



Using Traditional and Search Engine Marketing (and Social Networking) to **Leverage Your Investments** in Original Content and SEO

Introduction

The Web has had a huge impact on how businesses research human resource products and services. Companies used to rely solely on peers, consultants, trade shows and print magazines for information. While these are still important, the Web has emerged as the primary resource where human resource professionals go to find and research HR software and services. And when a buyer learns about your company offline, they go online to learn more.

Because of this shift, you must have:

1. A search-optimized "marketing" Web site that clearly and quickly tells the prospect who you are, engages them and converts them to sales leads.
2. Lots of original content (e.g., articles, white papers, research reports, etc.) on your Web site.

HR decision makers are searching online for information and tools to help them do their job better and more efficiently. But HR buyers rarely navigate the Web by entering a specific Web site URL. They use search engines, and you must continue to increase your online presence to be found. Having great content on your Web site increases the likelihood of your company showing up on search results.

Our [first](#) and [second](#) articles in this three-part series focused on the above two topics.

Our final article in this series shows you how to:

3. Use search engine marketing and social networking to leverage your investments in original content and SEO. In other words, how to increase your online presence in order to be seen and attract prospects to your Web site.

Other recommended resources include:

- eBook: [How to Reach and Engage Human Resource Buyers and Convert Them to Leads](#)
- eBook: [Conversation Starters – Social Media Marketing in the HR Marketplace](#)
- [HRmarketer Blog](#)
- Podcast Series on iTunes: [The HR Marketshare Podcast](#)
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Not incorporating search engine marketing in your ongoing marketing and PR efforts means your rankings, visibility and sales leads will suffer.

If your company has already invested in SEO, created a great “marketing” Web site and produced lots of compelling content, then you are way ahead of most of your competition. However, stopping here will not guarantee sustainable first-page rankings on the major search engines – in fact, your rankings are likely to plateau or even drop off.

To continue to increase your rankings and maximize your online visibility, you need to engage in aggressive and consistent ongoing marketing and PR activities to keep your brand top of mind with HR decision makers.

Who has the money to invest in a downturn? Those who invested in the last one.

Marketing should not be stopped and started. That’s because there is a lag time between campaigns and sales. Suspending marketing creates serious gaps in your prospect pipeline – something you can’t just kick-start when good times return. It’s not a spigot you can just turn on when it’s convenient for you and realize immediate leads/sales.

One of the most important principles of marketing is persistence. Most marketing experts agree that a target has to be exposed to your message at least six times before it sinks in.

Don’t abandon your “traditional” marketing and PR

While this article focuses mainly on Web 2.0 search engine marketing tactics, by no means are we suggesting you abandon your more traditional marketing and PR activities. In fact, we recommend most companies continue to invest in the following traditional marketing and PR tactics:

Print Advertising

The marketing activity suffering the biggest budget cuts these days is print advertising. While it still has a role, many experts place print advertising as a key to brand maintenance, not new exposure. Once companies obtain a well-known brand status, they will forever spend money just to keep that position. For large companies with established brands (and bigger ad budgets), advertising is used for maintaining brand dominance—but advertising is less effective for “lead generation.” And for print advertising to be most effective, advertisers must be able to commit to at least six placements in the same outlet over a twelve-month time frame. For this reason, smaller companies may not find print advertising a cost-effective investment.

Trade Show Participation: Exhibiting, Speaking and Attending

Trade show participation continues to be a popular lead-generating activity, as it remains the best way to meet prospects face to face. You should attend at least one or two key events per year in order to maintain an industry presence and credibility. We also recommend that senior marketing and/or company executives attend. While sales professionals, not marketing staff, should always staff the exhibit, marketing executives should attend HR events to talk to buyers and understand their pain points, study competitors, and attend sessions to keep current with the discourse of the industry.

Print direct marketing

Traditionally, the most commonly used medium for direct marketing is printed marketing communications sent to prospects through the mail. However, because direct e-mail is so inexpensive compared to print direct mailing, there has been a noticeable decrease in print direct marketing. This has created opportunities for HR vendors.

Direct e-mail marketing is best for lead generation via “content” offers (e.g., “click here to download our free white paper”). But print direct marketing is a great way to alert your target market to new services, products or other information about your company that reinforces your brand. And while postage rates

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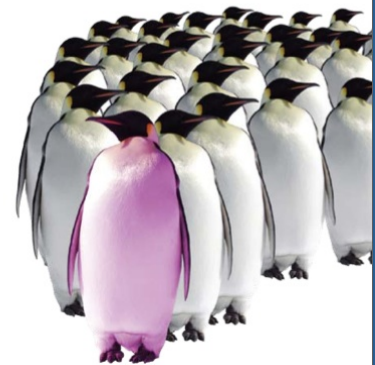
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have risen, digital printing costs have plummeted – a postcard mailing can be executed for as little as 35–85 cents per unit.

