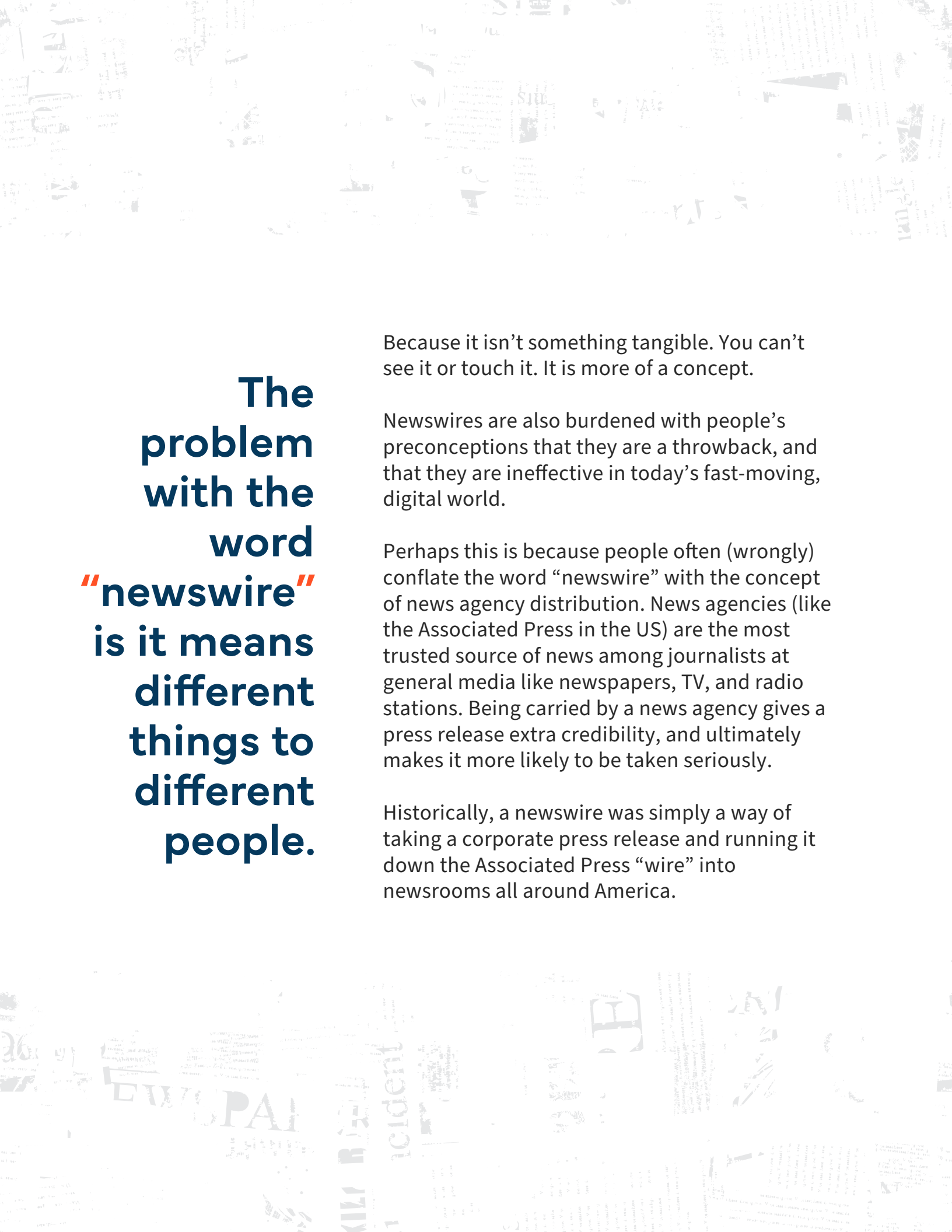


# Newsires 101

*Everything you've ever wanted to know*

The background of the entire page is a faded, high-contrast collage of newspaper clippings. Visible words and phrases include "Site", "r. J.", "lan", "le", "EUROPA", "Accident", "KILL", "R", "171", and "Incident".

