



Making Headlines Shine (and Getting Your Story Read!)

Headlines need to excite, entice and entertain. Studies show the best grab a reader's attention in a short amount of space and lure him or her into a story. They create evocative thoughts and images. They don't go on forever like an abstract for a research paper (you can't bore people into reading your story!). Think of each as the short teaser the TV anchorman or radio newswoman uses to keep you around through the commercial breaks. Here are some quick tips for writing better headlines.

- 1. Study the media you are trying to reach! How would they write the headline?**
- 2. Think about your target audiences and what's important to them**
- 3. What's the news (breaking, feature, opinion)?**
- 4. Get creative. How are you going to stand out from the crowd?**
- 5. What general approach to take (fact-based, humorous, the ever-present pun, positioning and visionary, provocative, diplomatic)?**
- 6. What are the most important facts and impressions you want to leave with your audiences?**
- 7. Be a stickler for style**
- 8. Use this check list to walk through the creative and writing process:**
 - *Brainstorm on key words and tags to use for search engine optimization and easy on-line searching*
 - *Use a two-line headline and two-line subheadline wherever possible to make it easy for the reader and search engines to put it into context*
 - *Have the client name in the first line wherever possible*
 - *Use active verbs*
 - *Have complete thoughts on each line*
 - *Have logical line breaks and balanced lines as best possible*
 - *Be smart about punctuation (including commas, semicolons and dashes)*
 - *Use the "So What, Who Cares?" test to see if you've got it right*
 - *Write straightforward headlines or use good word play to make your point; avoid blind, trick headlines that send readers scanning elsewhere*
 - *Read the headline and subheadline aloud and see if it flows*
 - *Edit, edit, edit!*

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