

PR News

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December 20, 2010

prnewsonline.com

Issue 48 Vol. 66

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Reinvent Press Releases With SEO Tactics

A New Wave band, the Buggles, once had a hit song called “Video Killed the Radio Star.” It was about how cruel new technologies and modes of communication can be to institutions that refuse to change.

Listening to the rumblings in the PR business lately, you’d think they were singing a tune called “Social Media Killed the Press Release.”

But nothing could be more wrong. The truth is, social media has helped to transform the press release—giving it new life, a vastly larger audience and a huge role in generating traffic to your organization’s Web site.

This “new wave” press release has evolved into a more compelling and interactive medium. It’s concise, and easy to retweet and share. It encourages dialogue and interaction.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is important to the success of today’s press release. Optimized press releases attract consumers and influencers, as well as journalists—and pulls them in to your story.

To get the biggest bang out of SEO, you may need to change the way you write your release. Some basic, traditional best practices still apply, but here are 10 tips to keep in mind to optimize your releases:

1. Choose the Right Keywords. Search engines think like your audience. Know

the keywords or phrases that will drive them to the news release, and motivate them to click through to pages on your Web site, before you write. Do basic keyword research on sites like **Google AdWords**, **Wordtracker** or **Keyword Discovery**.

2. Speak Your Audience’s Language. Avoid buzzwords and jargon. Your audience may use different terms to describe your product or industry. For example, if you’re promoting a new athletic shoe, are people searching on sneaker or gym shoe or tennis shoe? Use keyword research to make sure you are talking their language.

3. Be Specific. Be Selective. A press release containing nothing but keywords will confuse search engines and turn off readers. Use only three to five keywords in a 400-word release. Try to find keywords that are favored by consumers but are unique to your message—and are thus less used by competitors. Don’t overuse them, and write clearly.

4. Use Your Heads. Use one to two keywords in the headline and subhead. Search engine spiders read left to right; take that into account as you compose your headlines and your first paragraph. Use no more than 200 characters in the summary or subhead.

5. Optimize From the Top Down. Spiders also read from the top down. Using keywords in the first two paragraphs makes a much bigger impact than using them lower down. As you write, think in sound bites, like 140-character tweets.

6. Have Anchor Text, Will Travel. What is your ideal outcome after someone reads your release? Likely it’s to get your news out, increase traffic to your home and/or product pages and get a better view of prospects and customers. Anchor text links can take your audiences where they—and you—want to go. They are made up of hyperlinked words (often keywords) that are underscored or in colored type. By clicking on it, readers can drill down for more information about the keyword/topic they searched on, and register for a future sales opportunity.

7. Don’t Over-Link. As with keywords, don’t overdo anchor text: It causes confusion and dilutes the impact of the links themselves. Offer two to three links for a 400-word press release.

8. You Can’t Go Home Again ... and Again. Don’t just link to your homepage. Keep readers engaged by driving them to other pages that relate directly to the content of the linked text.

9. Multimedia Rules. Research shows that press releases with pictures, video and other multimedia get at least 80% more search traffic than text-only releases. They’re usually more appealing and interesting, too. You’d be surprised how easy it is to create your own video or add visuals that support your product, message or campaign.

10. Post Your Release on an Optimized Press Release Web site. SEO Web sites boost results because they have higher page rankings than most corporate Web sites; most are cost-effective and easy to use. Some enable you to create online newsrooms with video/multimedia, white papers, FAQs and other ancillary materials.

The press release has never been more alive. But it is changing—and must continue to evolve. Tips like these can help you take advantage of the press release’s exciting present and future. **PRN**

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