

Seven Deadly Sins of Marketing Press Releases

Marketing press releases drive leads and increase visibility

While literally hundreds of articles have been published on traditional press releases, they often ignore the existence, uniqueness and effectiveness of *marketing press releases*. A marketing press release is intended to drive sales leads *and* provide increased media visibility. Moreover, marketing press releases are the most cost-effective method for increasing SEO (search engine optimization). This technique works in all industries, but it has been tried, tested and proven by the marketing efforts of HR and employee benefit suppliers.

Unfortunately many organizations attempt marketing press releases and fail because they do not understand the fundamental differences between marketing and traditional press releases—the audience and the purpose of each. To avoid the most common pitfalls caused by these misperceptions, marketers must avoid the seven deadly sins of marketing press releases.

Seven Deadly Sins

1

Written for the media instead of your prospects and/or customers

While the media plays a relevant role in the distribution of information, they are typically looking for news that aligns with their publication. On the other hand, prospects and customers are looking for news (i.e., products and services) that will make their lives easier, help them meet their business objectives and save them time and/or money.

When writing a marketing press release, focus on prospects and customers' needs. Marketers are typically far more aware of these needs—and they must target their content to fit these needs.

2

Sent to journalists instead of the Internet

Prospects are not searching journalists' networks or databases—they are looking online.

- Over 130 million American adults search online
- 84% Americans use a search engine to find information, products and services
- 72% Americans use a search engine to get news
- In 2005, total online searches increased by over 50% - from 3 billion to over 5 billion searches.

Marketing press releases, posted online through sources such as HRmarketer, allow prospects to find information directly. Marketing press releases also allows prospects direct access to an organization's educational offers, website and resources. The more online content you generate with marketing press releases, the more traffic you will drive to your website, the more leads you'll generate – the formula works!

3

Lacks promotional aspect (does not offer links to the website or valuable content)

For lead generation, marketing press releases are most effective when they link back to the website or an educational offer (such as a white paper, an article or a webinar).

In order to make marketing press releases drive prospects to the promotional offer, the offer should be mentioned several times in the body of the article and link directly to the web information capture form. Also, display the actual offer URL at least twice, because different blogs and portals may not display the embedded keyword links directly.

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4

Not available in RSS format¹

Today, 27% of Americans online are using RSS² (compared to 2% in 2005) of which 63% of large companies are planning on syndicating content via RSS by the end of the year. All the content you publish, whether it is a marketing press release or a blog entry, should be available in RSS format. RSS allows instantaneous streaming of content to those who have requested a feed from your site; in other words, your content reaches them as soon as it reaches the Internet. When publishing marketing press releases, this is essential because it allows customers and prospects who have registered to keep track of news and download the latest offer (while capturing their contact information).

5

Not utilizing popularity of blogs

Blogs are fast becoming powerful Internet marketing tools for businesses, and their popularity continues to climb – “blog” was picked as the word of the year in 2004 by Merriam-Webster, a U.S. dictionary publisher.

A blog and subsequent blog directories provide additional links plus using RSS syndication will increase traffic to a website.

Also, blogs that use TrackBack functionality allow readers of other blogs to find the marketing press releases through their blog's TrackBack system.

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6

Using “Newsworthy” versus optimized headlines

- Bin Laden purportedly clears Moussaoui
- Mortgage loan demand falls
- Sticky showdown on 'Idol'

These headlines from recent newspapers are all newsworthy, but not optimized. For example, “Bin Laden purportedly clears Moussaoui.” While those looking specifically for those two men would find this report, others who are looking for news on terrorism, Iraq or Al-Queda—all relevant search terms for this article—would not find it. Also, “purportedly” is not an optimized search term; most people wouldn't start a search with such a word.

In order to create an optimized headline, think about the words the audience would use to search the web. To capture HR buyers, choose HR and other terms that are relevant to readers in the headline.

7

Not search optimized (Does not contain embedded hyperlinks and text for SEO keywords and phrases)

Marketing press releases are both sent over the wire (distributed to the Internet search engines, related news portals and media outlet subscribers) and posted to the corporate

¹ RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a family of web feed formats, specified in XML and used for web syndication. RSS is used by (among other things) news websites, weblogs and podcasting. Web feeds provide web content or summaries of web content together with links to the full versions of the content, and other metadata.

² Jupiter Research “RSS Comes of Age” April 26, 2006.

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website (posting on corporate website adds more relevant content with keyword phrases to a website raising its ranking). In order to take full advantage of both placements, your marketing press releases

should drive website SEO as well through keywords and phrases. If readers searching for HR, human resources and talent management are in your target market, use these words in the body of your press release to drive SEO. Links are another vital element of SEO—each link to your offer raises the rating of your site.

For more about marketing press releases, visit www.HRmarketer.com.

About HR Marketer

HRmarketer is a service of Fisher Vista LLC, a marketing and information services firm focusing exclusively on the human capital industry. The company services over 300 HR service providers, employee benefit brokers and consultants, helping them increase their visibility and generate sales leads.