

White Paper

Inside the Newsroom: What Veteran Journalists Actually Look for in Press Releases in 2026

By Issac Morgan

Executive Summary

Journalists receive dozens — sometimes hundreds — of press releases each week in their inboxes, and that hasn't changed in 2026, as email pitches and announcements continue to pile up.

While general advice on media pitching and capturing journalists' attention is widely available, guidance from those decision-makers in the newsroom is more useful.

To better understand what makes a press release stand out, veteran editors and reporters were interviewed by [EIN Presswire](#) about how they decide whether to open, read, reference, or pursue a story.

Across interviews representing decades of newsroom experience, these journalists provided several common themes:

- Relevance to a newsroom's geographic or subject focus is important
- Researching a news outlet before pitching significantly improves outcomes
- Clear leads, data-driven content, and expert quotes can spark the interest of reporters
- Complete contact information is essential
- Press releases remain valuable when structured to meet newsroom standards

This white paper brings together those findings and outlines practical implications for communicators, businesses, and brands seeking earned media coverage.



The Role of Press Releases in Modern Media

Today's journalists operate in a fast-moving information environment. News arrives through email pitches, wire services, social media, and direct outreach. The volume is constant.

Despite the constant flow of news, the press release remains a core communication tool, according to veteran journalists. It provides structured information and quotable material that reporters can quickly use under tight deadlines.

Typically, press releases are distributed through direct email outreach and commercial distribution platforms.

Most editors and reporters skim press releases quickly to determine whether they are timely, relevant, and credible. Understanding how those decisions are made is critical for anyone seeking media coverage.



Methodology

This white paper is based on interviews with experienced editors and reporters working in:

- Community journalism and newspapers
- State-level political reporting
- Investigative journalism
- Digital-first newsrooms

Collectively, these journalists bring decades of newsroom experience.

Questions included:

- What prompts them to open a press release?
- What causes them to ignore one?
- What information increases the likelihood of coverage?
- What common mistakes do they observe in media outreach?

The findings below reflect recurring patterns identified in the interviews.



Key Findings from Journalist Interviews

Interviews with six veteran journalists revealed clear points of agreement in how press releases are evaluated.

1. Relevance Determines Whether a Press Release Is Considered

Editors consistently identified relevance as the primary filter.

Cheri Martin, a former community newspaper editor at The Gadsden County Times in Florida, said she prioritized press releases that enhanced the paper with a clear local connection. For smaller newsrooms with limited resources, geographic relevance is not optional.

Political reporter Mitch Perry, who works for States Newsroom's Florida Phoenix, similarly emphasized beat alignment. If a news release directly relates to public policy, elections, or his coverage area, it is far more likely to receive attention.

Implication: Communicators should demonstrate geographic or subject-matter relevance immediately, beginning with the subject line and first paragraph.

2. Researching the Outlet Increases Credibility

Editors consistently identified relevance as the primary filter.

Cheri Martin, a former community newspaper editor at The Gadsden County Times in Florida, said she prioritized press releases that enhanced the paper with a clear local connection. For smaller newsrooms with limited resources, geographic relevance is not optional.

Political reporter Mitch Perry, who works for States Newsroom's Florida Phoenix, similarly emphasized beat alignment. If a news release directly relates to public policy, elections, or his coverage area, it is far more likely to receive attention.

Implication: Communicators should demonstrate geographic or subject-matter relevance immediately, beginning with the subject line and first paragraph.

