

Writing an Effective Press Release

Your guide to harnessing the power of the press release.

Brittney Miculka

Director, Marketing
Redbird Flight Simulations

A Publication of ImagineFlight



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1/ Introduction

Why do I Need a Press Release?

Press releases help businesses spread their message and get valuable publicity.

Press releases are an important tool in a flight school's marketing toolbox. They help keep the community informed and are meant to pique the interest of journalists who can cover the topic further.

Think of a press releases as an article that you write about yourself and submit to newspapers, news websites, and local radio and TV stations. By doing the hard work for the editor or reporter you allow the news source to easily add content to their paper or site. The news outlet may take all or part of the press release and use it as an article. If you invite them to check out your school and follow up with your contact, they may even cover the story in more depth.

It's important to note that a press release is an announcement, not an advertisement. There are times when a press release is a good idea for earned media coverage. But, if you are not promoting something new or newsworthy, a press release is not a good option and other marketing tactics should be considered.

Send a Press Release to:

- Spread Your Message
- Earn Publicity
- Boost Visibility

WHEN SHOULD I SEND OUT A PRESS RELEASE?

If you have something newsworthy to share, a press release should definitely be a piece of your promotion plan.

Reasons to send out a press release:

- Acquiring new equipment like a Redbird simulator or a new aircraft
- Announcing a new service
- To place your own spin or make a statement on an issue impacting your business (aka “newsjacking”)
- Personnel changes or staff promotions
- Hosting an event or seminar
- Interesting story about your business or its customers
 - A student solo on her 16th birthday
 - Participation in Pilots N Paws Flights

When NOT to send out a press release:

- A blatant advertisement
- Reads like a personal opinion
- Information is potentially libelous or could cause harm to a third party
- Sharing too much information that is too long to read

2/ Format

The Components of a Press Release

Headline

Grab the reader's attention with a great headline. Keep it short and simple. Below the headline, you should also include a subhead to add more detail, but keep it to one line.

Get to the Point

Get straight to the point in the first few sentences. Start with the big picture version of your message and then order the details from most important to least important or supporting information. Some editors may only publish the first paragraph of your press release, so get to the good stuff right away. Try to keep your press release 1200 words or less. If you provide accurate contact information, the journalist can always follow up for more details.

Quotes

Include a quote from the flight school owner, chief CFI, current customer, or newly certificated pilot. This helps provide a human element and credibility. A quote should sound natural and conversational without much technical jargon.

About Your Company

This last part of the press release is a short paragraph with the boilerplate information about your company. It should be straightforward enough so that anyone reading it will understand what you do. Make sure you include your web address in this section.

Check out the press release template for flight schools on the next page.

Write it so that it screams, "read me and write about me".

PRESS CONTACT

Name

Flight School Name

Office: 123-456-7890

email@flightschool.com**X FLIGHT SCHOOL HELPS STUDENTS TAKE OFF WITH
NEW REDBIRD FULL MOTION FLIGHT SIMULATOR*****Innovative Technology Provides Pilots with a Cost Effective, State of the Art Training Tool***

Austin, TX (November 30, 2016) - X Flight School, a leader in quality flight training, is proud to announce the installation of a Redbird MCX full motion flight simulator at their facility at San Marcos Regional Airport. The state of the art simulator will be fully integrated into the training offered by the flight school. The FAA certified device provides students with a more streamlined and immersive training experience with the goal of reducing the time and cost of a pilot's license. This simulator is the only one of its kind in the Austin metro area.

"We're proud to offer our students the very best training available," said Brittney Miculka, owner of X Flight School. "The Redbird MCX is a great addition to the tools we have to help our customers reach their goals." Training completed in the simulator counts towards a portion of the requirements needed for both beginning and advanced pilot certifications. The simulator also offers students a chance to "fly" anywhere in world, in a variety of different airspace environments. "We expect to see a major reduction in the total time and cost it takes a customer to get a license," said Miculka, "the use of full featured simulators is becoming the industry standard and we intend to maintain our leadership in the local flight training community".

