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BLOGPOST: Building and cultivating a successful press distribution list



Providing the right people at the right time with [relevant press distribution lists](#) is a prerequisite for successful PR and press relations. Well-structured, continuously maintained press distribution lists are thus an essential tool of the trade. The article below explains how PR managers can build up high-quality press distribution lists, incorporating the right media and journalist contacts, and how to work successfully with them.

Contents

- [What is a press distribution list?](#)
- [Why do you need a press distribution list?](#)
- [How to guide: How to build a good press distribution list](#)
- [Maintaining and updating a press distribution list](#)
- [How news aktuell can help you build and maintain press distribution lists](#)

What is a press distribution list?

A press distribution list is a central instrument in PR and press relations. It is used to distribute press releases and other content formats. A press distribution list is sometimes called a media distribution list, PR distribution list, media list, press list or journalist list. Hence it is a list of contacts, enriched with relevant data on them. But a well-maintained press distribution list includes not only journalists, but also contacts to bloggers, influencers, podcast hosts and other multipliers.

You can manually set up and keep your own press distribution list as an Excel list, your own database or a CRM system. Or you can turn to a professional online journalist database offered by [PR service providers like news aktuell](#).

Why do you need a press distribution list?

Press distribution lists lie at the heart of public relations and have become a fundamental pillar of press relations. With professional communication and press relations thriving on the contacts from them. A press distribution list lets you capture important industry contacts and keep a record of your communications with them. A thoroughly compiled press distribution list lays the foundation for building and maintaining personal and long-term relationships with journalists and the media.

Media, blogs, podcasts and other earned media channels are a crucial building block in the PESO mix to increase reach and visibility among the public. This all makes a targeted press distribution list essential for getting through to the media contacts most relevant to your PR messages. Because even the most [professionally written press release](#) is of no use if you send it to journalists with no interest at all in your topics, or your message never arrives because your contact details are out of date.

How To Guide: How to build a good press distribution list

Define your target group

When you are creating a press distribution list, the first step is to clarify your target group. What makes target groups special in press relations: is that there are always at least two of them. While media creators are the primary target group, the other is the

readers of the media you ultimately want to reach. In practice, the latter target group is too often neglected, yet essential if you are looking to minimise media wastage.

The more precisely you define your own target groups, the more likely your communications are going to be accepted. Target groups can be laypeople or those quite interested in the subject (B2C, B2B), or they can be customers, politicians, competitors, neighbours or even your employees. Only certain sectors may have an interest in your topic or it may be of cross-sector concern. Likewise, it may be relevant only locally, or it could be something that strikes a beat nationally or even internationally.

Once you have narrowed down your target groups, the next step is to consider the target media, journalists and other multipliers for your topic. Depending on the target group you have defined, these can be general or special interest media and media contacts, representatives from the online, print, radio or TV sector and those with a regional or national focus.

Example: You are a medium-sized company based in a rural region that manufactures drilling machines for both end consumers and the construction industry. Now you are organising an open day. While the target groups are going to be the local population, both younger and older people, you are also focusing on the regional building trade. Use your press distribution list here to communicate to your contacts from local newspaper editorial offices (both print and online), local radio stations, possibly local TV studios and advertising journals, regional construction industry trade media, the local Chamber of Industry and Commerce and other business publications, and possibly also target freelance media representatives reporting locally on business and local interest stories.

Media and journalist research

You can carry out your own research or use professional media databases to find the right media contacts and journalists. No matter which path you decide to take: you should definitely be aware of the media landscape relevant to you. But gaining such knowledge takes time, effort and is always going to be a work in progress. And it includes keeping up to date on a regular basis with the topics and trends that affect your sector. Learn about newsletters from your major media outlets, monitor your competition's communication and regularly read your key media.

Starting your own research off at a well-stocked newsagent is always worth it. Familiarise yourself with your media and get a feel for its thematic focus and tone. It is also a good idea to research the media to find out which journalists are reporting on which topics. A look at the imprint also provides information on the department and topic responsibilities. A comprehensive source for research on specialist publications is fachzeitungen.de.