# **The problem with the word “newswire” is it means different things to different people.**

Because it isn't something tangible. You can't see it or touch it. It is more of a concept.

Newswires are also burdened with people's preconceptions that they are a throwback, and that they are ineffective in today's fast-moving, digital world.

Perhaps this is because people often (wrongly) conflate the word “newswire” with the concept of news agency distribution. News agencies (like the Associated Press in the US) are the most trusted source of news among journalists at general media like newspapers, TV, and radio stations. Being carried by a news agency gives a press release extra credibility, and ultimately makes it more likely to be taken seriously.

Historically, a newswire was simply a way of taking a corporate press release and running it down the Associated Press “wire” into newsrooms all around America.



## But today's newswires do much more than that.

They can do things no other PR activity can achieve. They simultaneously help you reach, not just the media, but consumers, potential investors, and industry peers. They help promote your brand in new markets and in multiple languages.

Alongside the “wire” distribution via news agencies like AP, newswires publish press releases online in prominent places like websites, equity terminals, and social media platforms, ensuring your verbatim content reaches public as well as media audiences.

At their core, newswires are about seamless and simultaneous delivery of press releases to as many people as possible in:

- General media outlets
- Trade media outlets
- The general public
- The financial community

Put simply, newswires are your best chance of reaching audiences who don't know who you are yet.

If you're not sure how to make the best use of newswires, continue reading to discover everything you've ever wanted to know!

## WHAT EVEN IS A NEWSWIRE?

As we have seen, newswires are difficult to define, so let's appease our inner word nerd and get a baseline definition from our friends over at [Merriam-Webster](#):

# newswire

/ˈnoʊzˌwi(ə)r/ *noun*

*Newswires (aka wire services, news agencies, “the wire”): A news agency that sends out syndicated news copy to subscribers by wire or by satellite transmission.*

And what is “syndicated news copy” you ask? It’s essentially a fancy way of saying that lots of different news outlets and journalists have access and the rights to use the same content originally published somewhere/by someone else. Where confusion often lies is in the fact that there are essentially two types of newswire services. Both originate from the same place and have a similar function (of widely distributing news), but they focus on different material, and one has far more relevance for PR practitioners than the other. Since the same language is often used to refer to both, for the sake of this piece, we’ll categorize them like this:

## NEWS AGENCIES

If you’re a news junkie and read multiple news sources a day, you may notice sometimes that there is an article repeated almost word for word in more than one publication. That’s because the story originates from a wire service. News agencies like [Reuters](#), [Bloomberg](#), and the [Associated Press](#) (AP) hire journalists to write original articles that are published on the wire and picked up by a variety of subscribing news outlets. These articles will always have the journalist’s name included, and the news agency they work with.



In today's changing and competitive media landscape, many outlets now rely on news agencies to provide their baseline news copy. This allows the outlet to employ fewer reporters and redirect resources instead to creating more robust editorial content to give the publication its unique flavour and characteristic “voice”.

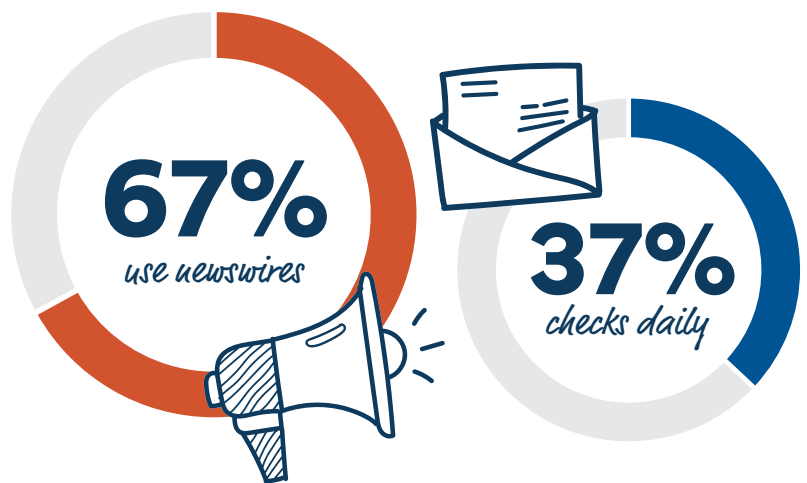
Pitching a news agency journalist successfully is striking media relations gold. The downside? To say it's a “tough sell” would be an understatement. These journalists are typically swamped, even more than the norm, and have no shortage of news stories, as they often cover breaking news and current events.

