



White Paper

Beyond Media Lists

**On-Demand Software Can Dramatically Enhance
Public Relations Performance**



Executive Summary

The leap from traditional public relations into orchestrated and integrated communications programs has yet to be bridged. Much of the difficulty in crossing this chasm stems from the limitations of the tools and technologies being employed in the PR department. This paper will examine the limitations of the tools being employed in public relations and investigate how some of the most successful communication teams are enhancing their results while improving the art of effective communications.

If contact and list management software still defines the technological limits of your public relations department, it may be time to leave the Stone Age of communications behind. Information management is, after all, the core of public relations: it is also what digital technology does supremely well. From word processing to optical text recognition to the Internet, major advances in digital communications have dramatically enhanced our ability to communicate, accumulate and disseminate information, whether within an organization or around the world. Combine this with more than 400,000 journalists reporting for nearly 80,000 media outlets in the United States alone, and the scope of the challenge facing today's public relations professionals quickly becomes mind-boggling. Media mergers, staff turnover, globalization and other evolutionary factors can magnify this complexity at seemingly geometric rates. It is in this chaotic, high-speed environment that contemporary organizations must endeavor to build, shape and protect one of their most valuable assets—their image.

While communications technology has continued to advance rapidly, its adaptation to public relations management has moved much more slowly. Indeed, most practitioners still rely on combinations of applications, list management software and electronic clipping services developed and supported by different vendors. And surprisingly, many public relations tasks are still done manually, from producing clip books to distributing press releases. Meanwhile, budget constraints increasingly limit the ability of public relations workers to cope effectively with their growing challenge. More importantly, manually handling routine, time-intensive tasks limits the time available to address higher level needs, such as coverage analyses, strategic planning, response management and insightful reporting.

The growth of global brands and remote PR teams has significantly increased the need for succinct, carefully coordinated communications. An organization's entire PR staff, regardless of location, must "sing from the same sheet music" to ensure message consistency. The inevitability of staff turnover only adds to the challenge.

It is little wonder, then, that managing information content and flow within this communications tornado with only a few unlinked software programs is becoming an extraordinarily difficult task. Happily, some software developers, including Vocus, have recognized the public relations field's growing need for comprehensive integrated solutions that enable professionals to be effective and productive.

The Early Marriage of PR and Technology

Technology first entered the public relations arena in a significant way in the 1980s when media list publishers, including the popular Bacon's, began offering their directories in a digital format. This enabled PR practitioners to electronically search and sort lists containing thousands of publications and journalists, and to build new lists that met their unique needs. Database technology also made it easy for them to do extensive searches based on such parameters as markets, circulation data, titles and news beats, and to obtain the results almost instantly.

Advances in word processing and database technology quickly revolutionized news distribution. Soon, organizations found themselves able to target messages directly to hundreds, if not thousands, of journalists, rather than relying on those same reporters to sift through unending streams of messages generated by multiple wire services.

While this technological advance in news distribution was broadly welcomed by the PR practitioners, they were still left to manually cope with a plethora of other information management and media relations tasks, from recording journalists' inquiries and tracking press coverage to planning, executing and measuring publicity campaigns. Most who worked in PR still relied on bulging notebooks, file cabinets and memories when it came to managing media relations. Consequently, as organizations and public relations staffs grew, so too did the opportunities for misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Effective media relations also requires awareness and sensitivity to the pitching preferences and idiosyncrasies of individual journalists. What pitches may have been successful, as well as knowing those that weren't, can help future reporter outreach. Tracking such details manually for hundreds of reporters without the aid of technology was all but impossible. Quickly identifying and working to mitigate unfavorable press coverage is another important aspect of public relations, yet one that grows increasingly difficult as the news cycle grew ever shorter. These and many other challenges made it clear that the gap between the public communications needs of organizations and the capabilities being provided by technology was rapidly expanding.

Media List Management

Electronic media directories today are more sophisticated and comprehensive than those of prior decades, and their publishers invest heavily to ensure that these products remain current. Public relations productivity soars when organizations use these tools to build custom media lists. Researching and compiling such lists manually requires approximately eight hours to complete^A, a task that can be accomplished in less two hours using electronic media directories and database software.

DailyAccess.Com, Inc., a leading provider of online retirement plan services based in Mobile, Ala., immediately found their reach broadened and press coverage increased with the adoption of Vocus' powerful media list management feature. "We expanded our media list about 70 percent using Vocus. I'm now getting good coverage from journalists I didn't even know were out there," says a DailyAccess spokesperson.

While creating media lists that closely align with strategic communications objectives is an important public relations task, it is just one of many that must be completed in an effective and well coordinated way if an organization is to maximize its public relations ROI. Other key tasks include: collateral production and distribution, project management, contact management, online newsrooms, campaign planning and implementation, editorial calendar tracking and comprehensive coverage analysis.

