how you show what's happening in the real world and why it's important. They make stories infinitely more compelling.

2. HEADLINE & INTRODUCTION

◆ What should be in an opening paragraph?

All press releases need a compelling headline followed by short opening or introductory paragraph explaining the news you're going to share in the release. We are going to deal with the introduction first and not the headline, which we will come to later for reasons you'll soon understand.

In the opening or introductory paragraph clearly explain what the big idea is in your press release and hook the reader into continuing to read. Don't make them scan through several paragraphs to discover the news you're sharing; the journalist might bin the release and move onto the next if you're not clear with your intentions from the beginning.

For example, great press releases answer the what, who, where, why, when and how questions in some way in the opening paragraph or introduction. With that the journalist knows what the news is and how worthy of their time it is.

◆ Building a great headline

If the headline doesn't grab attention even a great press release is a waste of time. The headline should hook the interest of the journalist immediately and attract intellectual, emotional or some immediate interest.

Fear of loss, celebrity, trending or viral events, spectacular success, special offers - especially anything offered for free, new products/technologies and new business alliances or collaborations that change market realities are all in the top 25 headline subjects identified by PR Web, giving you a steer on what types of subjects garner interest. In addition, tools like the Advanced Marketing Institute's headline analyser are helpful in checking the emotional appeal of the headlines you write.

We suggest writing the headline last on the press release so you can check what you write does not give a misleading slant to the contents of your press release. Nothing is more irritating than to be sucked into a release by a fabulous headline about a totally different subject to the facts in the release.

3. BODY COPY

Having showed the reader that your news is newsworthy in the introduction, the next few paragraphs or body copy need to expand and give additional information – this is where you tell your story.

It is important to share your news in as few words as possible, we suggest staying between 300 – 400 words. However don't worry if you don't write like a top journalist, creativity is far less important than giving and sharing facts.

◆ What should you write in your body copy?

In the body copy of the press release you should include real life experiences and tell a story which expands on your introduction. This instantly make the news more compelling as storytelling makes the news relatable to the readers.

For example, if a company faces a challenge and shares their story the readers will put themselves in the subject's shoes. They will compare their own experiences to those of the storytellers and continue to read on – this is exactly what the journalist wants to achieve.

In addition, if you explain how the experience affected the company and how the company overcame it they will value to piece further as it has educated them.

◆ Should you include a quote?

Quotes are related to storytelling because they provide an opportunity for an expert or significant person to comment and explain the meaning of facts mentioned in the press release. In addition, for those keen to demonstrate subject matter expertise, quotes are a great tool.

Just avoid using jargon or clichés anywhere in the press release. They don't make the commentator look clever, they simply make them unintelligible. A couple of quotes in the release by a qualified individual quickly explains the significance of the facts shared in the release, making them more relevant and interesting to readers. Quotes instantly humanise facts and guide the reader in their interpretation.

4. NOTES TO EDITOR

Having told the story you wish to share you need to indicate the release has finished by putting 'END' at the bottom. Under this every press release needs a 'Notes to Editor' section in which you provide all the details that would get in the way of your narrative but are necessary to share if the journalist wishes to find out more information.

Working down the press release you are giving information as and when it's needed, yet the 'Notes to Editor' section gives the journalist extra supporting material, not at the front when the decision is yet to be made, but at the end when the journalist really needs it.

◆ What should you include in the 'notes to editor' section?

This section should highlight a media contact who is available for interview or further comment. You should include their job role, email and details of how they can be contacted by telephone for ease and speed by the journalist.

Add details that enable the journalist to perform further research on the company or subject i.e. social media tags, background information and company website.

In addition you will need to attach relevant photographs, making sure they are of high quality and resolution. Pictures attached to a story raise the attractiveness of a story by 80% so don't lose the opportunity by sending thumb nails or sub-standard images. If you wish to send multiple or large files include a Dropbox or WeTransfer link.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All press releases follow this format for the ease of the journalist. You are aiming first to hook their interest via the headline and the introduction, confirm this interest in the body copy, and then give them all the other material they might need to write their story in the 'Notes to Editor' section.

◆ Facts and information

Don't worry about writing creatively, that's not a skill everyone has. Focus on the important facts you want to share rather than channelling William Wordsworth, Victor Hugo or Shakespeare.

Journalists will take great news in almost any format although of course it is better when using good grammar with correct spelling for ease of comprehension and illustrating to the journalist you've made an effort – if you haven't made an effort why should they?