At HRmarketer, we used print direct email marketing quite successfully to drive awareness of the new HRmarketer.com platform by sending seven postcards over a three-month period (two samples are above).

Media relations and traditional press releases

With all this talk about Internet marketing, why worry about traditional media? Because it's still really important (journalists can be very influential people) and it all starts with media relations. The key to effective media relations is to identify and build your journalist lists. The hard work involves becoming a resource and developing a relationship with the contacts who make up those lists. But stick with it; it works. We suggest maintaining four types of lists – again, services like HRmarketer.com help you locate and manage these lists.

- **Master Distribution List.** The comprehensive list that will receive all press releases you distribute. This list should not include every single media contact you come across – that can get you blacklisted from the media outlets that feel your release was inappropriate for them. Select only those journalists who are specific to your industry, your products and/or your services.
- **Targeted Media Distribution Lists.** Includes a selected pool of media contacts that you want to build relationships with. You will send appropriate press releases to these journalists with a personalized e-mail. But don't overdo it – just provide them with enough information to highlight your news, no more than a few sentences.
- **Local Media Distribution Lists.** Includes local business publications (e.g., Crains) or newspapers in the area your company is based in that typically want to receive news only from local businesses. When sending your press release, make note of the fact that you are local.
- **Personal and/or Vertical Contacts Distribution Lists.** These may include prospects, customers, business partners, etc., that you want to send releases to. You may also have journalists who cover a specific vertical that your release relates to (e.g., Logistics, Food Services, etc.).

Placing bylined articles

One of the best ways to leverage your investment in content (e.g., white paper) and position your firm as a thought leader is to recycle your content into a “bylined article” and shop it to HR media outlets. If it is well-written and non-promotional, you can almost always find an outlet that will publish it. You are establishing yourself as a resource for useful information, which builds credibility with prospects.

Measuring Your Marketing and PR – The Basics

We talk a lot about “online visibility,” “Web site traffic” and “sales leads” because we believe these three metrics are the core metrics for measuring your marketing and PR. We also suggest using these three tools to measure your marketing and PR, traditional or non-traditional:

- **Web Site Analytics – Install Google Analytics.** It’s free, and it’s a great way to measure whether or not your marketing is driving traffic to your Web site.
- **eClipping service** – You need to know where your brand is showing up online. Why? Two reasons. One, to measure whether or not your marketing and PR campaigns are resulting in online visibility. Two, to identify opportunities to “respond” to your coverage. For example, if your company is referenced in a blog post, you will want to “comment” on that post, which gives your company added exposure and advances your social networking initiatives.
- **Keyword rankings** – Tracking your keyword rankings on Google and other major search engines allows you to monitor the impact of your SEO and the impact of content changes and inbound links on search engine rankings.

* Members of HRmarketer.com have access to SEO keyword ranking tools and an e-Clipping service.

Best practices for how to use content in your marketing and PR campaigns to generate visibility, Web site traffic, leads and SEO:

- Write a quality white paper.
- Place the white paper on your Web site as a free download.
- Require the bare minimum of contact information on your landing page/registration form.
- Announce the white paper via press releases (traditional and search-optimized).
- If you have a newsletter, mention the white paper in the next issue.
- If you have a blog, blog about it.
- Upload it to content syndication sites and directories like HRmarketer.com/community.
- Announce it on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networks.
- Send the white paper to a few key bloggers in your industry.
- Send the white paper to a few key analysts in your industry.
- Send a direct email to your house list announcing the availability of the white paper.
- Rent a targeted opt-in list of HR decision makers (at least 5,000 – a quality list will cost you between \$0.20–\$0.50 per email) and send the direct email to them as well.

- Consider doing a webcast on the white paper topic.
- Consider doing a podcast on the white paper topic – turn it into a series and upload it to iTunes.
- Recycle and revise the white paper into an 800–1,000 word article and submit it to an industry trade magazine that accepts bylined articles.
- Write another white paper and repeat the above steps.

Getting Social – Using search engine marketing and social networking to boost your visibility, Web site traffic and sales leads

Sending search-optimized releases

Not long ago, companies were at the mercy of the news media when it came to press release pick-ups. Traditional PR tactics called for writing and distributing a release solely to secure media placements, and few would see the announcement beside reporters and editors.

Journalists were the gatekeepers who decided which messages were worthy of print. The business rewards for such exposure included increased visibility and potential sales leads for companies that made the cut. All others had to pay for their exposure through advertising dollars.

No more. The Internet has changed everything. Marketers can now bypass traditional media outlets to accomplish goals such as search engine visibility, demand generation and brand support. The weapon of choice is the search optimized press release – a release that is distributed online, like through HRmarketer.com, and includes embedded hyperlinks for your keywords that direct readers back to your Web site (inbound links – the search engines love them).