The media and association websites in your industry are another critical research resource, and often provide directories to guide you to the most important key media. A direct line to editorial offices is another effective way to find relevant press distribution contacts for your topics: Telephone or email to ask briefly which editors cover them.

When you are selecting media and contacts for your press distribution list, follow the principle of quality over quantity. Even if it seems quicker at first glance, a shotgun approach often proves counterproductive because, instead of reaching the right journalist, you get on the nerves of quite a few editorial offices. Professional media databases like [zimpel](http://zimpel.com) can do a lot of the work here, saving you time, because they can quickly and easily provide you with the contacts you are looking for and their data are always automatically updated. Learn about the specific advantages zimpel offers in Chapter 5.

Press distribution list structure and content

Once you have found the right media and contacts for your press distribution list, they should be well structured and enriched with meaningful information. Because this is the only way they can be used flexibly and become the base for a sustainable relationship with media professionals.

Tip: The more finely structured the press distribution list is, the more you can filter the relevant media contacts to fit your target.

Your press distribution list should contain at least the following information:

Medium:

- Media titles
- Media type (daily newspaper, consumer magazine, trade journal, news agency, radio, TV, online, podcast, blog)
- Websites

Contact person:

- First name
- Last name
- Salutation
- Position
- Department
- Postal address (Street, postcode, city)
- Telephone
- Email

Additional information on the medium and contact allows more flexible use of the press distribution list and enables it to be handled more efficiently. For example, the following information can be filled in:

Medium:

- Editor/publisher
- Medium target group
- Circulation/visits
- Publication frequency
- Editorial deadline
- Local/regional/supra-regional
- Language
- Thematic focus
- Publications

Contact person:

- Prioritisation according to A/B/C level contacts
- Social media accounts
- Topic responsibilities
- Personal interests
- Contact history (date/text field)

5 tips for building up a distribution list

1. **Define key media and key contacts:** Break your contacts down by importance to your PR and press relations, prioritising them, e.g. according to your Level A, B and C contacts. Look over your contact history to record when and on what occasion you turned to your top contacts. Check your weightings regularly as prioritisations can also shift. Doing so lets you add new A-contacts and relegate existing contacts that might be becoming less important to your PR. In principle, however, you should be treating all of your key media and editors equally, as permanently giving preferential treatment spoils relationships with other media and editors.
2. **Recognise individual requirements for the address:** It is perfectly legitimate for your press distribution list to have several people from one medium and for you to be writing to them. But please not all your contacts! So think carefully ahead of time about the most appropriate contacts for each press release. Sometimes a listed medium can have several editors. And there are also occasions where editors explicitly ask you to send your press release to a central email address for them to redistribute internally. Comply with the request and remove personal emails from your distribution list accordingly.
3. **Don't forget freelance journalists:** Freelance media professionals should also be on just about every thoughtfully researched press mailing list. Freelancers in particular are usually quite receptive to suggestions for topics as they have to regularly offer them for their contributions to editors. Furthermore, many publications now work mainly with freelance journalists who often have a great deal of expert knowledge themselves in their subjects.
4. **Set up a contact history to manage your long-term relationships:** Keep a record of every contact you make with your distributors so that you know over time who you discussed what with, who you met in person, who received what press release or other PR content from you, which media outlets had publications and what the tone was. A well-maintained contact history enables you to measure what you have done and build a lasting relationship with your contacts.
5. **Take 'quality before quantity' seriously:** You should be meticulously checking, and not just in these times of the GDPR, whether your topic is really going to interest each of your distribution contacts. 'Quality before quantity' should be your rule of thumb. Better to research your contacts again and actively ask them if you are not sure. When in doubt, delete the contact from the distribution list. With a high-quality list, less is always more! In addition, your press release should absolutely follow the [rules of journalistic news](#). Media professionals cannot and do not want promotional content. Finally, always offer an opt-out to whoever is receiving your press releases.