## PRESS RELEASE FEEDS

What most PR professionals will be referring to when they mention “the wire” or a “newswire” is essentially a press release feed. These are wire services that (usually for a fee) will post press releases from companies that subscribing journalists and outlets can access. Agility's integrated newswire is a great example of a press-release-feed-style newswire that distributes press releases to a broad range of news outlets and journalists. There are also wire services that will post both original news stories and press releases, like [Press Association](#) (PA).

## WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Newswires of all varieties were invented to help journalists do their job more effectively, and most are subscribed to both news agency and press-release-feed newswires. According to a study by [Vitis Business Consulting](#), despite being quick to point out their flaws, 67% of journalists use newswires with as many as 37% checking them daily.



As such, they're worth understanding and considering when crafting media relations strategies for your organization or clients.

So, where to start? Well, if we want to properly grasp some of the basics that define media relations and newswires today, we've first got to understand what defined them in the past.

# A long time ago...

By now you've probably guessed that we'll be embarking on a mini history lesson. We promise to be brief!

With our 24/7 news cycle and tech-dependent media landscape, it's easy to forget that at one time, transmitting news from one location to the next was a multi-day affair. Without the benefit of the Internet, fax machine, or even a telephone, the early-mid 1800s were characterized by news being dependent on postal service and reporters going down to the docks in major coastal cities like Boston and New York to get transatlantic news from the ships arriving in port. But what about the reporters who didn't live in a coastal city where they could access international news? And never mind international news, how did anyone quickly and efficiently find out about anything going on outside of their own city?

Until the mid-1800s, news had to be transmitted through letters and the national postal service. Well, in 1846, five New York City newspapers decided that method wasn't fast enough. Together they formed the Associated Press to create an express pony trail that would get news of the Mexican War to the northern United States quicker than the post. Shortly after, the Associated Press would have an even more effective tool at their disposal: the telegraph.

Developed by Samuel Morse (Morse code anyone?) and others in the 1830s and 1840s, the telegraph allowed users to transmit and receive messages over long distances using wire and electricity. Telegraphs became a staple of newsrooms worldwide and were used to communicate news with each other. If a wire didn't exist to connect certain cities, that's when carrier pigeons came in. In fact, Reuters—now an internationally recognized news agency—began as a bird service, using pigeons to transmit messages between Brussels, Belgium and Aachen, Germany until the telegraph finally connected the two in the mid-1800s.

As for international news, reporters still had to go down to the docks to meet the ships before heading back to transmit via telegraph to other newsrooms in the region, until the first transatlantic wire came into permanent operation in the 1860s.

Since the telegraph's transmission capacity was limited, the press discovered quite quickly that it was in their best interest to pool news gathering, instead of competing for transmission over an already-crowded service. The continued existence of multiple wire services proves that the benefits of news-pooling is still as relevant now as it was well over one hundred years ago.

early 1800s



1830s



1840s



1860s



# Fun fact:

Beyond their initial function of broadly distributing news and making it easier for journalists to do their jobs, newswires also informed the style and formatting of the modern press release.



*"don't bury  
the lead!"*

The nature of transmitting through the telegraph back in the 1800s meant that brevity was key. It also meant that the most important information needed to be at the very beginning of the message, and eventually all stories would be collected and edited to a standard style before being sent out. Sound familiar? Think “don’t bury the lead!” and the habit of keeping press releases to 400 words or less.

These stylistic and journalistic standards were eventually formalized and recorded and can be found in style guidebooks like The Associated Press Stylebook, that continue to govern the writing style of journalists today. They also affect PR folks, as many newswires still require submitted press releases to be a certain length and to follow certain style standards.