Information technology has certainly made extraordinary advances since digital media directories were first introduced. Today, word processing, data warehousing, text recognition and other technologies have become highly sophisticated and, when linked, can become even more powerful information management tools. Until recently, however, surprisingly little was done to adapt these technologies to the specific needs of the public relations profession. Today, Vocus is the leader among a small group of firms that offer organizations the real power of multi-functional, on-demand public relations software – with capabilities that reach far beyond media list management.

Beyond List Management

Contemporary media list management applications generally include a limited number of options that enable users to address and distribute news releases and other information via direct mail, email, fax and news wire services. This, however, is generally the extent of their capabilities. Public relations professionals are still left to find alternative solutions to address their many other information management needs. Consequently, most devote hours searching manually through files, calling their colleagues for information, searching online and using contact management software designed for sales departments.

By contrast, a robust, full-featured and highly integrated solution designed exclusively for public relations management, such as Vocus' on-demand software for public relations management, can significantly increase their productivity, performance and ROI across the broad spectrum of PR tasks. Having fingertip access to in-depth information about an organization's and its competitors' past and present public relations activities can improve productivity as much as 75 percent^A. The chasm between managing media lists and managing the entire public relations function are the key differentiators between what successful PR teams are doing and what the masses of PR professionals are doing that is the core discussion of this white paper.

To elevate the stature of your function and to validate the benefits and results of your programs, you need to understand how much of a difference on-demand software can make to the management of your public relations programs. The following chart compares the functionality typically offered by list management applications and public relations management software. What follows is an overview of how these functions have enhanced the PR programs of companies like ABB, Eckerd and Southwest Airlines.

To understand the powerful advantages full-featured software suites offer the public relations professional, let's look briefly at their more common components.

List Management vs. PR Management Software

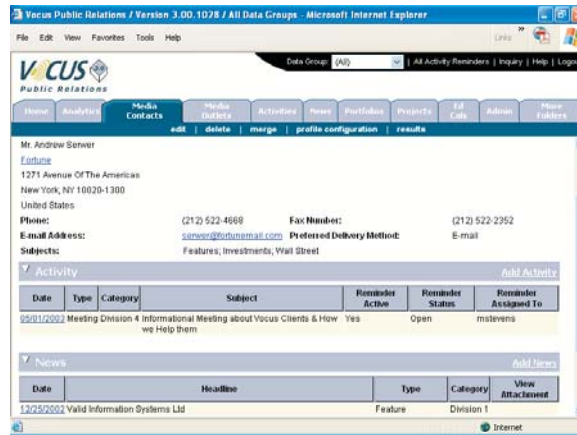
Function	Typical List Management Application	On-demand software for Public Relations
Media Database	✓	✓
Contact Management	□	✓
News Management	□	✓
Editorial Calendars	□	✓
Collateral Management		✓
Project Management		✓
Reporting		✓
Analytics	□	✓
Email Campaigns		✓
Online Newsrooms	□	✓

✓ - Included in most solutions

□ - Not integrated with list management functions or partial solution

CONTACT MANAGEMENT:

When fully integrated with other functions of on-demand public relations management software, the contact management function enables detailed tracking of the organization’s contacts with every journalist and other influential individuals. Each interaction can include date-stamped notes, documents, pitch details, and other relevant information to provide a robust and instantly accessible profile. Research shows an integrated contact management function results in average productivity gains of 87 percent in responding to media requests^A. This feature is especially helpful in providing continuity when different staff members are likely to interact with a given media outlet or reporter. For large organizations that interact frequently with the media on a variety of topics, a customized contact management database is essential to effective communications management.

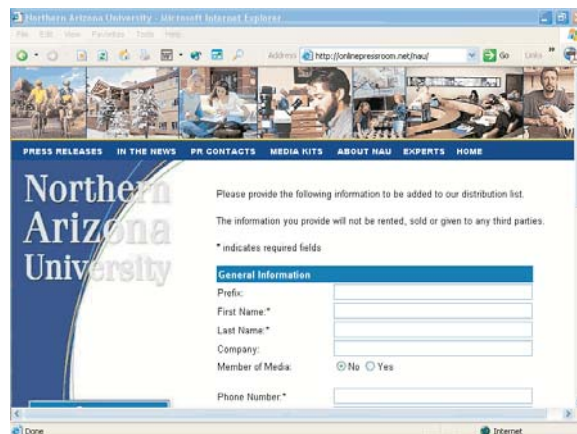


Contact details and histories increase productivity.

Rachel Query, deputy director of media relations for The Humane Society of the United States, says, “Never before have we had the ability to track all of the reporters who have been covering our issues. With Vocus, I can record all communications with reporters, and then quickly pull up that person’s contact information and know [whether] that’s the right person to pitch.”

