

## WRITING NEWS

**Why do we write news?**

**Better to ask: Who do we write news for?**

**The Client** – Nobody, but nobody, Googles themselves like the clients. Curtis Brown needs to be seen to be shouting about their work, regardless of whether or not it has any concrete effect. The more Curtis Brown gives the impression of being proud, the better represented the client feels.

**The Industry** – In many ways, mail-outs are a more direct form of marketing in this regard, as CB can communicate directly with publishers/casting directors/producers etc, but the website is good back up to that. News stories exist as a gateway to the clients' personal pages. They also give someone prominence should an industry professional land on the homepage/department page.

**Curtis Brown's rep** – This is really quite key. An agency's reputation is secured by its clients and so by their work. In the actors' department, in particular, client lists are kept hidden, so news is the only way for CB to shout about its clients and so about itself.

**Fans** – We never write for fans or Joe Public, but the language and writing should be clear enough that they can make sense of it should they stumble across a news story. Think in layman's terms.

## The Formula

### Headline

Client's name – where possible try to mention the client's full name. This will be seen by passing visitors to the site, who may not click on the link. Landing the name is a good thing.

Never use the phrase 'Curtis Brown...' in a headline or at the start of the story - we should always put the client at the centre of the story.

In a story with lots of clients, you have some options:

- Flag the lead and don't worry about the bit parts
- Talk to agents about letting one client have the headline if possible, remembering that all agents want the best for their individual clients.
- If you can't fit all the main actors in, focus on the project: Back to Broadchurch
- Don't use the phrase 'Curtis Brown clients...'

Try to find an alternative to X stars in Y. It looks repetitive and bland. Try other options: leads, returns, joins etc

This is a great chance to pun, to keep things light. 'Nicholas Bishop takes flight in Man and Superman' etc

Keep it short and snappy. Watch out for length as it can mess up the formatting.

The headline doesn't need to do everything: client and project, that's all.

### Introduction

Keep the introduction broadly formulaic. This paragraph is there to lay out the bare basics of a story.

Always – ALWAYS – start with the/a client's name. We represent the client, not the production; they should always be the focus of the story. Compare:

***Broadchurch, starring Olivia Colman, returns to our screens***

***Olivia Colman returns to our screens in Broadchurch***

Aim is to keep the intro compact: *WHO, WHAT, WHERE*:

***Cush Jumbo stars in Jez Butterworth's hit play *The River*, which opens at the Square Theatre in New York.***

**Emma Healey's debut novel *Elizabeth is Missing* has been longlisted for the 2015 Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction.**

Here's an example of where it can go wrong:

**The Vote, James Graham's new play will open at the Donmar Theatre in the run up to the general election and will be broadcast live on More4 from the Donmar between 8.30pm and 10pm, on election day - the 7th of May.**

There's too much in here and it's can confuse the reader. It starts with the project rather than the client, the Donmar is repeated and all the dates and times hide the main story. It should be:

**James Graham's new play *The Vote* will be broadcast live on More4 on election night as part of its run at the Donmar Warehouse in London.**

Explanations can follow. Times at the end. Keep it simple. Take us through it all slowly. Start with the bare minimum.

Adding details are a great way to add variety to this, but they have to earn their place in the introductory paragraph. There is plenty of space elsewhere.

**Cush Jumbo makes her Broadway debut, starring alongside Hugh Jackman in Jez Butterworth's hit play *The River*, which opens at the Square Theatre on Broadway.**

(Actors dept: Only mention other actors when they are big enough names to attach extra credibility to CB's clients. We are not in the business of giving free advertising to other agencies' actors.)

With multiple clients in one story, hierarchy is important here. Does every client belong in that first paragraph? Can you split them up? For example:

**Mark Rylance and Mark Gatiss star in the BBC's adaptation of Hilary Mantel's acclaimed novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, which also feature Harry Lloyd and Thomas Brodie-Sangster.**

Use your common sense; read it through and just be aware of over-loading an introductory paragraph. Does every client really belong in that paragraph or will they just look out of their depth there.

Actors Dept: Be careful with your use of 'stars' – don't over-bloat a supporting role.

The same goes for using 'leading role' – don't be too keen to stress how massive a part is, let the word stars speak for itself.

Don't mention timings in the introductory paragraph. News stories stick around online for ever, in the archive, and nothing makes them weirder than an out of date future tense:

**Phoebe Fox stars in *The Hollow Crown*, which starts on BBC One next Tuesday**

**Derek Jacobi reprises his role in *Vicious*, which returns for a second series in October.**

### **The Project**

The second paragraph exists to tell us, first and foremost, about the project – be it a book, a TV show, a film or a play.

Remember/assume that your reader doesn't know anything about the project. Explain everything.

You need to give us a synopsis in the most basic terms. This is a good example:

***Me Before You* tells the story of Lou, a small-town girl caught between dead-end jobs, and Will, a high flying young professional who finds himself wheelchair-bound after an accident. He struggles to find a reason to live until they meet when Lou takes a job as his carer and she becomes determined to prove to him life is worth living.**

... It's clear, concise and doesn't go into more detail than we need.

