

Maximizing the Value of Your News: From Twitter to Google



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As the objectives of Public Relations are shifting to generate interest not just among journalists but consumers, investors and other audiences, it's important to adjust your outreach strategies accordingly. And as PR professionals know, every audience has a different contact preference and with today's possibilities, it can be difficult to find the right method.

While more traditional distribution methods, such as personalized outreach are still vital to success, a number of additional methods have emerged to help you extend the reach of each of these methods. Distributing your news through targeted emails, online news distribution services, and company newsrooms is enhanced by incorporating social media and messaging platforms.

By leveraging both traditional and new outreach strategies, you can create a successful PR campaign that truly maximizes both the impact of your news and the dollars you put behind it.

This paper will illustrate how to combine your traditional PR methods with the latest tools and techniques to cost-effectively communicate with each of your target audiences.

Rethinking your Audience

As you approach this new landscape and determine the best tools for your audiences, keep in mind what appeals to each. Some examples include:

- **Media**—Significant news, including new products and customer wins, that either helps build a story or is worthy of coverage.
- **Consumers**—News, such as product upgrades, that will help them better understand your offerings.
- **Investors**—Financial news, customer wins, awards and news that portrays your organization as solid and growing and a good investment.

Today you can break down the artificial boundaries driven by distribution tools that only reach one distinct audience, such as wire services. New tools allow you to distribute your news to multiple audiences through one vehicle, enabling your news to become viral in nature and continue to give your message momentum.

When determining which audience you would like to reach, decide on the methods that will help you, every release is different and will require its own distribution strategy. Look closely at your goals and determine the distribution that will have the strongest impact for the company and help tell your story.

Traditional Methods Still Matter

With everyone talking about the new world of social media tools, it is important to start with the basics and grow your PR strategy from there. Traditional methods for distributing your news have not been replaced but can be used in conjunction with these new tools to extend the reach and impact of your message.

Personally reaching out to targeted journalists has always been the cornerstone of public relations. Email is a powerful communications tool to reach individual journalists and deliver news straight to their inbox.

No matter what outlet you are dealing with, online or offline, do your homework and research. Pitching reporters without researching them first is dangerous, and may result in you not only losing a story but also trust in you as a professional. Take the time to familiarize yourself with the topics they care about and more importantly, their perspective.

Today's PR software can provide you with basic information on reporters and their coverage areas. In the

case of Vocus, you are able to get the basic information as well as more in-depth background as well. Use the information to target the best reporters for your stories and create a pitch that will get their attention.

Aside from enabling journalists to easily obtain information about the company, email distributions can also provide valuable metrics on the effectiveness of your public relations programs. Many email distribution platforms can keep track of who received the email, who opened it and which documents or links they accessed.

While it may not be seen as the most advanced form of communication, the telephone is still a very valuable tool for public relations professionals. A quick call and introduction can go a long way in developing a relationship and helping you stand out.

Building a website with information about your organization is one of the most important things you can do to establish your credibility with journalists and consumers. Increasingly, the company website or online newsroom has become the first place journalists turn for basic information about the organization and its products and services. Making key facts about your company readily available is a smart investment.

While these methods will get your message out to the media, it is not enough to ensure news coverage. However, when combined with a newsworthy message, follow up and other distribution methods you greatly increase your chance of catching the attention of the media and getting some ink.

Integrated Communications Offer PR New Opportunities

As PR has grown over the past few years, so has its potential to become a key part of the organization's marketing function. The Internet has created opportunities for PR to not only grow a brand and generate publicity but to play a part in driving sales and raising the company's online visibility. With virtually unlimited space and restrictions, the Internet has opened up a new avenue for you to get your story out to a much wider audience.

In many cases online channels also serve as an avenue to get in front of the media by putting your story directly where they search for news and information. The media's role in Internet-based communications has shifted to include news consumption as well as distribution. In fact, according to the Arketi Web Watch Survey, 74 percent of journalists report finding story ideas from websites and 54 percent report blogs spark story ideas.

Consumers and journalists are increasingly going online to find news and information about products and services. According to recent studies, the influence and power the Internet holds is evident:

- 81% of Internet users worldwide used search engines to find information (TNS "Digital World, Digital Life", December 2008)
- 76% looked up news (TNS "Digital World, Digital Life", December 2008)
- 89% of Internet users use a search engine to find information. (Pew Internet & American Life Project, May 2008)
- 73% of Internet users use the Internet to get news. (Pew Internet & American Life Project May 2008)

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 receives higher rankings on these sites. Search Engine Optimized 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.

Search Engine Optimization is designed to help your news stand out amid all of the cyber clutter. Online news distribution services, such as PRWeb, have become increasingly useful in keeping the company highly ranked in organic search results and enhancing the success of the online marketing team. With coordination, press releases can now enhance the effectiveness of company messaging, drive customers to the organization's website and,

ultimately, lead to an increase in sales and revenue. In addition, SEO helps extend the “life” of your press release by keeping them in the long tail of the web.

