

# Search Engine Optimization for Press Releases



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## A Guide to Search Engine Optimization and Online Public Relations Strategies

### The Evolved Medium is the Message

Driven by innovation, PR professionals are always on the look-out for that creative punch – how can you deliver your message in a content-rich, vivid way that attracts interest and remains relevant? Now that you know how color TV ignites the senses and commands attention, could you ever go back to flat, uninspired black and white? The evolved medium is your message. It's time to modernize the press release.

Once dedicated primarily to informing the media, today's PR is becoming part of a more integrated sales and marketing strategy. As the nature of PR has evolved, how professionals target their audiences, deliver their message and measure their success must also advance. And, like the communication mediums of the past, the loyal press release must evolve in order to remain relevant, interesting and profitable.

### Public Relations and the Internet

It is increasingly vital for PR practitioners and marketers to achieve visibility on the Internet to build brand recognition and attract online traffic back to their company's Web site. But how can you ensure that your company has a superior online presence?

Search engines are the key to navigating the often rugged and increasingly cluttered terrain known as the Internet. Without search engines, online news and information would be virtually adrift unless you knew exactly where to find it. Consumers and media are increasingly going online to find news and information and they are using search engines to help.

- More than 70% of Americans read their news online. Yahoo! News has the broadest Internet news audience – broader now than CNN Source: Nielsen/Net Ratings.
- 80 million Americans use search engines on a typical day
- 60% of journalists say they spend more than 20 hours a week on the Internet

When asked how journalists use the Internet:

- 98% say reading news
- 93% say finding news sources
- 89% say finding story ideas
- 72% say reading blogs

What can we take from these statistics? Consumers and journalists are using the Internet to find information. How will they be able to find your news amid all of the cyber clutter? Search Engine Optimization will make certain that your news is visible to search engines and easily accessible to the consumers and journalists who are actively searching for it.

### What is Search Engine Optimization?

Your marketing counterparts have known about and used SEO since its emergence in the late 1990s. Traditionally, SEO has been utilized in a marketing capacity to drive sales through increased Web site traffic, but as PR and marketing are becoming more intimately involved, the benefits of SEO have become applicable to the public relations sector too.

Search Engine Optimization is a means to empower your communications initiatives so that search engines can easily locate your news and list it prominently when performing user searches and retrieving matches. SEO increases your website's rankings in search engines, directs more targeted traffic to your site and extends the lifespan of your news on the Web.


According to 'Search Engine Results Pages Turn Into Destinations,' the number of U.S. Internet searches continues to increase. In 2006, the increase in search queries went up 20 percent. In 2007, there was a 30 percent increase to over 35 billion searches. That's an average of 52 searches a month per user in 2006 compared to 74 searches per month in 2007.

Search engines such as Google, Yahoo! and MSN are the principal channels by which most Internet searchers find news and information on products and services, so it is vital that your news is easily accessible on these sites. SEO infused press releases are a decisive way to increase your company's web presence and brand visibility by making it easy for those search engines to find you.

### Traditional Press Releases vs. Search Engine Optimized Press Releases

Gone are the days of the straight text, flat press release. Press releases must now be interactive, creative affairs to pique the interest of consumers, media and search engines alike. They must be accessible, easy to find and easy to use. Optimizing press releases is a decisive way to increase your company’s web presence and brand visibility, but it is also an effective way to attract the attention of your target audience.

Consider the two press releases seen here.