NEWS MANAGEMENT:

This feature enables users to easily review, sort, store and retrieve thousands of news mentions from a variety of sources throughout the country and beyond. Much of this can be set to run on an automated basis, leading to productivity increases as high as 60 percent^A.



Allow journalists to self-certify their news interests.

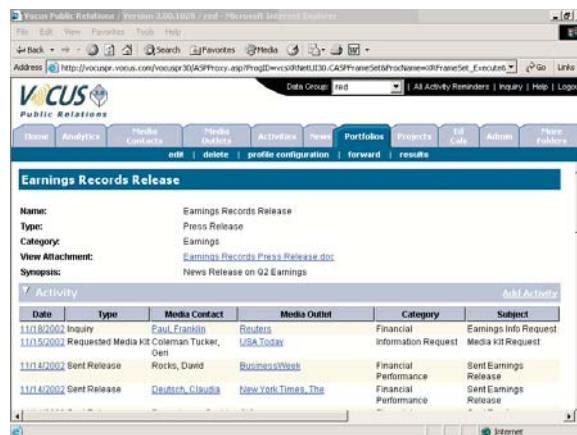
The news management feature enables you to:

- Create, distribute, and store electronic clip books, manually or automatically, according to a schedule you determine in advance.
- Retrieve archived clips instantly whenever a critical issue heats up or an executive suddenly requests all available background information. Electronic clip archives can instantly be searched using dates, names, titles, key words and other parameters, much like the Internet.
- Significantly strengthen media relationships by knowing what type of coverage each outlet and reporter has been providing, and then adjusting your communications effort accordingly.
- Quickly and easily issue news releases, saving the average \$750 wire service fee^A per release, and eliminate the need to manually fax and email news releases.

□ EDITORIAL CALENDARS:

Full-featured on-demand public relations management software keeps you informed of upcoming opportunities, to gain incremental press exposure in special editions that focus on your product or service area. Eliminating the need to manually track and research these unique opportunities increases productivity an average of 88 percent^A.

□ COLLATERAL MANAGEMENT:



Document and collateral management provides immediate access and continuity.

Most organizations have a diverse range of collateral marketing materials, from media kits and executive photographs to product brochures and annual reports. Some of these are updated frequently, while others are added or deleted. A central, up-to-date, digital file of the organization’s full range of marketing collateral provides numerous benefits. The entire team, regardless of location or hour of day, can type in a keyword to find the document they need, access and view the materials, ensuring the organization is presenting a unified image. The expense of printing, mailing and stockpiling documents that often go out of date can also be eliminated.

□ PROJECT MANAGEMENT:

Project management software is nothing new, but most standalone applications are generally ill suited for most public relations needs, and can be difficult to integrate with other PR software. In comparison, the project management feature in on-demand public relations management software enables users to easily track and report on a wide range of communications activities and projects, whether by individual staff member or organization-wide.

ANALYTICS:

Measuring and carefully analyzing the results of PR initiatives is the only way managers can know what does and doesn't work. However, until recently analyzing such efforts in-depth required a substantial commitment of scarce resources, and by the time meaningful results could be obtained it was generally too late to act on them.

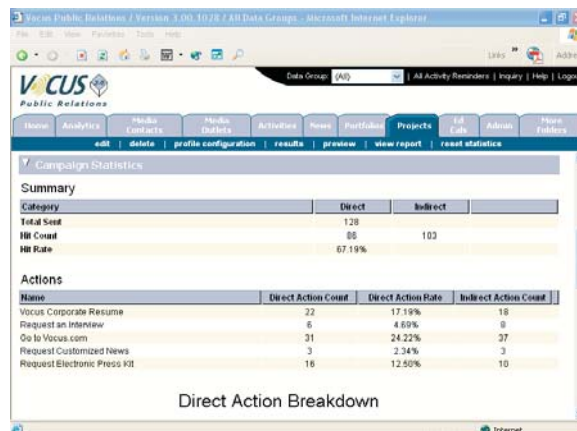


Results tracked in real time demonstrate ROI to management.

Fortunately, the ability to now electronically scan most publications and TV news broadcasts; automatically retrieve, score and archive news clips; rapidly analyze vast quantities of clips; and generate a broad array of electronic reports greatly helps public relations managers to improve their effectiveness and their return on investment. Companies that tracked and analyzed their competitors' performance as well as their own reported productivity gains as high as 90 percent^A.

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS:

Distributing news and other messages by email offers several benefits not found in other distribution methods. For example, campaign managers can learn instantly how many viewers are opening their messages and how many are clicking through. This not only provides an immediate measure of the media's interest level, but also enables the PR staff to react promptly when press response is unfavorable. Email news releases are an easy way to provide journalists with instant access to everything they need to write a better story by providing links to relevant literature, photographs, and data supporting your news. An integrated email campaign function enables PR managers to create and issue a campaign in one quarter of the time standard production methods require^A.



