

## Boost Your Marketing ROI Using “Marketing” PR

Most leading human resource and employee benefits suppliers spend 20 percent or more of gross revenue on marketing and public relations, but how this money is allocated is dramatically changing – especially for progressive industry leaders who understand the effectiveness of online marketing. Print advertising, the once powerful oligarchy controlling most HR suppliers’ marketing dollars, has been on the decline, replaced by online marketing and PR activities. This is driven by the fact that increasing numbers of HR professionals turn to the Internet when researching new products and services. As more buyers of HR products and services use the Internet to look for suppliers, the metrics of online publicity, website traffic and qualified sales leads are becoming the standard measurement for how marketing and PR departments are evaluated.

However, the shift to “Marketing PR” and incorporating Web 2.0 technologies like “social media” to marketing and PR campaigns is not universal for HR/Benefits suppliers. Many suppliers (and their PR firms) continue to spend thousands of dollars on traditional PR as if it were 1993 (before the World Wide Web).

So, how are industry leaders changing the game and driving more leads, generating more publicity and creating more website traffic than their competitors - with little or no additional costs? Many are allocating more dollars to “Marketing PR” tactics. Marketing PR is the combining of what are traditionally two separate departments, public relations and marketing, to one integrated front whereby all marketing and PR activities focus on reaching buyers directly. Marketing PR incorporates both traditional marketing and PR tactics with social media and other “Web 2.0” Internet technologies to support the measurable goals of online publicity, increased web site traffic, search-optimization (SEO) and lead generation.

When HR buyers go looking for solutions to their problems, those suppliers who have committed to enhancing their online visibility are the first to be found on popular sites such as Yahoo! and Google. In fact, Yahoo News is now more popular than CNN.com or MSNBC when measured by unique visitors to

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	Jun-06	Category Reach
Total Internet: Total Audience	172,907	N/A
General News	94,070	100%
Yahoo! News	31,186	33%
MSNBC	23,393	25%
AOL News	20,405	22%
CNN	19,891	21%
Internet Broadcasting	9,518	10%
The New York Times Brand	8,593	9%
Tribune Newspapers	8,456	9%
Knight Ridder Digital	7,585	8%
ABCNEWS DIGITAL	7,533	8%
USATODAY Sites	7,252	8%

Top 10 General News Sites by Unique Visitors  
Unique Visitors (000)  
June 2006  
Total U.S. – Home, Work and University Internet Users  
Source: comScore Media Matrix

## Growth of Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO, as defined by Wikipedia, is:

*A set of methods aimed at improving the number and quality of visitors to a web site from “natural” or “organic” search engine listings. SEO is primarily concerned with advancing the goals of a website by improving the number and position of its organic search results for a wide variety of relevant keywords. SEO strategies may increase both the number and quality of visitors. A quality visitor is one who takes the conversion action intended by the web site operator, such as making a purchase or requesting further information.*

In other words, SEO is used to increase the number of relevant visitors who come to your site **and** take the first step in the sales cycle. But in order to take advantage of SEO, your website must be designed to capture buyer information. This means having landing pages (with relevant content that includes your targeted keywords) linked to from the offers you’ve promoted via your Marketing PR activities.

<sup>1</sup> Heather Lloyd-Martin, “Search Engine Marketing Boosts ROI for B2B Sites”.  
Published on SearchEngineWatch.

their website. According to Barbara Coll, CEO of the SEO firm WebMama, Inc., “When a company's name appears on the search engine results page, it gains perceived status and top of mind awareness.”<sup>1</sup> Your online visibility makes everything else you do have a higher perceived value and makes each marketing deliverable more readily available to your target audience.

*“Search engines have become a crucial first step for HR buyers as they search for products and services. No longer are marketers constrained by the gatekeepers of traditional media outlets, or bound solely to costly print advertising.”*

**Mark Willaman**  
Founder of HRmarketer



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It is essential to recognize that SEO is an ongoing task. You cannot hire a SEO agency or an SEO specialist for a few months and expect your SEO results to remain high for the next year. According to SEOmoz, “Services like link building, content creation, linkbaiting, viral marketing, social media optimization, reputation management, even keyword research and analytics monitoring don't end - they are tasks that demand attention every month.”<sup>2</sup> Many of the tasks to enhance SEO can be done in-house as a part of marketing—you're probably doing quite a bit of internal work that can help with SEO already.

## Marketing PR and SEO Checklist

So, what are these tactics that draw highly-qualified prospects to your website like moths to a flame when they are ready, willing and able to progress in the sales cycle?