## HOW NEWSWIRES WORK TODAY

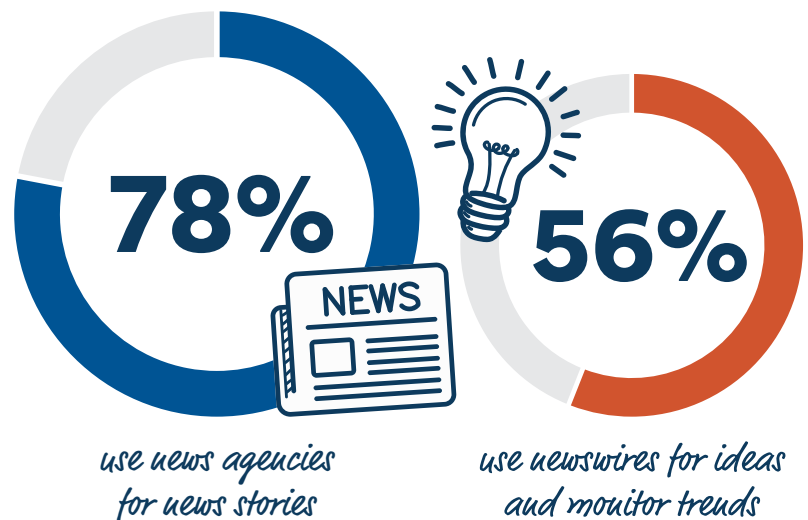
Perhaps you’re asking yourself, “Well, that’s all fine and good, but what does any of that history have to do with me and my comms strategy?”

Aside from the origins of common press release style and best practice, the history of the newswire also gives us an excellent idea of why journalists continue to use them, and clues to PR pros on how to use them. More on that later...

In the meantime, let’s look at how the modern newswire works, as we’re sure you’ve deduced that we no longer rely on telegraphs or carrier pigeons. Largely dependent on the Internet, newswires today distribute submitted press releases electronically for a fee to subscribing newsrooms and journalists. There are global wires and regional wires that distribute to specific markets. For example, a wire service may have a North American wire, a US-only wire, or a UK-Europe wire that distribute releases only to the subscribing outlets in that region. The company submitting their press release will be able to choose which regional wire they’d like to use.

Once posted to the wire, journalists and news outlets who subscribe to that wire will be able to see it. However, depending on the size and popularity of the wire there can be tens of thousands of press releases posted a day. While many wires will allow journalists to filter releases based on topic, there is always a massive amount of content to sift through.

Subscribing journalists and newsrooms can monitor the wire through email alerts or they may simply check the wire on a regular to semi-regular basis. While a large majority of wire subscribers (78%) will use news agencies for news stories, according to Vitis Business Consulting's survey, 56% of journalists use newswires for article and feature ideas, and to monitor industry trends—which is good news for PR folks.



In some cases, especially in the financial sector, news outlets will have a section of their website that will automatically pick up any press releases distributed on the wire that include a stock market ticker symbol. Publicly traded companies are legally required to wire-publish news that will affect their investors, and the ticker symbol is a necessary component of their press release. So, while that could be considered an easy “win” when it comes to scoring coverage, it’s worth noting that these pages don’t often get very many views—and getting the press release picked up on a site is not the same as earning coverage from a journalist.

In fact, when researching newswires, you’ll want to be conscientious of what numbers are being used to try and seduce you. Many wire services simply tabulate the total monthly users of subscribing news outlets’ websites to quantify reach and influence (which will sound extremely high and impressive), as opposed to looking at how many people on average *actually* view the press releases.

## PRICING

While free wire services do exist, you typically get what you pay for when it comes to their reach and influence. Most journalists have certain wires that they prefer over others due to the quality and relevance of the press releases they deliver, and if you want your newswire efforts to have any meaningful impact, those paid newswires are the ones you'll likely want to pursue. But as with anything else, do your homework!