Key Findings from Journalist Interviews

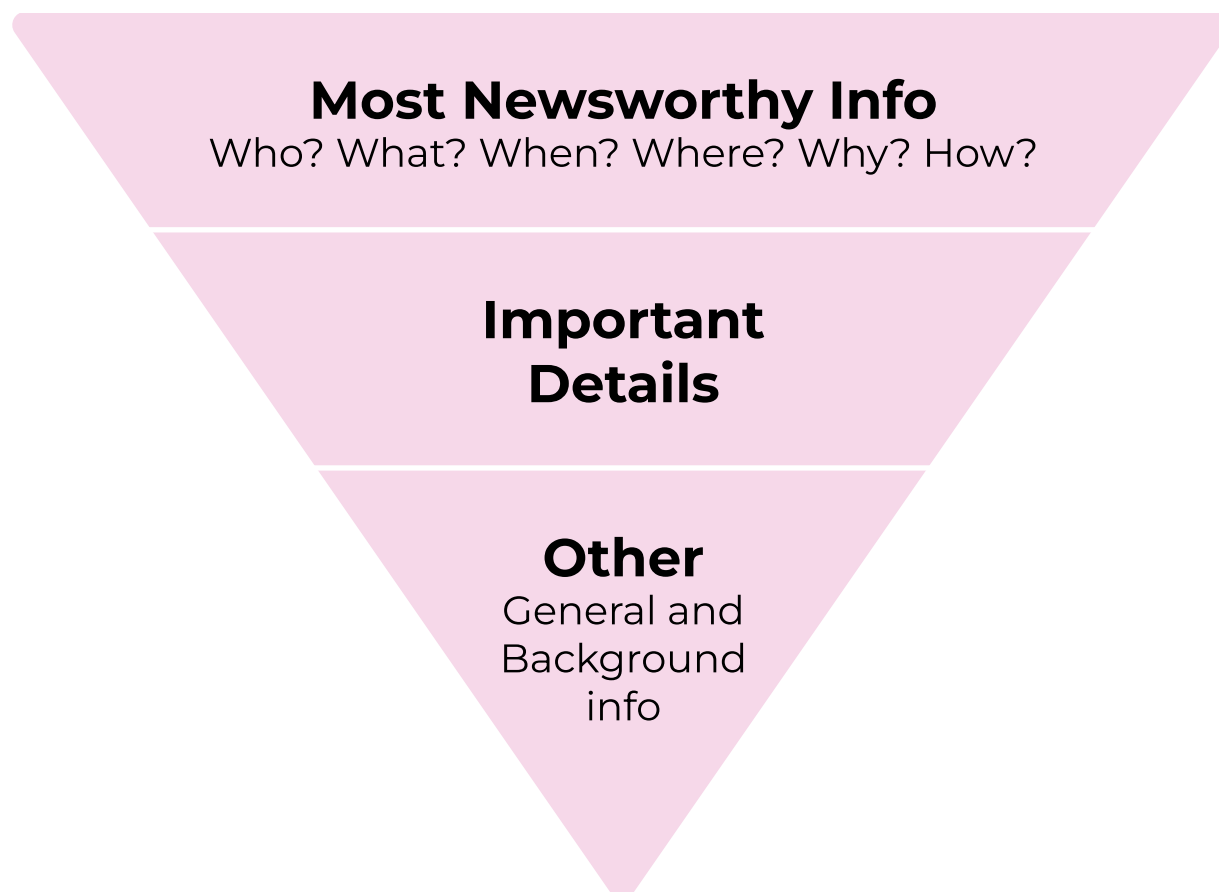
3. Structure, Data, and Credibility Build Trust

Tammy Joyner, whose four-decade career in journalism spans a wide range of publications including The New York Times, stressed that press releases should follow a clear inverted pyramid structure, presenting the essential facts at the top.

She also emphasized verification and differentiation. What makes the information distinct? Why should the audience care?

Laura Cassels, another reporter who works for the Florida Trident, highlighted the value of expert access and credible data, describing strong news releases as offering sufficient evidence that a story may warrant further reporting.

Implication: Clear structure, verified facts, and authoritative quotes increase the probability of coverage.



Key Findings from Journalist Interviews

4. Distribution Alone Does Not Equal Impact

Several journalists cautioned against equating wide distribution with meaningful coverage. Some outlets may publish releases with minimal review, but publication alone does not guarantee relevance or audience engagement.

Reporters emphasized that alignment with their readership remains the deciding factor.

Implication: Placement should be evaluated by relevance and audience fit, not volume alone.

5. Personalization Supports Long-Term Relationships

Wilson noted that exclusivity and tailored pitches can strengthen professional relationships over time.

When journalists feel they are part of a mass distribution list, skepticism increases. Personalized outreach, by contrast, signals intent to build a working relationship.

Implication: Relationship-building remains central to effective media strategy.

6. Complete Contact Information Is Non-Negotiable

John Pacenti, an Emmy-winning investigative journalist who has covered South Florida for more than three decades, said that missing or incomplete contact details immediately raise concerns.

“If I receive a press release that is missing critical information or doesn’t include contact details, I am suspicious,” he said.

Reporters require accessible contacts to verify information and pursue follow-up questions.

Implication: Every release should include a clearly identified contact person with direct, accurate information.



Common Pitfalls That Limit Media Coverage

Weak Press Release	Strong Press Release
Generic mass email	Targeted pitch
Buried lead	Clear top-line info
No data	Verified facts
Missing contact	Full details






Why these mistakes get ignored:

- Journalists don't have time to search for key details
- Irrelevant pitches signal lack of research
- Missing data reduces credibility
- No contact prevents follow-up

If a journalist can't quickly see relevance, clarity, and credibility, the press release is dismissed within seconds.

Applying These Findings to Your Media Strategy

The interviewees revealed that press releases remain relevant in today's media landscape. The effectiveness of news releases, however, depends on alignment with newsroom priorities. Press releases that gain media attention consistently include:

-  **Immediate relevance**
-  **Clear structure**
-  **Verified information**
-  **Strategic targeting**
-  **Transparent contact details**

These fundamentals continue to guide editorial decisions. Communicators and businesses that align their media outreach with these standards are more likely to secure meaningful media coverage.



This white paper was produced by the team at EIN Presswire, powered by Newsmatics. EIN Presswire helps brands publish and distribute press releases that improve visibility across search engines, media outlets, and AI-powered platforms. Learn more at einpresswire.com.

Follow us!



www.einpresswire.com