

THE SEVEN DEADLY PRESS RELEASE SINNERS OF OUR TIME

*Transforming conventional press releases
into compelling content*

By Chris Hewitt, CEO at Berkeley

How to make boring, interesting.

Take a look at any 'news' page on a corporate website and the same old stories appear time after time.

- 1 The boring product launch press release. Sorry, but it is
- 2 The dreaded 'strategic partnership' announcement
- 3 The appointment of a new cmo. As if anyone cares
- 4 The annual customer/channel event. Yawn
- 5 The perennial customer win story. Not again
- 6 The 'raising investment' brag
- 7 The new office opening. Oh please, stop

If you must do these things, how can you apply some serious storytelling to give your brand a lift?

Take a look at our guide to making the boring sound interesting.



THE BORING PRODUCT LAUNCH PRESS RELEASE

The business thinks: Our new product announcement is really important. Everyone will be interested in hearing about our latest invention.

The journalist thinks: No it isn't. We don't cover product launches.

THE BETTER WAY

Every invention ever created was designed to solve a problem. So focus on the problem the product solves. Tease out the tension and make a drama out of it. It is not enough to say that your product 'boosts operational efficiency and reduces costs'. Better to say that many organisations are wasting money and something needs to be done about it.



THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PRESS RELEASE

The business thinks: We have just signed a new alliance partner and the board are keen to see lots of coverage.

The journalist thinks: I don't care and nor do my readers. Go away.

THE BETTER WAY

What's the back story? Why is the partnership important? What is the problem the businesses have come together to solve? A bit of plain speaking honesty goes a long way here. Amplify the human element and talk more about the impact the partnership will make on people than the partnership itself.

THE EXEC APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CMO OR WORSE THE 'INTERNAL PROMOTION' PRESS RELEASE

The business thinks: We have appointed a new CMO. We must raise their visibility fast.

The journalist thinks: That's not my problem.

THE BETTER WAY

Don't say this new person is 'strengthening the leadership team to drive the next wave of growth at the company and that the chairperson is delighted to welcome them on board'. A short factual statement for the appointment pages is enough.

A fuller executive profiling campaign could be suggested and that will entail an in-depth interview and some insights about the person – maybe about how they overcame adversity against all odds. Or perhaps something about them that is unusual or a fascinating anecdote about their past when they were a circus performer.



THE ANNUAL CUSTOMER EVENT PRESS RELEASE

The business thinks: This is a very important event and we need bums-on-seats.