Traditional Press Release:	Search Engine Optimized Press Release:
<p><b>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE</b></p> <p><b>PRWeb Launches Feature Video to Provide Complete Multimedia News Releases and Deliver Video Content for Customers</b></p> <p><i>PRWeb users now can include embedded videos in their news announcement to create a true multimedia news experience and increase their online visibility. With the launch of Feature Video, PRWeb allows customers to increase the visibility of their video content on popular video-sharing sites and provide a more vivid experience for readers of their news releases.</i></p> <p><b>Ferndale, WA (PRWeb) June 11, 2007</b> -- PRWeb®, a leading online press release distribution news wire and a Vocus (NASDAQ: VOCS) company, today announced the launch of Feature Video, a new service that allows users to embed online video content into their search engine optimized press releases. Just as PRWeb increases the online visibility of news releases by optimizing them for search engines and feeding the release directly to major online news outlets, Feature Video also increases the visibility of customer’s video content.</p> <p>To take advantage of Feature Video, PRWeb users simply upload their video to popular video-sharing sites, including YouTube, Google Video and Yahoo! Video. Feature Video then enables the video to play directly within the customer’s PRWeb release.</p> <p>“As the explosive growth of video-sharing sites demonstrates, organizations of all sizes are using video content as a way to tell their story,” said Bill Wagner, Chief Marketing Officer of Vocus, Inc. “Feature Video allows PRWeb customers to embed videos directly in their news release, providing a true multimedia experience for their news and increasing the video’s visibility on the web.”</p> <p>Notable customers including PETCO, Discovery Communications, Ragan Communications and Southwest Airlines have already begun taking advantage of the new advanced feature to promote their products and services. To view each company’s individual news release, please visit:</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows a PRWeb press release for PETCO. The page layout includes a header with navigation links, a main content area with a video player and text, a PRWeb logo with the tagline 'THE ONE AND ONLY VISIBILITY COMPANY™', and a sidebar with contact information and a list of other press releases. The text on the page is more visually integrated with images and video, making it more engaging than the traditional text-based release.</p>

Which would you rather read?

Today’s press release can include images, audio and video to create a richer, more engaging content experience for consumers and media. In fact, studies show that people are more likely to take some form of action, such as purchasing a product, after watching a video about that product. Your multimedia release serves as a vehicle to push out marketing and advertising messaging and provides your audience additional interactive content on your company.

### Benefits of Search Engine Optimized Copy

Distributing optimized, keyword-rich content builds brand awareness, enhances backlinks to your Web site and continues to build your organization’s reputation.

- **Targeted Traffic** – Journalists and consumers accessing your optimized press releases are already interested in the product or service you offer as they proactively searched for that topic by keyword. Including your company’s web site directs that relevant traffic on to your site.
- **Increase Sales** – Drive relevant, targeted traffic to your Web site. Convert leads to sales by making your news and information easily available to consumers actively searching for you.
- **Richer, More Vivid News Experience** – More visually interesting press releases retain your audience’s attention and increases their level of interest and participation.
- **Higher Website Placement** – Positioning your news at the forefront of search results is essential to ensure you are reaching your target audience at the beginning of their search to effectively drive sales back to your website:
  - 77% of Internet users employ search engines first to find new Web sites
  - 64% of Internet users are searching for news
  - 65% of online shoppers conduct product research using search engines
  - More than 80% of Internet users don’t go beyond the first three pages of search engine results.

- **Long-term, Augmented Online Presence** – More and more journalists and consumers are relying on the Internet to find news articles and consumable information. In order to get your news in the hands of the media and the public, it needs to be electronically accessible and easy to locate:
  - 70 million Americans go online for news
  - 39% go to portals like Yahoo! and Google
  - Over 50% of Journalists use Yahoo! and Google

Optimized press releases are stickier than traditional press releases because they have long-term search visibility. Your audience will be able to find your products and services long after you've sent your release.

### How to Optimize your Press Release

Press releases are increasingly useful in highly ranking your company in organic search results, but you have to arm your message with the tools to put it front and center.



The screenshot shows a PRWeb press release titled "PRWeb Launches Feature Video to Provide Complete Multimedia News Releases and Deliver Video Content for Customers". The page includes a navigation bar, a search box, and various social media and utility links. Callouts point to specific elements:

- Keywords in Headline:** Points to the main title of the press release.
- Hyperlinked Text:** Points to the text "PRWeb" in the first paragraph, which is a link to the PRWeb website.
- Video and Audio:** Points to an embedded YouTube video player.
- Photos and Logos:** Points to the PRWeb logo and the Vocus logo at the bottom of the page.

