

BETTER VISIBILITY THROUGH SEO PR:

2 simple steps to attract readers and search engines



IS YOUR NEWS EASY TO FIND?

If someone searches for keywords related to your news content, where do you show up in the results? When distributing press releases, how much media coverage do you normally get? No matter how you answer these questions, the good news is that there's always room for improvement. With just a few simple tips on how to make your press releases appeal to journalists, readers and search engines, it's possible to drive more web traffic, boost link-backs to your website and increase media opportunities.

When it comes to news research, no tool is as widely used as the search engine. This is as true for journalists as it is for the average web user. In fact, a full 95% of journalists now use search engines like Google or Yahoo, according to a 2009 survey carried out by PR firm Arketi. Some 87% of those surveyed reported using the Web to find news sources, while 89% used it to search for new story ideas.

But journalists are just one type of gatekeeper in the world of online PR. They may help to get your story into the right channels, but they won't put it into the hands of eagerly searching audiences. Only search engines can do this, and only the right combination of effective search engine optimization (SEO) and sharp headlines will gain these readers' attention.

Step One: Know your keywords, and use them wisely

Before you write a single word of your press release, make a list of the likeliest, most relevant search terms for your target audience. Is your news about a popular product or service? Does it relate to a high-profile client or event? Which topics are trending in your industry? By using relevant and frequently searched keywords in your news release, you can increase the chances of climbing the online rankings and news search results. The more relevant and traffic-heavy keywords you can include in your news release, the better your chance of climbing up the list of online rankings and news search results. Additionally, try to concentrate top keywords within the first 250 words of your press release. This can dramatically increase your click-through rate.

Once you have a shortlist of top keywords, keep the following tips in mind:

Avoid corporate buzzwords: As an industry professional, it can be all too easy to get caught up in obscure lingo and keywords that customers and journalists might not even understand, much less look for. Does anyone really search for "innovative cloud-based solutions" or "seamless integration"? Part of this is simply common sense: Step into your target audience's shoes for a moment, and you'll quickly see which search words are everyday terminology, and which are industry jargon. Another tip is to check your web analytics. Which keywords have helped people find your news releases and website in the past?

Start with meta tags: Make sure the top keywords are included in your title and meta tags. This is not only crucial to ensuring that search engines, journalists and readers find and click on your release – it also provides a list of key terms you should be certain to use in headlines and body copy. Meta descriptions, in addition to containing relevant keywords, should also give an original, compelling reason to read further in 160 characters or less. After all, these few lines may be the first impression many readers get of your company. So make them count.



Making search engine optimization a priority can dramatically boost your company's visibility.

Use hyperlinks: A well-written press release is both captivating and concise. The drawback is that this leaves little room for in-depth information. Hyperlinks provide a chance to guide and maintain the reader's attention by driving traffic to your website and other pages related to your release. Equally importantly, links in your copy will affect search engine optimization, so always be sure to include keywords in any hyperlinked phrases. Finally, if you use MyNewsdesk remember to crosslink to other pages within your newsroom.

Media-rich content drives traffic: Headlines and body copy aren't the only places where keywords matter. Images, videos and other documents can also drive traffic, especially if they are easily searchable. By including headlines, summaries and tags – and by giving all types of media relevant file names – you'll make your material much easier to find through engines such as Google Images or Picsearch.

Step Two: Sharpen your headlines

The headline is the most important part of your press release. It's the hook that draws readers into your release and the cue that sets your story apart from the hundreds of others that pass through newsrooms every day. In terms of SEO, headlines are also the place where keywords count most. Fail to capture the attention of either readers or search engines here and even the best story will go unread.

“FAIL TO CAPTURE THE ATTENTION OF EITHER READERS OR SEARCH ENGINES AND EVEN THE BEST STORY WILL GO UNREAD.”

Here are a few tips for writing attention-grabbing headlines:

Keep it to the point: Tell what your story is about as quickly and effectively as possible. Ten words or less will almost always suffice. Long headlines can be hard to take in at a glance and can often be cut off as news releases are passed around as links and email subject lines. So spare the details and focus on the heart of the story. Your headline just needs to attract search engines and convince readers to open your press release. Also be sure to include the most important keyword in your headline.

Stay relevant: Every journalist caters to a specific target audience with its own particular interests. If it's a trade publication on shipping, include words like "harbors", "shipping", or "freight". If your story has a local focus, give your headline a local angle including the name of the city or region. This might sound obvious, but it's easy to forget the simple fact that it's not your business journalists are interested in – it's the story. And that story needs to speak directly to their readers and the terms they search for.

Keep it simple: You're writing a press release, not ad copy or newspaper headlines. So don't be too witty. Again, it's your story that matters, and your headline should accurately summarize this. Journalists are always under the pressure of deadlines. If they are to use your release as source material for articles, the biggest mistake you could make is distracting them with a misleading or convoluted headline.

Think “outside-in”: A new contract or new hire might be news to you, but let's face it: most readers have probably never heard of your business or your staff. Unless your company is famous, writers don't need to see its name in a headline. Think from the readers' perspective. Where is the general interest? Why should people care?

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING:

<http://www.arketi.com/>

<http://mashable.com/2008/11/04/how-to-make-press-releases-seo-friendly/>

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<http://flackchick.wordpress.com/2010/03/19/easy-tips-to-optimize-your-press-release-for-media-relations-success/>

<http://www.prweb.com/pr/release-example/index.html>

<http://www.publicityheaven.com/free-stuff/articles/write-press-release-headlines-that-capture-journalists-attention/>

MyNewsdesk makes it faster and easier for companies, journalists, bloggers and opinion leaders to gain relevant exposure – on their own terms. For more tips and advice on how to search engine optimize your press releases, visit www.mynewsdesk.com



The News Exchange Site is a place where company content can be exchanged on users' terms – guaranteeing that interested readers are seeing your story.