Email campaigns offer instant insight into the impact of your online communications.

□ ONLINE NEWSROOMS:

The growing ease of online communications is bringing exponential growth in the popularity of online newsrooms that enable organizations to be responsive to the journalists needs around the clock. But, as many organizations have learned, creating and properly managing these digital media centers day-after-day generally requires a substantial commitment of time and money. However, a fully integrated software suite, such as Vocus' on-demand public relations management software, greatly simplifies this task, thereby reducing the burden on staff and budget. What previously required substantial technical expertise and knowledge of HTML coding can now be done quickly and easily by members of the PR staff. Vocus users, in fact, report average savings of approximately \$30,000 in creating and managing their online newsrooms^A.

The response of journalists to online newsrooms created with Vocus is highly positive. Many report that it is easier to find what they need and that responses to their requests are much more timely. When Gap, Inc., the national clothing retailer, launched its online newsroom using Vocus' on-demand public relations management software with an online newsroom, it immediately noted several improvements. From the media standpoint, image placements increased 30 percent over the prior year for the busy fall season, and the placements often were more prominently positioned—a change that management attributes to its Vocus-created newsroom.

The Value of A Single Integrated Software Suite

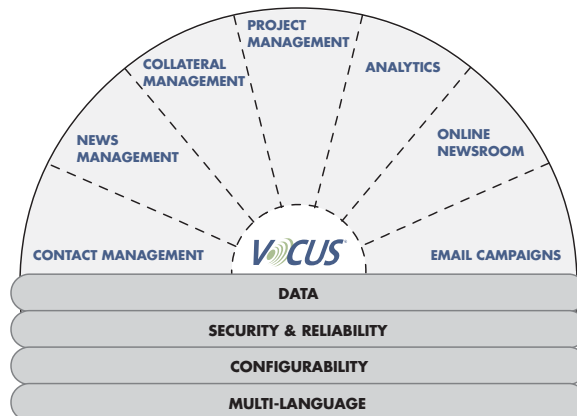
The marriage of public relations and technology that began in the 1980s is now blossoming into a healthy and highly productive relationship. Today, public relations professionals have access to sophisticated technology that can dramatically increase their productivity while helping them to work smarter and more effectively. For companies and organizations, this means better control of public image and an increase in their public relations ROI.

Conclusion

In summary, using a fully integrated on-demand public relations management software suite provides a broad range of benefits for public relations professionals, whether working as a one-person department or part of a large PR team. Here are some of the most notable advantages over performing tasks manually or using limited-function, non-integrated applications:

- Eliminates the need to do many common, highly repetitive tasks manually
- Enables electronic file handling and archiving to provide instant search, sort and analytical capabilities
- Gives instant, fingertip access to pertinent information when journalists call or issues arise
- Permits rapid in-depth analyses of news coverage for any chosen period
- Generates and distributes customized reports automatically
- Frees time for planning, managing and responding to inquiries
- Facilitates consistent response to the media with less duplication
- Improves the ability to support and validate past and future PR initiatives
- Archives past programs, results and media relationships

Vocus' on-demand software for public relations not only offers all of these functions and more in a single suite, but also fully integrates them so users can transition smoothly among them while "on-the-fly" – saving time and eliminating the frustrations of software incompatibilities.



Vocus' public relations software is available in a Professional Edition for small to medium-size PR departments, and in an Enterprise Edition for larger organizations with more complex needs.

The Gap's public relations spokesperson says, "Vocus delivered an easy-to-use solution that is exactly what we wanted. It supports all the communications needs of our brands." According to a Goodwill Industries representative, "We've increased our productivity by 50 percent since adopting Vocus' public relations software. It's like having an additional staff member." Peoples Energy's Elizabeth Castro says, "With Vocus, we capture everything, and all the information is integrated in one place so the whole team can access it."

Now is an ideal time for organizations and companies to review their public relations capabilities, especially in light of the dramatic advances in information technology in recent years, and the adaptation of these to the unique needs of the public relations profession.

ENDNOTE:

A. Source: Vocus: ROI White Paper, Hobson & Company, January 2003

About Vocus, Inc.

Vocus is the global leader in on-demand software for public relations and government relations. Vocus products help thousands of customers to plan, execute and measure communications programs. In today's increasingly complex communications environment, Vocus software helps organizations deliver the right message to the right audience while improving productivity, lowering costs and measuring results.

Vocus serves a global customer base that includes American Medical Association; Eckerd; FedEx; Library of Congress; Pulte Corp.; and World Bank. Vocus is a privately held company with headquarters in Lanham, Md., and offices in North America, Europe and Asia. For more information visit www.vocus.com or call 800.345.5572.