Online press releases also offer multimedia support. Companies are able to include elements, such as images, audio and video to effectively create a richer, more engaging reader experience. 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. To truly reap the rewards of the online press releases and search engine indexing, you need to keep a few things in mind when writing your release:

- **Keywords**—Headlines should contain keywords related to major themes in your news. The headline is not only extremely important for SEO but is also your first opportunity to engage your consumer and will generate the title tag of your release. Additional keywords should be strategically placed in the release to create rich content that is easily retrievable.
- **Enhanced URL**—Search engines look at the keywords used in a hyperlink to a website to determine its ranking. If a hyperlink has keywords included and points to your website, then when a person does a search for those keywords, they are going to be more likely to find you among their results.
- **Anchor Text/Embedded Keywords**—Embedding hyperlinks into your release is another way to increase your ranking and drive traffic to your website. However, hyperlinks should not exceed one for every 100 words of content.
- **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.



Online press releases have the power to reach millions.

Since many of the online services are significantly less expensive than traditional wire services, online news distribution services offer organizations of all sizes an additional resource. An online release will typically range from free up to \$400. Investigate your options to find an affordable service that has built relationships and established a distribution model that will truly help your company.

New Tools To Extend your Message

Social media offers new opportunities to activate...brand enthusiasm.” - Stacy DeBroff, founder and CEO of Mom Central

Social media is a great place to help spread your message but it can be tricky. Although social media makes it possible to simply shout your message whenever and wherever, you will likely end up with the wrong kind of attention. Social networks are communities and to be fully prepared to engage with them, you have to take part in it. Listen to the conversations about your company and the industry. Understand what is being said and get a

perspective on what you should say, try not to focus solely on an angle to enter the conversation.

The creation and evolution of Internet-based communications has allowed media, bloggers and consumers to collaboratively participate in online conversations about news and information. To help spread news and information across the Internet and around the world, today's communications can leverage content shared through traditional methods. Today's news makers must make their content easily accessible to be plugged-in to social media audiences.

RSS feeds automatically bring updated information straight to the desktop of subscribers. Users can monitor news, blogs and more. An increasing number of websites offer RSS feeds, which is identified by a small button denoting either RSS or XML. Enabling your site with an RSS component allows audiences to subscribe to your company's news and information as well as pass it along to other interested parties, generating conversation and interest along the way.

Popular sites such as Facebook and Twitter have emerged as a great way to share your news. But they are not only about sharing news and media, like all forms of social media, they are about dialogue. These sites are primarily ways to discuss and share thoughts and ideas and should not be used simply to market your company.

According to Brian Solis' free eBook [The Essential Guide to Social Media](#), "If you're not part of the conversation, then you're leaving it to others to answer questions and provide information, whether it's accurate or incorrect. Or, even worse, you may be leaving it up to your competition to jump in to become the resource for the community. Yes, there will be negative comments. Yes, you'll invite unsolicited feedback. Yes, people will question your intentions. Negativity will not go away simply because you opt out of participating. Negative commentary, at the very least, is truly an opportunity to change the perception that you did or didn't know existed."

Many brands have successfully used these social media sites as platforms to engage in conversations with their customers and peers and have built a solid network. Once in place, your network can become a tremendously powerful distribution point for sharing information. Content through these sites are easily shared and re-posted throughout the social networks using social media tools, resulting in additional distribution for your news.

It is acceptable to post your latest company announcement for your Twitter or Facebook followers to see or engage in conversations regarding your brand. In fact, the viral effect social media sites have on your message can help distribute it throughout the web and extend the reach of your news and the ultimate value of your news.

According to Mashable.com's Top 40 Twitter brands, Southwest Airlines is among the examples of Twitter success. The company has been recognized for its ability to use the tool to communicate with their audience and disseminate information. According to the article the Southwest Twitter expert, "had been blogging for more than a year when we discovered and joined Twitter in July 2007. We were intrigued by its possibilities." And their advice, "Be honest, be real, be quick, be FUN."

As PR tools advance, it is becoming easier to incorporate social media into your strategy. Many online news distribution sites allow you to easily include your news in blogs or create social media bookmarks. For example PRWeb, allows you to distribute your news through the online distribution service while simultaneously updating your existing Twitter account with a "tweet" and link to the release.

Incorporating social media outreach and conversation into your PR strategy is a great way to generate buzz and invite more people to your company's spot on the Web.

Conclusion

With so many methods for distributing news and new audiences to reach, it can be difficult for you as a PR professional to know where to begin.

There are multiple methods to reach each audience and while not every release needs to include each distribution method, you should maximize your distribution for releases that will have a strong impact on the company and help tell your story.

Leveraging more traditional distribution methods, such as newswires and personalized outreach are still vital to success and combining them with the power of the Internet will help extend your reach and get the most out of your efforts.

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.