Most of the quality newswire services publish company news releases for a fee. This can range anywhere from \$150 up to \$1,000+ depending on your press release's word count and number of images, videos, logos, and whether you need it to be bilingual (we see you, Canadian PR folks!). Many pricing models include a fee for a press release with a set number of words and images, and then charge a premium for additional words and multimedia components. Other wire services, like Agility PR Solutions' integrated newswire offer one flat cost for unlimited words.

Because you'll likely end up having to invest money if you choose to include newswire in your strategy, the age-old conundrum remains:

*to newswire?  
or not to newswire?*

## WHAT NEWSWIRES CAN'T DO

As all of us in PR are aware, expectation management is extremely important. Which is why, before diving into the benefits of using newswires, let's be crystal clear about what they will NOT do for you:

### SINGLEHANDEDLY GET YOU EARNED MEDIA

If your media relations strategy consists solely of distributing your press release on the wire, don't expect any earned media coverage. It's a fantasy to imagine a journalist scanning their wire subscription, seeing your press release, and toppling over with excitement before writing up a whole piece for The New York Times. It's safe to assume you won't be getting many (if any!) calls from journalists based solely on the fact that you put your release out on the wire.

## SIGNIFICANTLY BOOST YOUR SEO JUICE

Google effectively categorizes press releases as paid advertorial as opposed to earned media, and so packing it full of links and publishing every piece of “news” possible on the wire because you think it’s going to get you some major SEO juice isn’t going to get you very far. Focus on ensuring quality content in the press release and link where it makes sense so that it is a helpful communications tool for people looking for news, but don’t expect it to do wonders for you in the SEO department. Google’s on to us, and ultimately, that’s a good thing as it discourages people from clogging up the wire with irrelevant content for the sake of some backlinks, making room for your high-quality press release to potentially pique some interest.

## WHAT NEWSWIRES CAN DO

So why bother posting your press release to the news wire if it costs you money and doesn’t even guarantee earned coverage or a significant SEO boost? Allow us to point out their more attractive qualities:

### BROAD MEDIA RELATIONS STRATEGY

As part of a larger media strategy, a newswire allows you to go broad. It has the potential of getting your press release in front of lots of eyes, many of whom you may not have thought of right away when putting together your strategy. Also, because certain wire services and news outlets automatically pick up certain press releases, you can exponentially increase the chances of being noticed. And while this may not get you earned coverage on its own, it does help with things like...



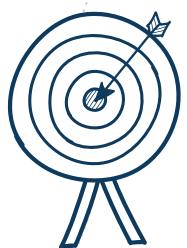
### BRAND RECOGNITION

Even if they choose not to write a story, if you put out quality press releases (key word: quality) on a semi-regular basis, journalists may become more familiar with your brand/company, which could put you on their radar, and potentially increase the chances of someone reaching out eventually or responding favourably to direct outreach.



### SUPPORT MORE TARGETED MEDIA RELATIONS STRATEGIES

Putting your release on the wire can support your more targeted media relations strategies, especially with industry-specific journalists. Having your release out on the wire gives you something to reference when speaking with your contacts and may jog their memory.





## INDUSTRY-FOCUSED JOURNALISTS MAKE GOOD USE OF NEWSWIRES

Journalists who write for specific industry and trade publications do tend to monitor newswires more closely than their mainstream counterparts. With fewer news tips constantly flooding their inbox, as is the case for editors and journalists working at more mainstream publications, industry writers will commonly use newswires for story ideas and news tips related to their field.



## FACT CHECKING

Many journalists will use newswires as a quick and easy way to verify information when fact checking articles for their publication. Your wire press releases can serve as a quality communications tool, complete with relevant facts, company boiler plate info, and links to visuals and other information beyond the scope of the release.