Search-optimized releases regularly appear on the news sites of major search engines like Yahoo! and Google, and it's not uncommon for them to continue propagating through the Internet to appear in other relevant news sites. It all adds up to a cumulative effect that increases your company's online visibility, Web site traffic, sales leads and search engine rankings.

Unlike traditional media releases, the newsworthiness standards are relaxed, and frequency is encouraged for search-optimized releases. The number of releases distributed is crucial to elevating a company's Internet profile. And, it's easy to measure successes of search-optimized releases – you either increase your publicity, traffic, leads and organic rankings or you don't.

You should also post the release to your own Web site's news page—ideally in the form of a social media press release (SMPR) with these features:

- Relevant images.
- Embedded multimedia files (video or podcast).
- Embedded hyperlinks for your key words/phrases.
- Social media sharing features including pre-populated Tweets.
- RSS feeds.
- Web optimization.
- Comments.
- Tiny URLs.
- Links to additional resources and archived news releases.

If you do not have this capability, you should make plans to add it. You can build your own news page on your Web site using a service like Wordpress. Having these releases reside on your Web site gives you SEO benefits and eliminates concerns that a third-party service will remove your releases in the future. These "SMPR" releases work best for companies that are actively involved in social media/networking. Otherwise there is less value in using them.

Direct email marketing

Online direct marketing, where every campaign can readily test a variable such as personalized content offers or different calls to action, continues to validate findings of the well-established direct mail industry that prospects respond better to personalized and highly relevant and contextual messages. The advantage of direct marketing is its ability to segment prospects and personalize marketing messages for prospects within those segments.

Consider at least one direct marketing campaign per quarter to at least 5,000 prospects (preferably more), whether it be to your house list and/or other list rentals. Repetition is key, as not every buyer is at the same purchasing stage. The key is to stay on their radar screen so that when they are ready to buy, they think of you.

Webinar

Got a solution for a hot-button topic, or a new perspective on a perennially popular subject? A webinar is a great way to broadcast your expertise with little expense. Services such as GoToWebinar, WebEx and others offer quality webinars at a low cost; you provide the informational content and some PowerPoint slides. You can select a speaker from your own organization, choose one or more external experts whose subject matter dovetails with your own, or do a combination of the two.

You can segue from sharing information to showing a demo of your product or service, but you have to do it tastefully or run the risk of turning off your prospects. You want to make sure to provide real value to your attendees, not just a long-form commercial. An HRmarketer customer recently held a webinar with a subject expert partner on a timely topic and had over 600 attendees, generating 70 qualified leads.

Podcast

Podcasts are another great, inexpensive way to get your message out. They most often take the form of an interview and can be scripted to ensure all the major points are discussed—or for those who have less natural confidence behind a microphone. They make a great complement to a white paper or research report. – e.g., talking about the key points and why you should download the content. You want to make sure to practice, though, or even re-record if necessary to avoid stale, robot-like exchanges. Also, remember that your listeners are searching for valuable information or interesting insights, not a lecture! They want to digest some bytes of useful information and move on with their busy days. Aim for twenty minutes at most. Like webinars, podcasts can be posted and archived on the company Web site for additional cache. You can also post podcasts on iTunes, where listeners can subscribe to your weekly or monthly installments.

Blog

A company blog is yet another way to communicate your views and push content to your prospects, all in a format that allows you to reveal more of your personality. It can be written by one designated blogger or by a group of employees. Southwest Airlines and HRmarketer.com, for instance, have blogs written by a number of employees in a variety of roles. Blogs of this kind provide a wider perspective on the workings of an organization and reveal its culture with a diversity of voices. The one thing you do NOT want to do is hire a ghost blogger. People who read blogs are looking for expert content from an authentic source, and if word leaks out that your blog isn't really yours, the brand damage could be significant.

In addition to establishing your own blog presence, you also want to participate in the larger "blogosphere" conversation. Regularly read industry blogs, and leave your comments—along with links back to your blog. This demonstrates thought leadership and provides additional visibility. The more often people see your name, and the more places they see it, the more likely you are to be remembered when buying time comes around.

When it comes to webinars, podcasts and blogs, HR buyers are catching on. If you are not blogging, podcasting or doing webinars, consider doing so – especially webinars. These are yet further opportunities to take your message direct to your buyer, bypassing the traditional media. They can also be used to further leverage your

content. For example, if you produce a white paper and announce its availability via direct e-mail marketing and a few search-optimized press releases, you can then promote the white paper download via your blog and provide a summary via a podcast – which, by the way, can be incorporated into your search-optimized release. Finally, you can deliver a webinar to discuss the white paper and then publish the webinar archive on your Web site (more content!). Each of these plays a critical role in lead generation and SEO.

