

A press release is really just a last resort

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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Far too many PR people these days still believe that press releases are mainly what media relations are all about. They are wrong. Very wrong.

A press release has its place. At the back of the strategic queue. As a last resort. When there is really no other way.

My belief is that media relations is, as the name suggests, all about relationships. It's the same in any business. Being able to talk directly to a client is so much better than anything else. And being able to create a relationship with a customer is the ultimate goal. Because people do not like doing business with strangers. But, they love doing business with people they know.

In my journalism days, I didn't give much time or thought to those PR people who kept sending me press releases. I didn't know them. I didn't really have time to care about them. They were strangers. And like any human being, a distrusted stranger.

But, those who made the effort to meet with me and develop a mutually beneficial and professional relationship, were the PR people who got the most out of me for their clients.

When I was on the corporate side of things with BMW SA., I actually told my PR staff never ever to send out press releases. They did what I did and got to know the motoring and financial journalists. Got to know them well. And it paid huge dividends.

Yes, we did send stuff to them that could be construed as "press releases", but the big difference being they were only sent to journalists who *actually asked* to be kept informed.

Of course, I commiserate with those PR people whose clients insist they put out press releases which usually have to mention the company product or service heaven knows how many times and which quote the client ad infinitum. Probably because he or she just loves the idea of maybe seeing their names in print.

When it comes down to brass tacks, there is a place for the press release. But, its not the magic elixir that it is plumped up to be. It is and always will be a media relations accessory and never ever the main vehicle.

When I do presentations to clients on the role of PR and particularly how to develop media relations, it is always such a pleasure to see light bulbs going on over heads that for so long were stuck in the sand.

It is not rocket science. In fact, it isn't any sort of science. It is just the profitable use of human nature.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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