To make your press releases friendly to search engines, keep the following tips in mind when crafting your message:

- **Keywords** - A carefully worded headline and sub-headline should contain keywords related to major themes in your news. The headline is not only extremely important for SEO purposes but is also your first opportunity to grab your reader's attention. Throughout the text of your release, look for additional ways to include high volume keywords and phrases without altering the tone or message of your news release.

Keyword-optimized press releases rank higher in search results and have longer life spans on the Web. When relevant keywords are incorporated in the correct frequency and placement throughout the text, consumers and journalists are able to immediately retrieve your news and information based on their keyword searches.

Choosing the most relevant keywords for your press release is probably the most important aspect of writing optimized web copy. You should diligently research appropriate keywords for your target audience and subject matter. These keywords should then be strategically added to the headline and press release body to create keyword-rich content that is easily retrievable. Your keywords should also communicate your message in a clear and concise manner to the media and consumers who are actively searching for it.

Web sites like [www.google.com/trends](http://www.google.com/trends) and [www.freekeywords.wordtracker.com](http://www.freekeywords.wordtracker.com) can help get you started with selecting the best keywords for your copy.

- **Enhanced URL** - Search engines look at the keywords used in a hyperlink to a website when they are ranking that website. If a hyperlink has keywords included and point to your website, then when a person does a Google search for those keywords they are going to be more likely to find you among their results. Make sure your release uses targeted keywords when pointing back to your site to make sure you get an SEO boost for your website.
- **Anchor Text/Embedded Keywords** - Embedding hyperlinks into your release is another way to increase your ranking and drive traffic to your Web site. Linking your product's name in the release back to the Web page where your readers can go to learn more will not only lead consumers directly to your site, but it will also get them into your sales cycle.
- **Multimedia Content** - Adding a news image, video or audio to your release will not only make your press release more consumable, graphically pleasing and likely to be read, but it will also ensure your news is indexed in image search engines and create more visibility for your message.
- **Social Media Tags** - Allowing your content to be circulated through Digg, Technorati, del.icio.us and other social bookmarking sites will not only increase the search engine rankings of your release, but also drive targeted traffic to your Web site. Social Media tagging tools allow users to bookmark and share web content, spreading your news and information across the web and around the world.

## Conclusion

Utilizing search engines is the most effective means by which Internet users find and consume news and information. Because of the pervasive and increasingly competitive nature of the Internet, it is vital that marketers and PR practitioners achieve stand-out visibility on search engines and databases to increase brand recognition, attract targeted traffic and increase sales.

As the Internet grows and develops, achieving prominent placements on search engines is becoming increasingly challenging. To improve search results and to drive targeted visitors to your Web site, PR and marketing initiatives must include interactive search optimized press releases.

The key is getting started and PRWeb's dedicated team of editors can help! To learn more about PRWeb, please visit [www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com) or call (866) 640 NEWS.

## About PRWeb

PRWeb is recognized as a leading online news and news release distribution service worldwide. Since 1997, PRWeb has been changing the way businesses, marketing departments and public relations firms think about press releases. PRWeb was the first company to develop a distribution strategy around direct-to-consumer communication and to build and offer a search engine optimized platform for press release distribution. PRWeb, located in Ferndale, WA, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Vocus, Inc., a leading provider of on-demand public relations management software. For more information, go to <http://www.prweb-inc.com>

## About Vocus

Vocus, Inc. (NASDAQ: VOCS) is a leading provider of on-demand software for public relations management. Our Web-based software suite helps organizations of all sizes to fundamentally change the way they communicate with both the media and the public, optimizing their public relations and increasing their ability to measure its impact. Our on-demand software addresses the critical functions of public relations including media relations, news distribution and news monitoring.

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