Press Advisories, Press Releases, Press Statements, Pitch letters
What’s the difference? When should I use which one?

Reading:
Our favorite single reading is “How to write a good press release,” in How to Tell and Sell Your Story, Washington, DC, Center for Community Change, 1997

Review:
Press Advisory (also called a news advisory, news alert or request for coverage)
A brief (1 p) summary of key information about an upcoming event. It is sent out even before a press release and present key information in bullet fashion. It should note any photo or sound opportunities. You can use a basic Who, What, When, Where, Why format.

Press Release
Two to three pages at most, a press release is your chance to pitch the story the way you would like it reported. “A release must look, sound and smell like a news article,” says Peter Sandman, media advisor to many environmental groups [CCC]. The press release should have a headline that grabs its reader and a strong lead. It fills in details beyond the basic information in the press advisory explaining why the event is newsworthy and including quotes from key participants. Sub-heads keep the release interesting. Press release templates are now included in most word processing programs.

Press Statement
A press statement can be used in two ways. At an event, a press statement is a condensed written version of key speakers’ remarks. It makes the reporter’s job easier and ensures that they get the quotes right. It also gives reporters who are interested but couldn’t make the event a chance to cover it using some quotes.

There is a second use for press statements which is valuable for community and labor groups. When your organization has something important to say about a breaking or evolving story, rather than call a press release, you can simply issue a press statement and fax it with a cover letter to the reporters who are covering the story as quickly as possible after the story breaks. This is one of the ways groups become recognized as useful sources -- you’ve saved the reporter the effort of tracking down a quote from your organization.

Pitch Letter
A pitch letter does exactly what the name says. It pitches an idea for a story to an editor or reporter. It flags an issue or problem, explains why the reporters audience would be interested, suggests a possible news angle and offers your group’s input (new program, campaign, hearing).
Nuts and Bolts
There is a constant stream of new manuals teaching communications skills; this list is not definitive but includes some of our favorites.

This list is adapted from “Media: Gaining Higher Visibility in the Public Domain,” The Nonprofit Quarterly, Vol. 6:1, Spring 99. The Nonprofit Quarterly features innovative thinking and experiments in the nonprofit sector. PH: 617-523-6565]

How to tell and sell your story – Parts 1 and 2. Center for Community Change, 1997. 1000 Wisconsin Ave.NW, Washington, DC 20007, 202-342-0567 At $7.00 each (less for bulk orders), this is a best buy - key concepts illustrated with multiple cases.


For information on uses of the internet visit Benton Foundation. www.benton.org.

Making connections and innovations


Domestic Violence; A handbook for journalists, Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. 2000. Documents a highly successful model of media organizing incorporating independent media, watchdog critiques and work inside mainstream media.

The Media Research and Action Project (MRAP) seeks to strengthen communication for social change. We work with under-represented and misrepresented communities to identify, document and challenge barriers to democratic communication; to develop proactive messages and strategies; and to build ongoing communications capacity.
Tel: 617-552-8708 FX: 617-552-4283 EMAIL: ryanc@bc.edu
What should I read to learn more? What should I buy for the office?

A Media Resource List

Introductory List - Organizing:
“There is no communications strategy without an organizing strategy.”

BOOKS/ARTICLES/FILMS
Johnson, Privilege, Power and Difference
Stout, Bridging the Class Divide
Bobo et al, Organizing for Social Change (Midwest Academy)
Staples, Roots to Power
Kahn, Organizing
Fellner, “Square Pegs in Round Holes”

HISTORY/CASES with key lessons
Morris, Origins of the Civil Rights Movement
Clark, Ready from Within (autobiography)
Hamer, This little light of mine (autobiography)
Eyes on the Prize (PBS series)

ORGANIZATIONS/WEBSITES
There are a number of organizations in the country offering organizing theory or and tools.

Grassroots Policy Project, Washington DC
www.grassrootspolicy.org
This website offers excellent materials on strategy as well as a resource list including organizing bibliographies, organizations, etc.

www.nonprofitquarterly.org The Non-Profit Quarterly is published by Third Sector New England and provides useful tools for non-profits (fund-raising, boards, etc).