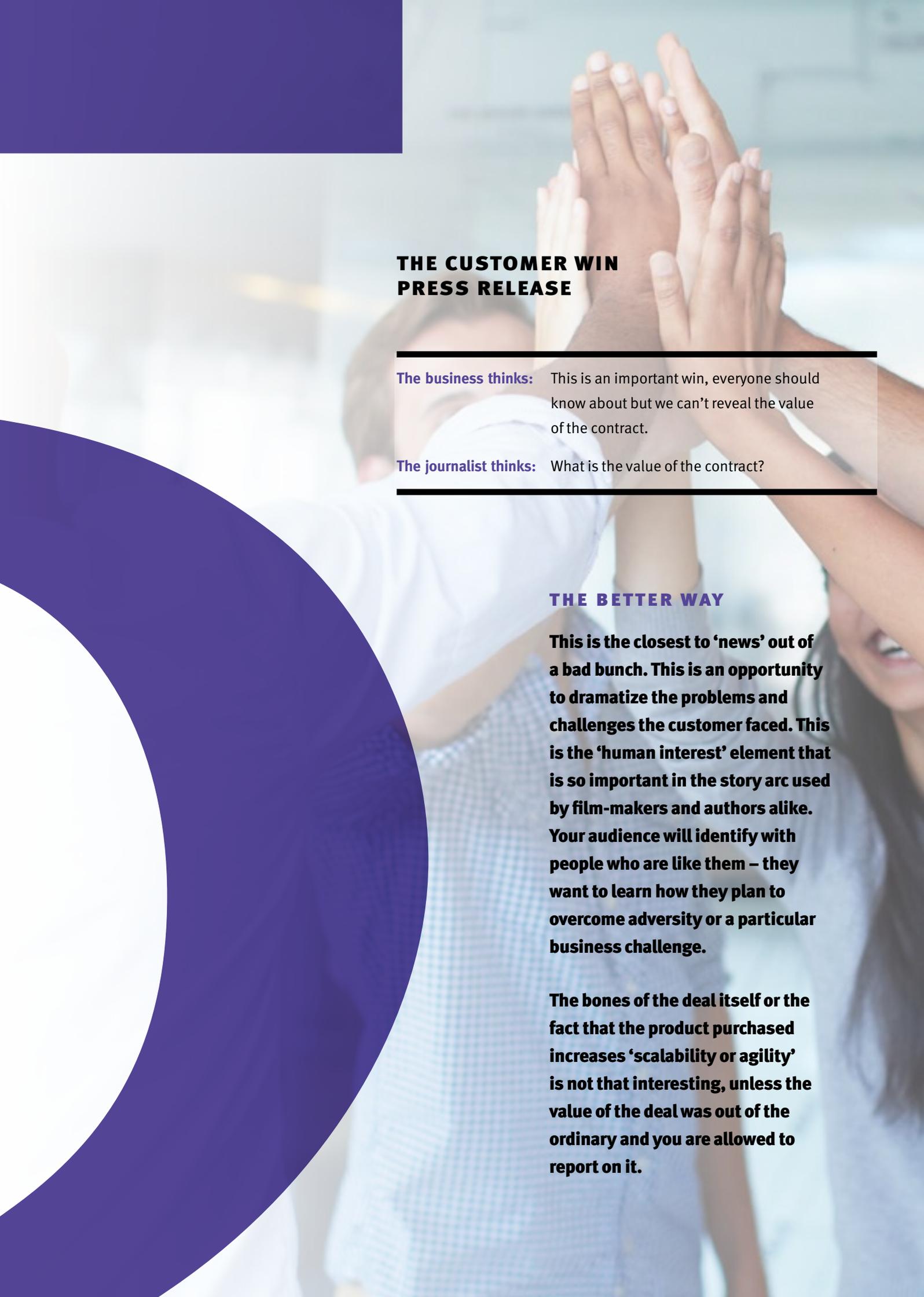
The journalist thinks: You need to talk to our advertising team.

THE BETTER WAY

The story here is not about the event itself but its content. The conference theme, such as ‘realising potential’ is not newsworthy either. Keep the internal ‘buzzwords’ and event logistics to a sentence at the end. It’s not uncommon to see long headlines in these sort of press releases as PRs try to appease internal stakeholders. It makes the release totally unreadable to a journalist.

Instead focus on the human interest elements of your key speaker(s) and their content. Perhaps your speaker will be calling for a particular change in the industry. The release could focus on this and why it’s important.





THE CUSTOMER WIN PRESS RELEASE

The business thinks: This is an important win, everyone should know about but we can't reveal the value of the contract.

The journalist thinks: What is the value of the contract?

THE BETTER WAY

This is the closest to 'news' out of a bad bunch. This is an opportunity to dramatize the problems and challenges the customer faced. This is the 'human interest' element that is so important in the story arc used by film-makers and authors alike. Your audience will identify with people who are like them – they want to learn how they plan to overcome adversity or a particular business challenge.

The bones of the deal itself or the fact that the product purchased increases 'scalability or agility' is not that interesting, unless the value of the deal was out of the ordinary and you are allowed to report on it.

THE RAISING INVESTMENTS PRESS RELEASE

The business thinks: We have a very significant injection of funds to the business – our industry needs to know, but not how much.

The journalist thinks: How much?

THE BETTER WAY

Whether it's investment in a new internal initiative or financial investment from a third party, this will mainly be of interest to investors. To stand a chance of media coverage, think plot. If the investment or new initiative accelerates expansion into new markets, sectors or territories, create a story specific to those markets. Perhaps there is a bad news angle; a weakness in that market that the product addresses.

If the investment or initiative will 'rapidly enhance product capabilities' or ramp up operation, could this translate into plain English as a story talking about why there is demand for such products in the first place?



THE OPENING A NEW OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

Oh please. (don't even bother)

AND FINALLY

Become the antithesis of the self-congratulating press release. The best stories aren't the ones that directly flatter a client, but the ones that inspire an audience and the media that serves them.

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