◆ Tone of voice

Vary the tone of voice of the press release to suit the publication or sector you're sending it to. If you write in the pseudo style of the target medium you may come across as a failed wannabee. Just mirror the tone of voice and remember it's the facts you enclose that count not the florid style you use that grabs the journalists attention. It's their job to be a creative writer and yours is to provide them with the information to be able to do that.

So, with brevity and newsworthiness as the key words to bear in mind, great press releases have a big news idea they want to convey, and do so with an arresting headline and body copy that does that in a minimum amount of words. Then via 'Notes to Editor' all the other details the journalist needs, including high resolution pictures are provided. Every great press release has these qualities.

Part 2

Preparing your press release



PRESS RELEASE EXAMPLE

Headline

Be factual and catchy. What is it about?

A tasty Hybrid Jam comes to tea with the Dorchester at the Chelsea Flower Show

Introduction

What, who, where and when? Go straight to the point.

From Tuesday, 23rd May to Saturday 27th May two great British institutions merge in the Drawing Room Marquee at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Chelsea Flower Show. Jam maker Butterfly And The Bee and the Dorchester Hotel will provide a traditional afternoon tea to guests and visitors at the show serving untraditional hand crafted jams.

Body copy

Detail your story, add a personal angle, statistics, etc. Explain the why and the how.

Michael Donnelly, Award winning Jam Producer and founder of Butterfly and The Bee, is crafting the jams for the Dorchester's tea event. His specially blended hybrid Jams are produced in traditional small batch, French confiture copper pans with no artificial additives, preservatives or stabilisers.

He has been Jam making since childhood, starting with his grandmother in Ireland and within two years of launching Butterfly and The Bee won both Gold and silver awards at Fortnum's Dalem Main Marmalade awards for his Plain, and Orange Honey and Vanilla marmalades respectively.

Michael is on a mission to take Jam away from the breakfast table and find other uses and associations for it. Thus, Butterfly and The Bee produce what can truly be called hybrid Jams - like their plum and cinnamon, Apricot and Amaretto, even Plum and Garam Masala spiced confitures that creatively compliment other foods.

"I work with the head chefs at the Dorchester to produce jams using in season ingredients to compliment what the Dorchester is serving, and it could be a plain Strawberry jam for Breakfast or something as exotic the Cardamom Jams they serve at their afternoon teas. People use our Jams for everything from eating with yoghurt to glazing duck," says Michael.

Quote

It needs to provide an insight or add an emotional impact to your story. Always attribute it to someone.

Butterfly and the Bee will feature and serve in season Rhubarb Jam at the Dorchester's Floral Afternoon Tea in the Marquee at the Flower show. It will add a tart flavour counterpoint to the traditionally plain sweet Strawberry jams.

Additional information

Add details about your business, your products and different contact points.

Notes to Editors:

- Contact: Michael Donnelly on 07786 325190
- Website: www.butterflyandthebee.com
- Twitter: @ButterflytheBee
- The Dorchester's Floral Afternoon Tea featuring Butterfly and the Bee Jams will be at the "Drawing Room" Marquee served at : 11.30-7.15pm Tuesday 23rd to Friday, and 11.30am- 4.45pm Saturday 27th May.

PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

1

Headline: What is your story about?

2

First paragraph: What is your story? Who is the main protagonist? Where and when?

3

Body copy: Detail your story, explain how and why, give statistics to back up your story or add a personal angle. What is the story behind the business? Give more information about your business.

4

“
Quote: Add a quote from the founder of the business or from a spokesperson giving an emotional angle to the story.
”

5

Notes to editors: Give your contact details, and additional information about your business, yourself and your products. Don't forget to attach a high-resolution picture to illustrate your release.

WHERE TO GO FOR A HELPING HAND



Most businesses will need help in at least some areas. Choosing which depends on existing in-house skills, time, and budget.

This guide has been put together by JournoLink, the online platform set up to help small businesses in those areas where they need that help.

JournoLink provides all the key aspects of managing your PR, from prompts on when and how to issue news content, to distributing that content to a whole range of journalists and bloggers, monitoring who is showing an interest in you, letting you know when journalists are looking for specific input and spokespeople for articles they are writing, and matching your content with the journalists most likely to cover you.

Moreover, JournoLink has been built with the small business budget in mind. Visit www.journalink.com for more details.