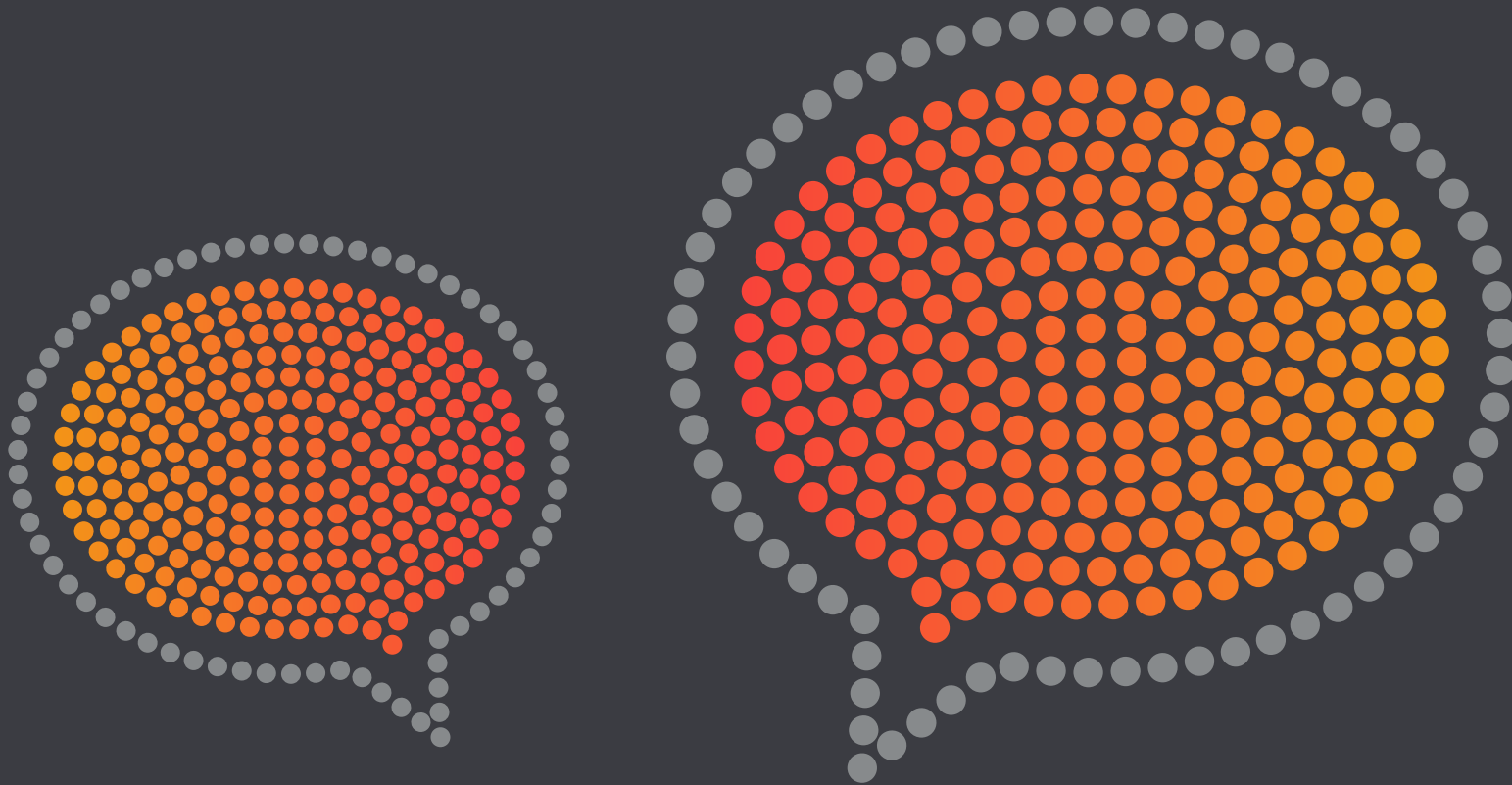


# Guide to creating a great news story



- Will my product make a good news story?
- How can I identify a good ILM case study?
- The 'so what?' factor: 10 ways to make your story more attractive to journalists

## Will my product make a good news story?

Journalists are not interested in providing free advertising for your product, qualification or service. Instead they are interested in unearthing inspiring stories or unusual facts which will inspire their readership.

There are no set criteria for what makes a good story, however it is worth considering the following before sending out a press release:

- Can the news be told simply and quickly?
- Is the news recent?
- Is it relevant to a lot of people?
- Does it involve 'human interest'?
- Will it be interesting to the people who usually read the paper?
- Would you be interested in reading it yourself?
- Is it dramatic, bizarre, amusing or quirky?
- Do you have good pictures available?