Twitter

There's been a lot of buzz about Twitter – the ever-exploding micro-blogging social network service that some have called the 27/7/365 noisy networker – with over 6 million users to date.

HR suppliers can really benefit from sharing original content and others' content on Twitter. In other words, Tweet the availability of your great new research or white paper. It's also an opportunity to frame yourself as a thought leader by connecting your followers to great content from other industry sources. It's a great way to build business and personal brand and develop relationships with prospects and influencers while strengthening customer relationships.

In its simplest form, here are the "The Five Steps of Twitter Success" that a fellow Twitterer shared with me:

- Follow
- Reply
- Retweet
- Share
- Repeat

For more information on using Twitter to grow your business refer to our recent eBook, *Conversation Starters*.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the granddaddy of the "new millennium" professional social networking services, with over 35 million users. We call it the "ladies' and gentlemen's gentleman" professional networking service. It's one of the more serious business networks online today and should be approached as such when participating.

HR suppliers can really benefit from networking on LinkedIn. Like Twitter, you can post announcements of your new content (keep it non-promotional) by using LinkedIn's "What I'm doing" status feature. It's also a great way to build business and personal brands and develop relationships with prospects and influencers while strengthening

customer relationships. And it is an invaluable prospecting tool for your sales department.

Again, download our eBook, [Conversation Starters](#), for all the details on using LinkedIn.

Facebook

Facebook is currently one of the hottest properties in social marketing. The estimated number of active users is over 250 million, with more than half of those users outside of college. People 35 years old and above are the fastest-growing demographic.

HR suppliers can benefit from networking and sharing content on Facebook. The only caveat is that many Facebook users still prefer to keep their personal and professional lives separate, although that line is dissolving, and many more company profiles (“fan pages”) are being launched on Facebook. Like Twitter and LinkedIn, Facebook can also be a great way to build business and personal brands and develop relationships with prospects and influencers while strengthening customer relationships.

Once you have invited all your clients, prospects and other stakeholders to join your network, you can use Facebook to announce your content, suggest a great article you’ve read, and so on. Doing so guarantees great exposure for your business.

Again, download [Conversation Starters](#) to learn the basics.

Online directories like HRM Directory – syndicate content

Online message boards, professional networks and HR directories have been around longer than the Internet as we know it today. And just as social networking services we do know today are based on the currency of trust, these groups operate on that same currency.

HRmarketer.com’s HR Directory allows you to create a company Profile and syndicate your content to thousands of HR decision makers. Check out [Taleo’s profile](#) as a great example and create your free profile today.

Before you join any of these HR industry groups, make sure you remember the golden rule – listen, listen and listen some more and then converse but DO NOT join to blatantly pitch. You’ll be blocked and booted quicker than you can imagine.

- 70 percent of journalists use social networks to assist in reporting
- 69 percent of journalists go to company Web sites to assist in their reporting
- 66 percent of journalists use blogs, 51 percent use Wikipedia, 48 percent go to online videos, and 47 percent use Twitter and other microblogging services

Source: [Middleberg Communications](#) and the Society for New Communications Research (SNCR), as reported in [PRWeek](#)

Conclusion

You've got your search-optimized "marketing" Web site, you've created lots of useful content, and now it's time to leverage these efforts with search engine marketing and social media networking:

- Search-optimized releases
- Direct email marketing
- Webinars
- Podcasts
- Blogs
- Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook
- Online directories that syndicate content

"...If you're a public relations professional, social media represents the most immediate path to increased results. If you position yourself as a source (and don't do anything stupid to tick off a journalist through these social channels), you could find a goldmine of new publicity opportunities for you and your clients. Also, as a final note, don't overlook your online newsroom. Journalists still consider your online newsroom as the top source for credible information on you..."

—Jeremy Porter, Journalistics blog

Increase your online presence using these tactics in order to get noticed and attract prospects to your Web site. Don't ignore your "traditional" marketing and PR efforts; add these new elements for maximum impact in a crowded, wired marketplace.

HRMarketer.com: How We Can Help You Grow Your Business

HRmarketer helps companies in the human resource marketplace grow their business by providing marketing/PRservices, direct email lists of HR decision makers and HRmarketer.com, the most widely used online marketing and PR software service in the HR industry. HRmarketer, a company of Fisher Vista, LLC, was founded in 2000 and is one of the largest and most well-respected marketing firms in the HR marketplace, having worked with over 600 HR and employee benefit businesses.

For more information visit the [What We Do](#) section of our Web site, email info@hrmarketer.com or call 831-685-9700. If your company sells to the healthcare marketplace, we invite you to learn more about HRmarketer's sister product, SeniorCareMarketer.com, for companies targeting Boomers and/or selling products that relate to the aging population.

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