Immortalize Your Press Releases Online Via SEO
By Jeff Stacey

Search engine optimization is an important part of any external PR campaign strategy, and should be top of mind with every member of your corporate communications team.

A staple of an organization's website, SEO is only now becoming a key weapon within press releases, allowing organizations to gain extra exposure directly with those who are most interested in the content of your announcement.

Press releases receive broad distribution online when they are sent to media outlets via a press release distribution service. The traditional print and broadcast media are very important audiences, and many press releases are of interest to financial reporters and securities analysts. However, a search engine optimized press release has the ability to "live" online via Google, Bing and Yahoo for many days, weeks and sometimes even years after the initial announcement is made.

Rather than having a press release get only one shot to deliver its message to the public and the press, an SEO press release will have an extended lifespan, giving it extra value, reach and staying power. Whether this leads to direct sales, social media engagement, or additional publicity in the press, it's a tool that every public relations executive needs to consider.

Maximize the Web's Power

The Web is fundamentally a persistent archive of content, and recognizing that your press release can essentially become a Web page in this "archive" will impact the way you think of a press release. For example, practically every Web page includes at least a few hypertext links—what we call anchor text—yet most press releases issued today do not make use of this important feature. Best of all, those who are searching online for the keywords related to your press release are also those who are most likely to want to buy your company's products or services, or reporters who are interested in covering your announcement.

Making your keywords a hypertext link (using the anchor text feature) in a press release increases the placement of that release in the search engine results page, and we know that natural or "organic" search results are more useful because many people tend to ignore paid-for results.

For many years now, press releases have been a solid source of content for the "news" section of search engines. However, more recently all the major search engines are cross-pollinating between the different sections of their service. Now news appears in the "Web" search results, as do photos. In fact, issuing an optimized press release with a photo is one of the best ways to get included in the search engine results page (SERP). With the growth of online video, multimedia press releases are becoming increasingly popular and are highly effective.

Turn Your News Into Views

Many organizations find it difficult to update and expand content on their corporate websites with the fast-paced regularity that's demanded. PR professionals, in particular, routinely produce a steady stream of new content in the form of press releases. This new content is fresh meat to a search engine, but the content needs to be optimized and tagged to be search-engine-friendly. Search engines love content, and press releases are a valuable source.

The following tips should be followed to get the most benefits from a search engine optimized press release:

- Anchor text, related links, tags and search-engine friendly metadata improve the relevance of press releases by improving the placement of your press release in the search engine results. Choose words that get to the heart of your news, whether it's the product or service name, stock ticker, description or the audience its serves.
- Social media widgets facilitate redistribution to "socialize" your press release and extend the "organic" reach of your news announcement by allowing users to re-post items on Facebook, Twitter, Delicious and Digg.
- The SEO life cycle is: research (identity your key words), prepare (use anchor text), distribute (publish and "socialize" via an SEO service such as the one offered by GlobeNewswire), monitor (track click-throughs and traffic) and report (receive analytics reports).
- Refine the key words of your release's anchor text to see which ones create the best results.

Following these tips will help you elevate your news to new heights on the Web.

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