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The Business Communications Report

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Exclusive interview

Writing skills remain important in PR

Getting your press releases and pitches read requires good writing and good storytelling.

Despite the changes wrought by technology, press releases and pitches remain the nuts and bolts of public relations, says Jon Pushkin, president of the Denver chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

He also contends the skills you need to write releases and pitches carry over into articles, brochures and other materials. Good grammar and syntax should be—yet aren't—a given, but they don't guarantee success.

Many press releases fail because they aren't interesting. Bad press releases begin with boring material, don't tell a story and don't say how the information affects readers.

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Pushkin cites an online release for a spinal surgeon in which the opening paragraph says he's "renowned" and "a pre-eminent expert." Few reporters would scroll through the vanity statements to

Sites to See

■ **LibrarySpot hits the spot**

You can find references galore and numerous specialized libraries at www.libraryspot.com. Bookmark it.

Its Reference Desk page includes acronyms, almanacs, business, calculators, current events, dictionaries, grammar/style, how to, public records, quotations and zip codes.

The grammar section of the grammar/style link takes you to books on English usage, a professor's FAQs on English grammar, writing tutorials from the University of Calgary and an editing checklist. The style section includes access to The Chicago Manual of Style, The Elements of Style and online citation guides.

Another page, the Reading Room, includes links to journals, newspapers, newswires, poetry and speeches.

LibrarySpot also provides links to numerous libraries, including such specialized ones as medicine, law and film; public, state, presidential and academic libraries; and national libraries of approximately 40 countries. The home pages of other countries' libraries come up in English, but if you visit Turkey's national library, for example, you have the option of the Turkish version.

The site contains much more, including links to six spin-offs: BookSpot, GenealogySpot, GovSpot, HeadlineSpot, HomeworkSpot and MuseumSpot.

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- 7 *Persuasive Business Proposals: Writing to Win More Customers, Clients, and Contracts, second edition*

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the news.

If the release had started by saying an important new technique will help people with back pain, reporters would read on.

PR staff may send out releases like the example to please their clients rather than to accomplish strategic goals. Some, overwhelmed with work, don't take the time to be creative, to find the story that piece needs and to write with emotion about it.

To find the crucial elements, and to help him get started, Pushkin writes the headline first. It must

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