The Redbird MCX is a full motion simulator that comes equipped with standard features such as a fully enclosed cockpit with greater than 200° wrap-around visuals, aircraft quality switches, high quality yokes, rudder pedals and power quadrants- all designed to perform like the real thing. "This machine is really amazing, after a few minutes you forget you are sitting on the ground," said Miculka.

The community is invited to X Flight School's Open House on January 3, 2017 to see the new simulator and for a chance to take the controls. For more information and to schedule a lesson visit X Flight School's website at www.XFlightSchool.com.

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About X Flight School

X Flight School, LLC is an Austin, Texas based company dedicated to providing exceptional flight instruction and aviation training. Founded by Brittney Miculka in 2003, a certified flight instructor with more than 5,000 hours training pilots in 20 types of aircraft, X Flight School provides instruction for customers seeking a new certificate or rating and current pilots looking to maintain their skills. X Flight School has 10 airplanes, both single and multiengine, and 5 instructors. For more information and to schedule an introductory flight, visit www.xflightschool.com or email info@xflightschool.com.

3/ Recipients

Building Your Contact List

Build a media contact list that will give you the best chance of getting your news picked up.

You don't want to waste your time sending out press releases to people who are not interested. Taking some time to do research to build a solid contact list in advance of sending out your announcement will help you to share news and develop a relationship with the most appropriate people.

Depending on the type of news, you should determine whether your target is something that would be picked up nationally or locally. Unless your announcement can truly play on a national stage, don't try to worry about how to make it onto the cover of the New York Times. If you craft your message well locally, it's quite possible the story could get picked up from an affiliate on a wider scale.

Some simple internet searching can help you find out which local reporters cover certain topics, like business, leisure and recreation, or human interest topics. Search your local TV, newspaper, and radio station reporters. Find out who covers stories about the airport. Ask your airport manager for names as well, since he or she may often be contacted by reporters. This approach is better and more direct than just sending something off to the "editor".

Do you know the community bloggers in your area? While not a traditional avenue for press releases, community bloggers often have large followings and are viewed as experts for local news and events.

It is unlikely that you are going to have newsworthy announcements every week, so in between those times, keep a look out for what makes compelling stories. Follow journalists on social media and keep a folder of examples and ideas (both inside and outside of the aviation industry).

RELATIONSHIPS ARE A TWO-WAY STREET

Building a solid relationship with anyone, business or personal, is a two-way street. So, it may take time to develop good relationships with the local press. Outside of the instances when you need a local journalist to cover your news, think about ways that you can also help and support that person. Serve as a positive resource and expert on the local issues pertaining to flying and your airport. This is especially important because establishing a good relationship first can be very helpful when and incident happens and a reporter wants to reach out to you for something not so positive.

Follow local journalists on social media and share and retweet their content that is relevant to your industry and your business. This is mutually beneficial, because it will also help you research what types of stories are covered and may help you to brainstorm some ideas to pitch about your own business.

A show of gratitude can go a long way. If a reporter covers your story, be sure to send a note of thanks – email is okay, but it can be hand written too. Even if the story was short and you wished they would have highlighted more, the reporter still took interest in your business and hopefully keep paying attention to the great stuff you do in the future.

“Take the Time to Personalize: You don’t email your friends or colleagues with a “Dear Sir or Madame” email, so don’t do it to reporters.”

