

Integrating Marketing & PR for SEO Success



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99.5% of press releases aren't optimized for the Web, according to a recent DMNews article. So what is the secret to being one of the .5%?

As a PR professional, you are all too familiar with writing press releases to appeal to journalists. But have you successfully adapted your release for the web? Consumers and journalists are increasingly going online to find news and information about products and services. As online press release distribution has become more common to reach these multiple audiences press releases must evolve in order to remain relevant, interesting and profitable.

As the nature of the media has evolved, so has the public relations industry. In today's world PR is part of an integrated sales and marketing strategy. Once dedicated solely to the media, professionals are tasked with incorporating Search Engine Optimization techniques into their writing style.

Search Engine Optimization is designed to help your news stand out amid all of the cyber clutter and increase your online presence. By incorporating a few simple techniques, your press releases will become a powerful tool to help 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 SEO?

According to Wikipedia, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a web site from search engines via "natural" ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results for targeted keywords.

As the Internet has emerged as the prominent means of communication over the last few years, SEO has attracted attention for the value it offers to organization's search rankings. Comprising an audience of an estimated 178 million people or nearly four out of five US adults (2007, Harris Interactive Study) and consisting of consumers, media, investors and more, the Internet has greatly enhanced the exchange of information.

In recent studies from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, the influence and power the Internet holds over consumers is evident:

- 89% of Internet users use a search engine to find information. (May 2008)
- 81% of Internet users use the Internet to research a product or service before buying it. (September 2007)
- 73% of Internet users use the Internet to get news. (May 2008)

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 integrated, the benefits of SEO have become applicable to the public relations sector too. Through online services press releases are becoming increasingly useful in keeping the company in organic search results and enhancing the success of the online marketing team. In some cases, these services are able to direct potential buyers to an actionable page where they can request a demo, more information or simply buy the product being offered. With coordination, press releases can now enhance the effectiveness of company messaging, driving customers to the organization's website and, ultimately, leading to an increase in sales and revenue.

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.

The Potential of PR

With so many eyes on the Internet every day looking for information, public relations can help you leverage that power to directly reach your potential buyers. The effect of a successful PR campaign on the company can be seen in the impact on both awareness and sales. The right PR campaign results not only in publicity for the company but also supports all the organization's marketing efforts to drive potential buyers back to your website and create new sales opportunities.

Proper SEO techniques can turn your press releases into a cost-effective solution to drive traffic to your website and increase revenue.

How to Generate Business

By implementing some or all of these strategies across your PR programs, you can optimize the return on your PR initiatives while simultaneously driving sales leads for the business.

Traditionally, public relations has focused on media, with press releases making up the staple of the activity. Developed to help reach the media, newswires or press release services delivered your release straight to the desk of influential journalists in your target locations. Press releases were written to appeal to the journalists and reporters, hoping to pique their interest enough to write a story. The chosen releases received ink in their targeted publication but those that were not deemed newsworthy never made it past the reporter's trashcan. In recent years, new online press release services have been introduced. These services put the power back into the press release to make it an even more useful tool to organizations. The new services have made it possible to cut through the clutter and reach your audience directly through the Internet.

With coordination, your PR activities can now enhance the effectiveness of your marketing leading to an increase in sales. A press release is still a concise, summary of your news, however, the traditional press release requires a slight adjustment for the new audience given its broader reach. While a good press release has always taken complicated products and concepts and translated them into simple, easy-to-understand benefits, it is now more important than ever to avoid technical jargon and insider-lingo. Make sure your release can communicate your message effectively to potential customers as well as journalists, who are interested in writing about your company.

Following a few simple steps, public relations activities can now push your messages straight to potential buyers and increase your organization's overall sales by improving your search engine results.

To make your news friendly to search engines, keep the following 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.
- **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.
- **Add Multimedia Content to Your Release -** Adding a news image or video to your release will not only make your news release more 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.

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.

Converting Leads to Sales

Analyzing results is often the hardest and most ignored part of an effective campaign. Connecting marketing activities to leads will show your success and it will also help hone your tactics and keywords, which in the end converts leads into sales. Looking through your results will not only help you identify your strengths but where you need improvement.

Identify the keywords that elicit the highest number of prospects clicking to learn more. While many keywords can generate interest and entice prospects to get more information, it is important to determine which keywords drive your prospects to take action once they reach the site. Looking at the percentage of people who leave, or abandon, your site once they click through can also say a lot about the effectiveness of your strategy. While in some cases it may be that your website is not clear enough for prospects to quickly take action, many times it is indicative that the keywords selected may not accurately reflect your product's value proposition. The abandonment rate will help you identify which of your messages are not resonating with your

audiences. Once you determine, which keywords and messages are effective, you can quickly fine tune your public relations strategy to incorporate effective keywords in all your activities.

Getting Started

Using online news services, such as PRWeb, professionals are able to enhance the effectiveness of their campaigns while achieving their individual publicity goals as well. To get started with your press release strategy:

1. Compile Content- Put together a list of newsworthy releases. As David Meerman Scott points out in his best selling eBook, "The New Rules of PR," some newsworthy examples are:

- CEO Speaking at a Conference
- Winning an Award
- Adding a Product Feature
- Winning a New Customer
- Publishing a Whitepaper

2. Distribute SEO Releases- Once you have gathered your content and topics, draft your releases. Based on the number of releases, determine the best schedule to release them to create a constant news flow and distribute them through an online SEO news distribution service.

3. Measure the Impact- Analyze the results of your news release Look at your press release statistics to see how many times your release has been viewed, which search engines are producing your best results and other information that will help you determine where your efforts are best spent. Determine which releases have driven your website traffic and which keywords are having the greatest impact on potential visitors. Use the information to identify how effective your strategy has been and where you need to improve.

Conclusion

Press releases can have a significant impact on the company's bottom line when integrated into your overall marketing strategy. Look at the strengths and weaknesses to find out which strategies are working for your organization so you know what can be improved.

A vital avenue for company success, when done right, press releases magnify the effect of your PR campaign to see a significant impact on awareness and sales. Always keep your message consistent and your writing clear, concise and targeted to your audience and optimize all your writing to drive potential buyers straight to your sales team.

Effectively optimizing your releases will help your news stand out amid all of the cyber clutter and increase your online presence. These simple techniques will help consumers and journalists you're your company and play an integral part in turning your press releases into effective marketing tools and make certain that all the eyes on the Internet find your company in their searches.

About Vocus

Founded in 1992 by two entrepreneurs and best friends, Vocus (NASDAQ: VOCS) has grown into one of the world's largest and fastest growing public software companies. The Lanham, MD-based company has achieved 37 consecutive quarters of growth and has been named one of the fastest growing technology companies by leading organizations including the Washington Business Journal, Deloitte and Forbes Magazine.

More than 3,100 organizations around the world, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to one-person start-ups, use Vocus products and services to generate publicity and grow their businesses. Vocus software was awarded the prestigious SIIA's CODiE for "Best Business Productivity Software" and has been featured in The Wall Street Journal and Fortune. Our on-demand software addresses the critical functions of public relations including media relations, news distribution and news monitoring.

Vocus has offices in North America, Europe, and Asia. For more information please visit www.vocus.com or call 800.345.5572.