Any press release you put out should be easy for the audience to relate to or have a human interest angle that an audience can identify with.



## How can I identify a good ILM case study?

Whether you want to promote an achievement of your centre or launch a new service, a case study will help to enhance your the news story. Having a real life success story to hand will increase your chances of the news being picked up and getting interviews on TV or radio.

Here are a few questions you might want to ask yourself, to identify good media case study candidates:

- Do they work in an interesting or unusual field?
- How/why does their management style reflect ILM's leadership model of 'knowing, doing, being'?
- Do they have something special that sets them apart from people or businesses in the same field?
- Did they become a manager early or late in their career?
- Do they break a stereotype? (i.e. a woman working in a typically male industry)
- What inspires them in terms of their leadership style?
- Did they become a manager after making a dramatic career change?
- What obstacles have they overcome to get to where they are today?
- What factors influenced their decision to take an LM qualification/involve ILM in their business?
- Have they seen any tangible benefits to their business as a result of their training/qualification? How do they measure this?
- Will they tell their story in an engaging way in the press or on the ILM website?

## **The ‘so what?’ factor: 10 ways to make your story more attractive to journalists**

You'll need to justify to any journalist or reporter why they should cover your story. From news editors to features writers, they will want to know the reason why they should cover your story in their particular section or that month's issue of their magazine.

Here are some top tips for making your story more attractive:

### **1) Make sure your story really is of interest to others**

Is this a story you would want to read yourself? Where possible think about the human interest angle - how many people does this issue affect and how? It is something that is making people's lives better or worse and how? People care more about issues that they have some kind of direct experience of.

### **2) Do your research**

The best way to begin finding a story hook is to find out everything you can about the media outlet you are pitching to. A journalist can tell that you have done your research and if you are familiar with their publication/programme, they are more likely to take you seriously:

- Familiarise yourself with the various sections of newspapers/ magazines you are interested in and know who writes for them
- Try to listen and watch radio and television programmes (if you don't have time investigate their descriptions online, most media outlets have a website) so that you get to know which slots feature certain topics (ie a drivetime show may have a different feel from that of the breakfast show)

### **3) News should be new**

Tell journalists something they haven't heard before. Lots of stories are discarded because someone in the newsroom asks, "Don't we already know that?" or, "Didn't we already cover that last week?"

### **4) Piggyback on someone else's story**

Think about whether you can hook into the news agenda and make a connection between your story and something else that's making the headlines, or a relevant topical issue. Also, if you spot a clever story idea which someone else has used, borrow the idea and make it your own:

- Can you offer a new angle on a management issue that's being debated in the news pages?
- Have you got a story / case study / spokesperson to contribute that will add to that week's topic of discussion?

### **5) Hooking into breaking news**

Most stories won't last in the news pages for more than a couple of the days, so if a story breaks in the morning get on the phone to offer a reporter or journalist a new angle on the story.

Local press always loves anyone who can offer a local angle on a national story. Offering local case studies on a national story will make you particularly popular with your regional media.

### **6) TV crews need something to film**

This may sound obvious, but TV news channels will only take stories that have an interesting visual element. It is also vital to have available case studies and spokespeople.

### **7) Think about your 'launch' carefully**

Launching a new initiative or research report with an event can sometimes be an effective way of getting coverage. However before you start making arrangements, bear in mind that journalists are increasingly reluctant to leave their computers and come to press launches, press conferences or media events. If you are running an event, make sure that you can offer journalists something special they couldn't get elsewhere, such as an exclusive interview or access to brand new statistics.

### **8) Plan well in advance**

The earlier a story is offered the better; it gives journalists a better chance to produce a balanced report (you can send things out under 'embargo' to give the journalist the information ahead of the date you want it released). Think about offering exclusives – things become more attractive if a journalist knows they've been offered something before other outlets; it's not great for a local TV news channel to be seen to be duplicating material that's been running all day on various different stations.

### **9) Choose a good time to call**

If you are offering an idea to a newspaper/magazine, make sure you find out when they go to print and avoid calling at that time. For instance if your weekly local paper comes out on a Friday, try not to call on a Thursday afternoon. The best time to call is on Friday, when journalists are in the early stages of planning next week's edition.

If you aren't sure when to pitch to a journalist on a daily paper, the best window of opportunity is between 10 and 11 in the morning. Avoid calling late in the afternoon – this is when panic buttons are being pressed to fill any remaining gaps. Unless you have a front page exclusive to offer, avoid it.

### **10) Identify a spokesperson**

Make sure you identify a spokesperson for your initiative/organisation and ensure that interviewees are briefed and available if required. It can be extremely frustrating for journalists if you offer a good story but have no one suitable available for interview.