Maintaining and updating a press distribution list

Considering both high staff turnover and the many changes that have swept the media landscape, an up-to-date press distribution list today can already be out-of-date and worthless tomorrow. Editors switch thematic responsibilities, leave the editorial team, and others join. Publishers start up new magazines or sites, or discontinue existing media. New formats for press relations and multipliers are added such as podcasts and influencers, while others lose relevance. Previously independent editorial offices merge into a single organisation and vice versa. Accordingly, contact data like emails and postal addresses are constantly changing. Distribution networks operate similarly to living organisms: They grow, shrink and constantly change. In short, they are always in flux.

For a press distribution list to be effective, it has to be constantly maintained and kept up-to-date. It is recommended each time after a press release has been sent out to look over the feedback you get. It may mention new contacts responsible for your topics or you contact the editorial team and actively ask who should be receiving your PR content in future. This also brings up a good opportunity and introduces a strong reason for getting in touch with the editorial team in order to cultivate your relationships with the various media houses.

Take the necessary time to maintain and update your press distribution list, because it is an important investment in your company's or agency's future press relations. What you do and knowledge that comes out of it should be transparently recorded for everybody on the distribution as even your own department will have regular staff changes.

Tip: Work with so-called 'black lists': Blacklist journalists who no longer wish to receive press releases from you and block them from receiving any future releases. In contrast to permanently deleting a distribution contact, you can use the blacklist to retroactively track anybody that no longer receives anything from you and why.

How news aktuell can help you build and maintain press distribution lists

Creating high-quality press distribution lists takes a lot of time. It's not a one-time job, but something that has to be carried out on an ongoing basis. That is why it makes sense to use professional journalist databases. As a reliable service provider in the communications sector, news aktuell's media database and its zimpel public relations software supports all communication professionals as they build up a targeted press distribution list. And it's quick and uncomplicated!

Targeted research, straightforward administration and fast dispatch

Differentiated search options help you create an individual research profile. With just a few clicks you can find your media target group and the relevant contacts for exactly your topics.

zimpel's media database contains more than 612,000 data records from all media types, sectors and regions. Whether Tegernsee, Thuringia, Germany, Europe or Latin America, whether by sector such as construction, beverages, fashion or cosmetics, whether B2B or B2C, or print, online audio or moving images: you can find relevant media formats in zimpel and also journalists, bloggers, podcasters and influencers interested in your topics.

zimpel not only has essential contact details for the medium you desire, but also includes other valuable information such as detailed media profiles, topics and information on publication frequency, reach, circulation and distribution. It also provides detailed information on contacts, their personal contact details and the main topics they cover. Of course, you can add your own data anytime to the contacts and add your own personal contacts to the database.

Your search results can be fashioned to easily create tailor-made distribution lists. With the integrated mailing tool, you can distribute your press releases in just a few steps. You can also use the HTML editor to adapt your mailing layout individually to your corporate identity. You also have a range of other mailing features at your disposal, such as linking, file uploads, CTA buttons, individualised addressing, dispatch planning and mailing history. Major indicators such as delivery and opening rates enable you to evaluate your distributed press releases in a targeted manner. You also have the option of exporting your distribution lists in all common formats and processing them further with your own mailing tools.

Professionally manage your press distribution list with up-to-date, authorised data

Because zimpel's research team is continually checking all relevant publications and qualifying them, they save you much of the work involved in maintaining a distribution list. The distribution lists, once created in zimpel, are therefore always up to date. In addition, media data are always verified and qualified through personal coordination with editorial offices. This means that all data is not only up-to-date, but also approved by the media. This ensures that the PR information is both targeted and 'welcome'.

Advantages of zimpel at a glance:

- Easy contact research and creation of distribution lists
- Mailing tool that saves time and includes a dispatch protocol
- High-quality media and journalist contacts
- Optional integration of private contacts
- Over 612,000 data sets
- Data automatically updated daily
- All data checked and verified to GDPR standards
- Free support

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