"Vocus helps get our press releases out quickly and directly to reporters. When they see a release, it looks like it came from me directly, which helps us establish better relationships."

– Elizabeth Castro, Manager, Public and Community Relations

Challenge:
The media and community relations teams at Peoples Energy aimed to increase efficiency in several areas, reduce the costs associated with distributing releases and have a centralized way to track and measure their activities.

Solution:
With Vocus Public Relations, Peoples sends releases out directly from individual PR reps, has automated most of its daily clips management process and stores all activities in a central location that's accessible by all.

Results:
Peoples trimmed several hours a day off its clips process, saves $15,000 annually by not using newswire services and the PR teams can store and report on their activities.

Vocus Public Relations Fuels Dramatic Cost, Time Savings at Peoples Energy

Customer Profile

Peoples Energy is a diversified energy company, headquartered in Chicago, that provides safe and reliable gas service to consumers in Chicago and northern Illinois. In operation for more than 150 years, the company consists of five primary businesses: Gas Distribution, Power Generation, Midstream Services, Oil and Gas Production, and Retail Energy Services.

Challenge

The public relations and community relations teams at Peoples Energy juggle a number of responsibilities, from responding to crisis events to getting the word out about community assistance programs to keeping internal contacts informed about coverage.

In 2003, the team knew it needed to streamline a variety of practices to increase efficiency and cut costs. At the time, manually tracking and distributing clips throughout the organization demanded efforts from a team of people, and usually took the whole day to complete. Additionally, wire services were the only means of news distribution Peoples had, which ate into its budget. Finally, they had no way to track all their activities, or easily report on them to support their own decision-making or share results with others.

Vocus Public Relations Solution

Peoples Energy looked at several options to streamline its PR activities. Though the company initially considered bringing in a clipping service, that service alone would cost as much as deploying a more comprehensive solution such as Vocus Public Relations. The software promised to ease the daily process of assimilating clips, eliminate much of the cost and delay associated with wire services, and enable the team to track and measure all its activities.

"Vocus can just do more. It's the complete package," explained Elizabeth Castro, Manager, Public and Community Relations.

News Distribution Through Vocus Trims Costs, Enhances Relationships

Using Vocus, Peoples easily creates its own unique media lists directed at different audiences. Then, the media and community relations teams send out news releases directly from Vocus, which virtually eliminates all newswire costs. They can tailor the distribution to meet each contact's preference for receipt, whether that's fax or email. Plus, releases reach reporters faster and come from an individual representative at Peoples.

"Vocus helps get our press releases out quickly and directly to reporters," Castro said. "When they see a release, it looks like it came from me directly, which helps us establish better relationships. It looks like it's a personal outreach as individuals, instead of the same group mailings they get from others."

Vocus Automates, Streamlines Clips Management

Media and community relations also replaced their previously tedious and manual process for storing and distributing clips. Now, each day they locate clippings and scan them into Vocus. From there, they simply email clips to the rest of the team and other members of the company – saving several hours each day and wrapping up the whole process by 9 a.m. Upper management has taken notice and appreciates being informed about coverage first thing in the morning.

Media and community relations are also no longer dependent on a team of people, busy with other duties, to handle the multiple steps required to distribute clips. Moreover, they can instantly search and retrieve historical clips in the system at any time, instead of sorting through hard copies.

> "With Vocus, we capture everything and all the information is integrated in one place so the whole team can access it."

Vocus Enables Year-End Reporting

Peoples also takes advantage of powerful reporting capabilities in Vocus to help demonstrate to elected officials the company's community efforts. Vocus enables Peoples to track its community outreach, infrastructure upgrades and financial contributions, and then quickly create year-end reports. The PR teams provide those detailed reports to 50 aldermen, or elected officials in area wards, to highlight the company's activities.

Results: Vocus Returns Hours Each Day, $15,000 Annually to Peoples

Vocus has become an integral tool for the Peoples' media and community relations teams. They have reduced their daily clips process by several hours, decreased their reliance on a number of people once needed to copy and prepare clips, and clips reach upper managers early in the day.

Sending out releases through Vocus, they nurture media relationships and save approximately $15,000 annually by eliminating the need for outside wire distribution services. Plus, with a Web-based software solution, they can distribute news from the field during events or crisis situations.

Most importantly, Vocus provides Peoples with a way to track and record all its activities – all conversations, emails, news releases, clips and responses from reporters – which keeps the teams on the same page, and supports quick information access and reporting. That storehouse of information will also prove valuable for internally measuring the effectiveness of campaigns.

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About Vocus, Inc.
Vocus is the global leader in on-demand software for public relations and government relations. Vocus offers Web-based software that helps companies to meet today's local and global communications challenges, and to build and manage relationships with reporters, analysts, elected officials and other key audiences. Our award-winning software helps customers manage media relations, news monitoring and analysis, interactive email campaigns, online newsrooms and government relations activities. Vocus software is delivered as an easy-to-use and cost-effective annual subscription, with no need for internal hardware, software or IT support. Vocus has received broad industry recognition and is used around the world by more than 1,000 organizations in five languages. Vocus is a privately held company with headquarters in metropolitan Washington and offices in North America, Europe and Asia. For more information please visit www.vocus.com or call 800.345.5572.