YOUR MEDIA CONTACT LIST

Local

- Newspaper: business, sports & recreation or lifestyle section
- Publications: lifestyle, recreation, Business Journal
- Community Bloggers
- Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, etc.
- Your Alumni Association

Industry Media

- AvWeb: www.avweb.com
- Local Pilots Association in your area
- Personal Interest Aviation Associations
 - Women in Aviation, Intl.: www.wai.org
 - Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals: www.obap.org
 - National Gay Pilots Association: www.ngpa.org
- National Association of Flight Instructors: www.nafinet.org
- National Air Transportation Association: www.nata.aero.com
- Aircraft Owners Pilot Association: www.aopa.com, www.flighttraining.aopa.org

Take a look at these examples of earned media coverage of flight schools:

- [New flight simulator to help Okanagan College students take off](#)
- ['I knew I wouldn't give up': AB-Tech aviation student's accident tests his will to fly](#)
- [New flight simulation at North High School](#)
- [Safety in Motion](#)

4/ Next Steps

Beyond the Press Release

Your press release should be one component of a broader promotion plan.

Make Sure Your Website Rocks

If a reporter is researching your story, they are going to visit your website for easy access to more information. Make your website media friendly. Take a look at your website from an outsider's point of view and see if it is easy to navigate and conveys the image you want for your flight school.

Does your website features new announcements and blog posts? Blog posts are a great way to make sure your announcement or story is heard. Publicity is more effective when you approach it with multiple tactics. Combine a blog post with your social media tools to optimize your visibility and outreach. And, if for some reason your press release doesn't get picked up, you can use the blog post to start your own conversation.

THE MARKETING TRIFECTA – EARNED, OWNED, AND PAID MEDIA

Marketing is full of terms and lingo that may not always be intuitive. Since we are talking about press releases and what would likely generate “earned media”, let’s talk about some of the associated buzzwords and what it means for your marketing strategy. Each part plays an important role and should work together to be most effective.



Earned Media

Earned media is publicity that you haven’t paid for and is created by a third party. Earned media can take the form of local news coverage, an interview on a podcast or even a Facebook post about you by a customer. The valuable part of earned media is that since it isn’t created or paid for by you, it can be viewed as more trusted and less biased.

Owned Media

Owned media is any property you control, like your website, blog, and social media accounts. Earned media can help get people to view your owned media. Vice versa, creating good owned media can also get you more attention and picked up and shared by media outlets.

Paid Media

Paid media is advertising you pay for and control. It’s a way to promote your brand and can be used to drive traffic to your owned media. Facebook, Twitter, or Linked In advertisements are paid media that can help drive people to your website.

5/ Checklist

Get Started!

Promotional Plan Checklist

Task	Deadline	Owner
Write Press Release Draft		
Press Release Final Edits Have at least one co-worker proofread your press release and set a deadline for the review and edits.		
Schedule Press Release		
Write Blog Post		
Schedule Blog Post Optimize your blog post for keyword search well before launch day, add images as needed, and ensure that the post is scheduled to launch at a time that coincides with your media outreach.		
Create Social Promotion Assets Do you need images sized or reformatted for Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn promotion?		
Schedule Social Promotion Time your first post concurrent with your blog entry. Consider additional promotion throughout the day or week.		
Employee Communication Keep employees in the loop so customers that call with questions about the announcement will be provided with knowledgeable responses.		
Customer Communication Send an email that will energize your customers and leads with the benefits of the big announcement -- keeping them in the know will increase social shares, awareness, and engagement.		
Follow Up As appropriate, follow up with any contacts about your announcement and highlight an invitation to visit your facility to learn more.		

Frequently Asked Questions

- What does “Under Embargo” mean and when would I use it?

If you want to share information with a journalist, but would like them to wait until a certain date to publish it, you can put “Embargoed Until xx/xx/20xx” at the top of the press release.

- Can I include photos or a video with my press release?

It depends on your distribution method, but including a your company logo, a high resolution photo, and/or a video with your press release can be helpful.

- Should I use a press release distribution service?

Depending on the story you are trying to promote, it is likely that you do not need to pay a company to distribute your press release. Typically, the cost for these services for a small business will not have a good ROI. Building relationships with your local press and targeting your audience will likely garner a better outcome.

Piece of Cake!

Now you know what it takes to be newsworthy and how to promote your flight school through earned media. If you want to learn more about building your comprehensive marketing plan, check out [The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing for Flight Schools](#) next.