## TIPS FOR USING A NEWSWIRE

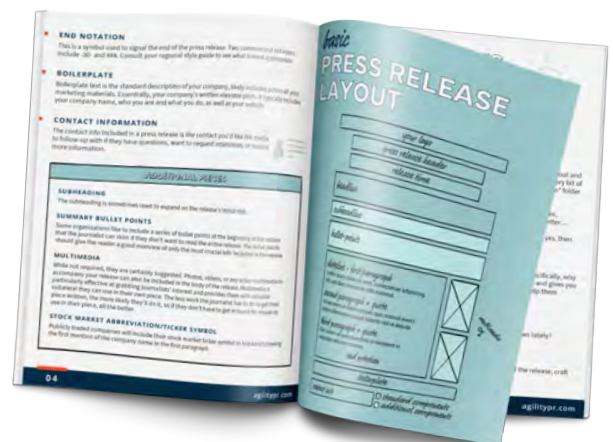
So, you're thinking of incorporating the newswire into your media relations strategy? Here are some tips to make the most of them:

### ✓ MAKE SURE YOUR PRESS RELEASE IS ACTUAL NEWS

Journalists often complain about the sheer volume of press releases that hit the wire every day and the effort it takes for them to wade through it all. For their sake, make sure that if your company is choosing to publish a press release, that it is in fact news. While it may seem basic, this is a common mistake companies make, and when the time comes that you have genuinely exciting or important news to share, you risk getting overlooked.

### ✓ QUALITY CONTENT

In that same vein, you'll want to make sure your press release stands out and includes quality content. Include relevant links, visuals, multimedia whenever possible, and most importantly, a killer headline. Want some help creating an impossible-to-ignore press release? [Check out our guide here.](#)





## ✓ INCLUDE YOUR TICKER SYMBOL

If you're simply looking for the broadest potential reach possible, include your ticker symbol so that your release is picked up by the websites that syndicate to wire services.

## ✓ STYLE ACCORDINGLY

Again, make journalists' lives a little bit easier and style your press release according to your region's style guide.

## ✓ SPECIFY YOUR REGION, RELEASE TIME, AND TIME ZONE

When distributing on the wire, make sure you specify which region you want, the specific time you want it released (typically, early in the morning around 6:00 am is best) and the time zone. Make sure it's set for the correct time in whatever region you're distributing your release to.

*Do ~~not~~ forget to specify the time zone!*

## ✓ BE READY TO FOLLOW UP

Remember, putting a press release out on the wire will not guarantee you journalist calls. Figure out your targeted list, and once your release is out, follow up!

## *The press release life cycle*

*Now that you've written your killer press release, chosen your wire demographic, and your media strategy is ready to launch, when and where do you publish your release first?*

## THE EXCLUSIVE SCOOP

If your media strategy involves pitching an exclusive story to a specific journalist or publication do not post it on the wire. Newswires are for broad media relations only, and you'll likely get blacklisted by a journalist if you've offered them an exclusive, only for them to see that you've posted it for every other journalist in the region to see on the wire.