1. **“Search optimize” your website:** Before you engage in any Marketing PR effort, you should ensure your website is search engine optimized and properly set up to achieve maximum value from Marketing PR. This includes keyword research to identify your company's relevant keywords and phrases (e.g., finding the keywords and search terms your prospects are most likely typing into a search engine); updating your META tags (title, description and keywords); ensuring that the body copy on each Web page includes your targeted keywords and key phrases you wish to optimize for your site and that these same keywords and phrases are integrated with each page's title tags and descriptions; fix all broken links, spelling/grammar and other errors within your site; and search optimize your site's design and/or navigation (e.g., text hyperlink footers, site map, etc.).
2. **Online information capture synchronization:** If you create an offer (e.g., a free whitepaper) you should require an online information capture form to be completed in order to download the offer. You should also promote the offer in your marketing press releases to drive more leads and measure the effectiveness of your offer(s). An online

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<sup>2</sup> Posted by owner and operator of SEOmoz, alias Randfish Oct. 26, 2006.



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capture form can be as specific or general as you like. Ideally, it should be used to help your sales and marketing team qualify prospects and determine what type of marketing follow-up is appropriate. Also be sure to customize your information capture forms to each campaign and synchronize the form with your CRM software.

3. **Marketing press releases:** “Search Optimized” press releases will improve your rankings for key search terms and increase the traffic to your website, ultimately giving you more visibility, site traffic and leads. You should distribute at least one per month, but ideally two or more when promoting webinars, white paper downloads, free trials, or other content offers. The more you send, the better return on your PR investments. At a minimum, search optimized press releases include embedded hyperlinks of your keywords and phrases back to appropriate landing pages on your website (whose title tags match relate to these keywords), plus relevant images that support the release content (photos, screen shots, logos, etc).

Each press release should also be placed on an announcements/news page on your website to increase content and, by extension, the repetition of key words. These same pages should allow prospects to subscribe to the RSS feed of your news and announcements. See <http://www.hrmarketer.com/home/pressreleases/index.php> for an example.

4. **Content creation/offer development:** The content of the offer can also be used to enhance your website if placed on an internal page. The links in the marketing press releases to your site will also increase your SEO.
5. **Byline articles and media placements:** Each whitepaper or other content offer can be recycled into a byline article and placed in targeted online media outlets – with hyperlinks back to your site. The more mentions of your company in the news and the more available links to your website, the better your SEO. Consistent execution of

## Case Study in SEO effectiveness: Leade Health, Inc.

Leade Health, a provider of health and wellness benefits to Fortune 1,000 companies, had an SEO ranking on Google that was approximately 188 last March. Their goal was to be in the top 10. Today they are holding steady at number 7 with an occasional ranking as high as #2. How did they do this?

- Monthly marketing press releases
- White paper development
- Online media placements

With every “marketing” press release and white paper that they release via HRmarketer.com, they continue to build the unique visitor traffic to their website and fill their pipeline with prospective clients. Furthermore, marketing press releases have resulted in nearly 500 downloads of their white papers during a three-month period. They’ve also secured a number of key media placements.

For the full study, see [HR Marketer Case Studies](#)



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these PR activities has a direct effect on your buyer by increasing the familiarity of your brand and an indirect effect by making your website rank higher on sites like Yahoo! News and Google.

These five steps -- all methods of driving leads, placement and visibility -- also help with one of the most critical developments prior to or as a part of SEO: content generation. While you are working on your SEO campaign, you can also utilize other tactics, including traditional marketing and PR activities, to increase your visibility on the internet. These include:

- Blogging
- Podcasting
- Publishing an eNewsletter
- Creating RSS feeds for company news and availability of new content
- Exhibiting
- Direct marketing (online and print)
- Advertising (online and print)
- Publishing byline articles
- Pursuing awards and speaking opportunities
- Hosting webcasts or webinars

Search engines have become a crucial first step for HR buyers as they search for products and services. No longer are marketers constrained by the gatekeepers of traditional media outlets, or bound solely to costly print advertising. By developing and consistently executing the steps shown above, HR and benefits suppliers can realize the full value of a Marketing PR campaign, and place their services squarely in the path of the potential customers they seek.

## About HRmarketer.com

HRmarketer.com 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 human resource and employee benefit service providers, helping them generate publicity, web site traffic, sales leads and improved SEO. HRmarketer brings you the latest information on industry leaders, the tools they use and how they use them. HRmarketer is the # 1 Internet marketing and media visibility service for companies selling to human resource departments and/or targeting employee benefit brokers and consultants. Founded in 2000, HRmarketer is used by recruitment and staffing, payroll, employee benefit, training and development, outsourcing and other human resource suppliers, as well as PR and marketing agencies. HRmarketer combines a database of marketing and PR opportunities with press release distribution, campaign management, business intelligence and advisory services. Learn more by visiting [www.HRmarketer.com](http://www.HRmarketer.com).

