Fact sheet: Press invitation

What are the possible reasons for issuing a press invitation?

You don’t have to wait until you have something spectacular to announce in order to invite journalists into your business. You only require a pioneering market innovation or a message eagerly awaited by the public at large if you want to run a full-blown press event, such as a press conference. In practice, there is seldom a suitable hook for such an event. Nevertheless, even for smaller companies of the green sector, there are many reasons for inviting the (local) press into one’s operation. The following events can provide considerable motivation for journalists to pay a visit:

- Customer events – for example:
  - An open day
  - An Advent display
  - A Summer festival
  - Professionally managed workshops with seasonal hooks (e.g. bouquets on Valentine’s Day, table arrangements at Easter, Advent wreaths at Christmas)
  - The inauguration of a new greenhouse
  - The installation of new technologies in your greenhouses
  - The opening of new retail areas
  - The start of poinsettia production in August
  - The start of the poinsettia season (greenhouses full of blooming poinsettias)
  - Etc.

When it comes to customer events it is true to say that the more interesting the programme and the visitors, the more likely it is that a press representative will accept your invitation. (Local) celebrities are always a big draw for the press. However, the most interesting programme and the most prominent of visitors will not guarantee that the media will acknowledge your event. You must remember that editors receive a large number of invitations every day, and they cannot consider all of them. However, that should not deter you from trying your luck and sending a press invitation. It is important to remember that good personal contact increases the likelihood that an invited journalist will actually come. As such, the better you maintain your press contacts, the more successful your press work is likely to be.

What must be taken into account when writing your press invitation?

Whether or not the press will accept your invitation doesn’t just depend on the relevance of the event; it also depends on the level of professionalism of your invitation. The following basic rules must be observed:

- Keep it short – a press invitation should be a maximum of one sheet of A4
- Select an easily legible font, and ensure an appropriate formatting (1.5 line spacing; paragraphs; generous page margins of at least 5 centimetres)
What should be taken into account when sending a press invitation?

A press invitation to the local media should be sent some 7-10 days prior to the event. Use the opportunity to manage your press relations by picking up the phone to invite journalists in person in advance. Then send the written invitation afterwards (unless the journalist has already rejected you over the phone).

It is best to send a press invitation by email. You should state clearly in the subject line of your email that it is a press invitation. The email itself should be a short, friendly letter, which ideally should be addressed to the responsible editor personally. The actual press invitation is then included in an attachment (PDF format).

A short paragraph is suitable for the email letter, as in the following example:

*Dear Mr. Mustermann,*
*Please find attached a personal invitation from Company X to the event XYZ on 4th August.*
*Yours sincerely,*
*Max Mustermann*
*CEO of XXX*
*Address*
*Telephone extension*
NB:

With non-personal collective mails, you must make absolutely sure that the recipients don't see which other addresses the email was sent to. You should therefore only write your own email address in the recipient line, and all other recipient addresses in the BCC line.

Moreover, you should refrain from asking for a written response wherever possible. For one thing, this means additional work for the journalists. For another, the planning of off-site appointments in editorial offices is mostly done at short notice; experience suggests that journalists are not fond of committing to anything several days in advance. It is only legitimate to ask for confirmation of attendance over the phone if extraordinary organisational reasons require that you know the number and names of the participants in advance.

What should be taken into consideration during the event?

Appoint a given person who is responsible for handling the press during the event. This person acts as the public representative of your company, and as such should be able to answer all expected questions in a competent manner. Treat press representatives as VIPs. Give them a friendly welcome, offer them something to drink and try to satisfy as many of the journalists’ requests as possible.

And if the press doesn’t show up?

Don’t be disappointed if the press doesn’t accept your invitation. This is definitely not uncommon, and it doesn’t mean that you have done anything wrong. In such a case, immediately after the event just send a short press release with an attractive photo to the media sources that were invited.