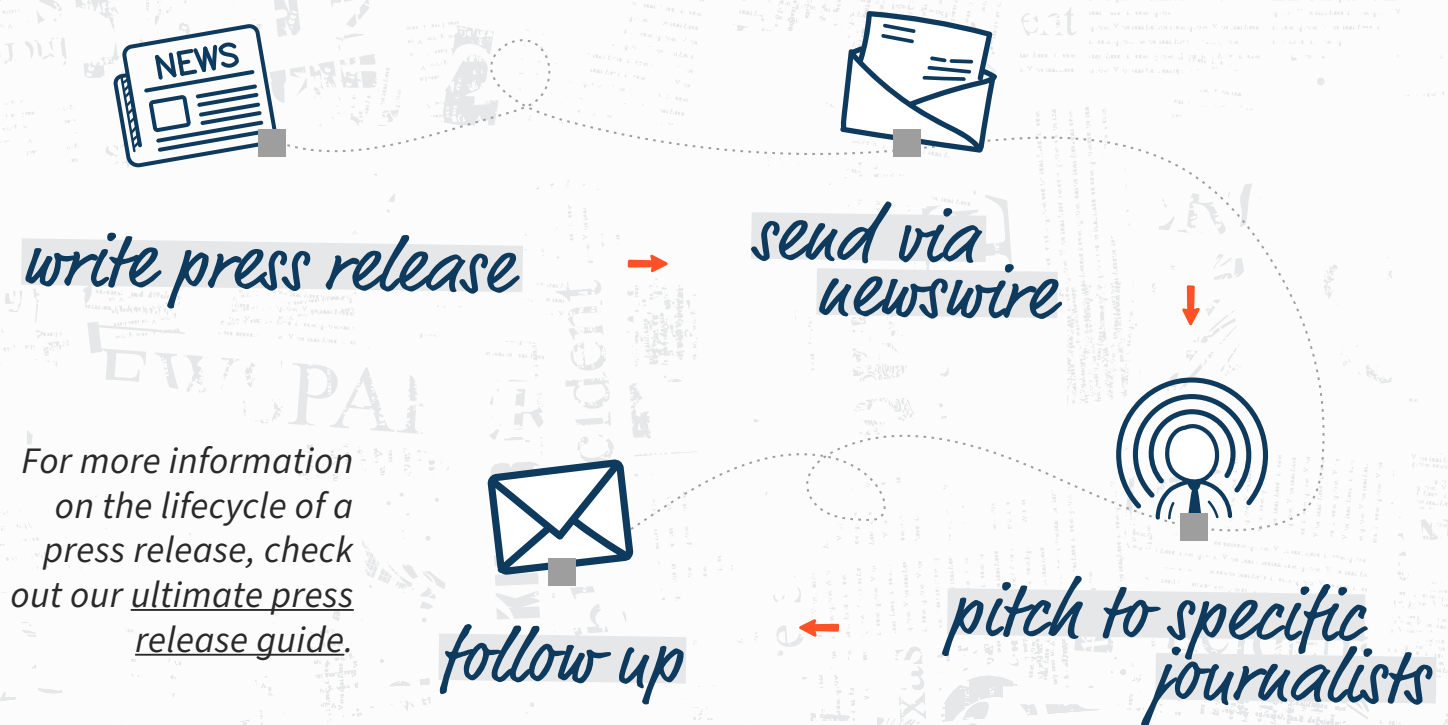
## UNDER EMBARGO

If your press release is under embargo\*, **do not** post it on the wire right away. Most newswires will allow you to schedule when you'd like it to be released. Make sure this time lines up with the embargo you've included on your press release, otherwise, your metaphorical cat will be out of its metaphorical bag.

In this case, you'd share the release with your targeted journalists first, to give them time to digest the information and prepare the story, and then publish on the wire at the specified time for a wider release.