But... it could do with telling us more about the book's success, not just its contents.

***Me Before You* has sold in excess of five million copies worldwide, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) have optioned the movie rights, with filming due to commence in April for a 2016 release.**

Start in the simplest terms. This is another example from a TFTV story about DCI banks...

**In the first of Craig's episodes, the body of a lawyer Anaan Kamel is found washed up by an underground river. While her husband and daughter try to deal with their grief suspicion falls on Marcus Layton, a former employee of the victim's chambers. As the case develops it seems there could be a contract killer on the loose but it's up to Banks and his team to find out who they are and why they targeted Anaan.**

But it launches straight into Craig Pickles' (director) episode and doesn't set up the project properly. Adding the follow paragraph first will make the story flow much better - and tell the reader something useful about DCI Banks:

**ITV's hit crime drama, which stars Stephen Tompkinson as Detective Chief Inspector Alan Banks, has been a major success for the channel over the last five year's picking up a Royal Television Society award in 2013.**

Then you can tell us about these specific episodes:

**Craig directs two episodes, the first of which sees the body of lawyer Anaan Kamel found washed up near an underground river. etc etc**

Keep it clear. Watch for spoilers. Don't copy and paste from the Radio Times/press release.

When you're talking about a film/play, this is a good point to mention other creatives. Theatre/Film – that means actors; Actors – that means writer directors. Books – adaptations as above. Remember to link to their CB profiles when applicable.

**The River, which premiered at the Royal Court in 2013, is directed by the former Royal Court artistic director Ian Rickson and follows a man (Hugh Jackman) as he takes his new girlfriend on a rural retreat. As it turns out, she's not the first to have had the experience.**

When you're writing about awards, try to place the award in context too.

**The Olivier Awards are the most prestigious theatre awards.**

**The Guardian First Book award is presented annually to...**

**Previous winners include...**

### **The Clients**

This is the section where you give us the context about the client(s). Again remember that you're talking in layman's terms. Assume your readers don't know who these people are.

Make sure you specify the client's role in the project, if it's not already clear.

Actors – character names are important, but it's equally important to place that character in context.

**Phoebe Fox plays Lady Anne.**

**Phoebe Fox plays Lady Anne, wife of Richard III.**

**Phoebe Fox plays Lady Anne, wife of Richard III (Benedict Cumberbatch) and one of the most iconic female roles in Shakespeare's canon.**

Use this space to flag up the client's pedigree, where applicable. This is your chance to sell your client, in the guise of context, both in terms of what they have done and what they've got coming up.

**Craig Pickles is something of a crime drama specialist, having directed on the Channel 5 series Suspects, set inside the Metropolitan police. His next feature film, Excorist Diaries, is in development.**

**Since her best-selling debut Me Before You, which has sold more than nine million copies worldwide, Jojo Moyes has written two other novels The Girl You Left Behind and The One Plus One.**

**Phoebe Fox was recently nominated for an Olivier award for her performance in Ivo Van Hove's acclaimed production of A View from the Bridge. Her forthcoming feature films include The Woman In Black 2: The Angel of Death and Stephen Poliakoff's Close to the Enemy. She was named amongst Screen International's Stars of Tomorrow in 2011.**

Keep it snappy. Keep it precise. Don't list everything that person has ever done. Be selective and sell your client well. If you can flag up what they've got coming up. Avoid listing and listing and listing. Keep it readable.

When you've got a lot of clients – actors in particular – use your common sense. It may be that not every actor needs a potted CV. The most important thing is that the reader stays with the piece to the end.

You can lump small roles together.

**John Travolta and Samuel L Jackson also appear as two gangsters ordered to look after their boss's wife, played by Uma Thurman.**

## **Reviews**

Reviews are your friends

You can always find someone else saying nice things about your client's work – but only do so if it's relevant.

We have to give the appearance of objectivity. It's not good for us to be saying:

**The brilliant Howard Jacobson returns with his sparkling new novel...**

## **Heartthrob and global superstar Robert Pattinson...**

When quoting reviews, make sure you set them up properly. Try to use the critic's name where that has some credibility and try to keep some variety:

**Lyn Gardner of *The Guardian* wrote: "..."**

**The *Evening Standard's* Henry Hitchings described the production as "..."**

**Writing in the *Telegraph*, Dominic Cavendish praised "..."**

**"..." – Matt Trueman, *Variety***

Again, keep it snappy and light. Find the good bits. Not the boring bits.

Use the publication's name as a link.

## **AOB**

This formula can be played around with. Use the news story as it best suits you.

If you've got quotations from your client or statistics about sales, weave them in.

Anything that's relevant and helps to sell your client is applicable, just be careful not to overload the article. Keep it light and snappy.

## **Sign Off - When/Where**

Always round the article off with a detail of how we can engage with the project more

Everyman opens at the National Theatre on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2015. It will be live-streamed at cinemas worldwide on 7<sup>th</sup> June as part of NT Live.

After You will be published by Penguin UK. Watch the trailer here.

DCI Banks: Buried begins on 18<sup>th</sup> March at 9pm on ITV and concludes at the same time on the 25<sup>th</sup> March.

Give us links where possible