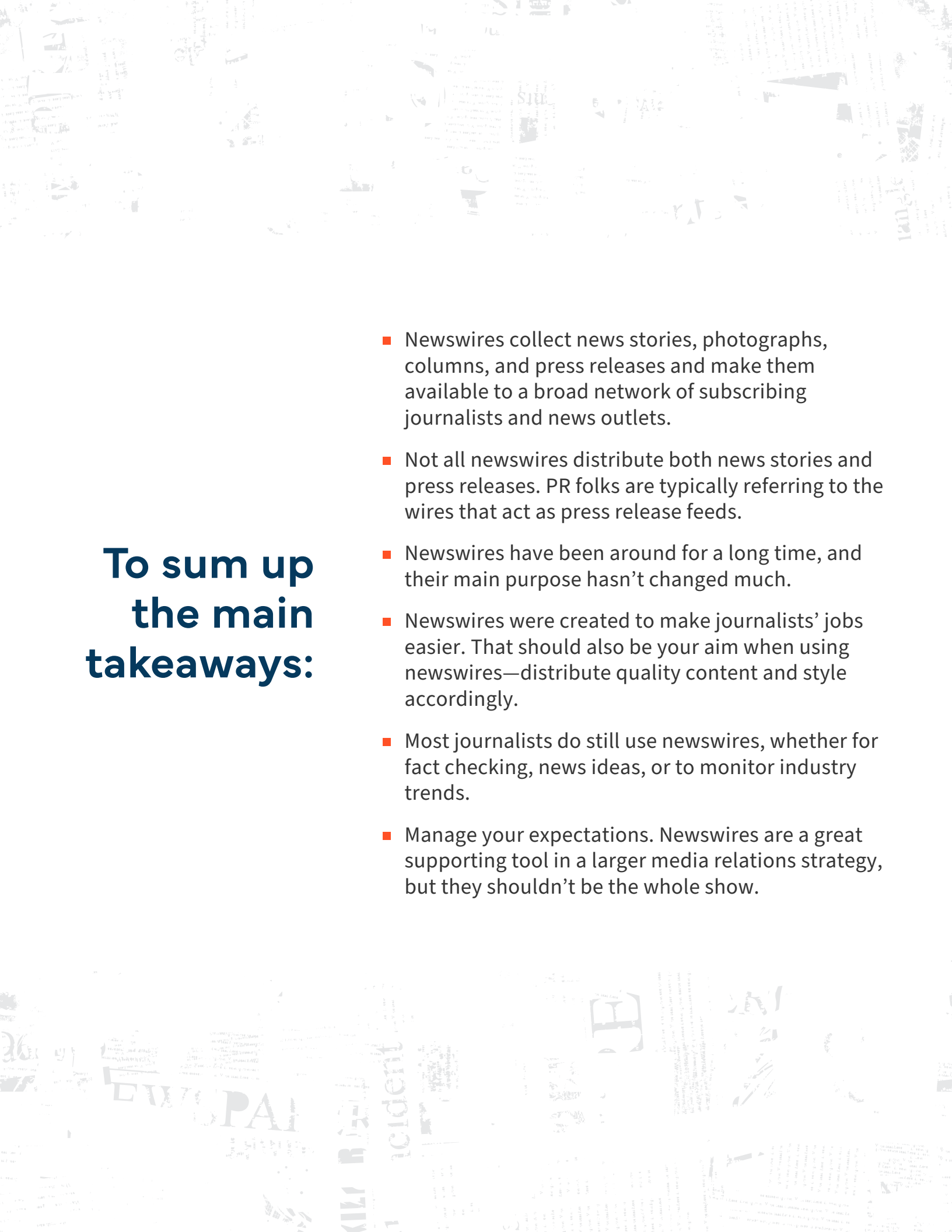
## AVERAGE LIFECYCLE

Assuming you are not offering any journalists an exclusive chance to report on your story, and your press release is not under embargo, you will typically post your press release to the newswire before engaging in one-on-one follow-ups with targeted journalists. A typical workflow will look something like this:



There you have it! Everything you've ever wanted to know about newswires. We hope we've enlightened you on this often-times confusing topic, and that you can take this information with you and make informed decisions that are best for you, your media strategy, and your company.

"Under Embargo" simply means that the press release cannot be shared with the public before a specific time. These press releases will have the words "Under Embargo Until \*time\*" on the press release itself. This alerts journalists that they cannot publicly discuss or publish anything until that time.

The background of the slide is a collage of various newspaper clippings. At the top, there are several small, overlapping snippets of text and images, including what looks like a person's face and some headlines. In the middle, there are larger, more legible snippets, such as "Site" and "The". At the bottom, there are more prominent headlines, including "EUROPA", "Accident", and "KILL RAIN". The overall effect is a textured, layered background that suggests a media or news environment.

## To sum up the main takeaways:

- Newswires collect news stories, photographs, columns, and press releases and make them available to a broad network of subscribing journalists and news outlets.
- Not all newswires distribute both news stories and press releases. PR folks are typically referring to the wires that act as press release feeds.
- Newswires have been around for a long time, and their main purpose hasn't changed much.
- Newswires were created to make journalists' jobs easier. That should also be your aim when using newswires—distribute quality content and style accordingly.
- Most journalists do still use newswires, whether for fact checking, news ideas, or to monitor industry trends.
- Manage your expectations. Newswires are a great supporting tool in a larger media relations strategy, but they shouldn't be the whole show.

*Interested in exploring more  
of what a newswire can do for you?*

Agility can help! Book [a free consultation](#) with one of our media experts today to get the full rundown of our very own integrated newswire. Curious to learn more, but not quite ready to dive in? No problem! Get in touch anyways and we'll be happy to answer any of your remaining newswire questions.