
SEO Strategies - Optimize Online Press Releases For CRM

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In a fiercely competitive online atmosphere, press releases can be a valuable resource for increasing your company's overall visibility, but only if they're optimized effectively. Remember, this tactic is no longer just about publicizing your latest news. Instead, it's about creating visibility through multiple channels that allow you to connect through content, reaching those audience segments that are relevant to your company and purpose.

When optimized correctly, online press releases can do all of the following:

Boost Search Engine Rankings for SEO

Drive Targeted Traffic

Build Brand Awareness

Save Money on Pay-Per-Click Campaigns

Usurp Position From Competition on SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages)

Despite these numerous benefits, however, many companies continue to use unoptimized press releases that don't work as well as they could. Instead, these lazy releases stagnate in Deleted folders and are never indexed by the major search engines. Remember, this isn't a traditional press release like Grandma used to write.

Unlike traditional press releases, which were succinct and written with readers in mind, online press releases need to be more carefully crafted. An online press release (like SEO in general), is half art and half science - in addition to appealing to readers, they need to be optimized for search engines in order to drive results. A few simple modifications could increase their effectiveness drastically, providing far more SEO benefit to your online presence than they would have otherwise.

So how do you write and optimize an online press release that will drive tangible results?

First and foremost, employ common sense and reason. No one wants to read something that isn't newsworthy, and these type of releases won't garner any publicity. In fact, according to a DM News survey, 98 percent of journalists are online every day, and almost 75 percent are searching for press releases. So before you write anything, ask yourself if the story you're thinking about publicizing is newsworthy. As a member of your industry, whatever that may be, would you take the time to read it? If not, don't waste your time. Wait for a story that will make a splash and matter to your audience.

Next, identify the keywords your press release will utilize. Align them with the keywords and phrases you're already optimizing in order to derive the highest SEO benefit. In order to make sure you're choosing those with the most potential, start with some quick competitive analysis. This can be done by performing a News search that includes your keyword on Google, Yahoo, Ask, MSN, or any other popular search engine.

Looking at the results page, you'll know if this is the right keyword or phrase to chase? How? By the amount of competition it presents. If you notice that most of the results are spread out over a longer time span, this keyword is a good opportunity because there clearly isn't as much competition. On the other hand, if your search turns up ten stories from the past few days, you'll know that this term is much more competitive due to the many stories you're competing against.

Now that you're aware of the competitive landscape, determine the amount of flexibility you have to work with. As I mentioned before, if you're attempting to enter a space that's crowded with recent news, you'll need to focus on a single keyword phrase, while if you have more flexibility, you can chase several permutations of your keywords.

In the end, it's a better idea to focus on specific online niches, crafting your press release in a way that you know will appeal to your potential readers. Your press release will be much more potent if it gets noticed within a specific sector than if it languishes away in relative obscurity, hidden somewhere in a crowd of similar stories.

This simple research phase can make all the difference in whether your press release gets noticed, but it's often the most overlooked aspect of this strategy. Don't get trapped milling around in the virtual crowd - stand out and get noticed by optimizing around the keywords that hold the most potential.

Once you've completed this critical research step, you will have identified the most potent keywords with which to write your press release. Now you're finally ready to start writing!

Start with the headline, the most important part of your press release. Include your most competitive keywords in this headline. While it may be tempting to simply combine all of your keywords, it's imperative that your headline remains both condensed yet descriptive. Think like a journalist and a searcher here. Stick to the basics, providing the essential facts and the who, what, where, when, and why. All of the major search engines start by looking for keywords in headlines, so be sure to give them what they're looking for in order to capitalize on relevancy. Observe these rules and you'll also attract those all important human readers.

After you've crafted the headline, it's time to start writing the body of your press release. Begin by isolating several related phrases to maximize your SEO potential. For example, if you're publicizing the launch of your new SEO site, your headline may be something like Fusionbox Launches SEO Microsite.

Don't fall victim to the constraints you'll encounter with the use of just one keyword or phrase. Instead, use a web of related keyphrases to expand your reach. Alternate permutations like "Fusionbox Launches Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Microsite," for example, will invariably broaden your scope and influence. These various combinations allow your release to appear in News results for these related phrases as well.

Try rotating various combinations of keywords in the body of the release as well to create more diversity and cover more ground. For example:

"Fusionbox, a Denver SEO agency, recently launched a new microsite devoted to search engine optimization (SEO) strategies. The company, which specializes in search engine marketing (SEM), web design, and web development, needed a unique platform to reach clients looking for optimization solutions and showcase their SEO services."

Rather than using the same keyword phrase repetitively and sounding like a broken record (which drives human readers away), this sentence sprinkles other keyword combinations that expand the SEO value of the release without detracting from readability.

Be creative here. Don't try to overload on keywords or your release won't flow like good writing should. A good rule of thumb is to write with an eye for your keywords, incorporating them into the release when natural opportunities appear.

Once you've finished writing your release, read over it again and circle your keywords in red. Does it sound natural or look like a finished New York Times word search? If so, take a step back and ensure your work flows while maintaining general SEO copywriting best practices and a healthy keyword density.

Next, look for instances of your keywords where you could include a backlink to your site. This will allow you to build valuable incoming links to your site, which are a major determinant of search engine positioning. Remember to use the full URL in your link if you can't employ anchor text, as this will ensure your link is indexed and available to search engines and readers alike. Finally, you've finished writing your optimized press release. Now you're ready to begin the submission process. There are an infinite number of press release sites on the Internet, but some are far superior to others. Before you go about submitting anywhere and everywhere, make sure the sites you're submitting content to are crawled by the major search engines, or else you won't get any SEO benefit from your release.

Many of the more popular distribution services are indexed by Google News, Yahoo News, and others, but make sure by searching for related stories on these engines and noting where the top results originate. This way, you'll get a better idea of which distribution channels specific search engines favor.

Target these for your own release to ensure your content will be visible where it matters, especially as Universal search rolls onto the scene, showing News links among the regular search results.

As you can see, optimizing your press release is a somewhat complex endeavor. Still, considering that an optimized release is an essential ingredient to a search engine marketing (SEM) campaign for its ability to boost search engine rankings, drive targeted traffic, build brand awareness, and even help you gain digital real estate on the SERPs (search engine results page), the juice is definitely worth the squeeze.

Just observe the best practices I've described above and you'll build your online presence in this fiercely competitive online atmosphere where visibility is everything. An optimized press release will allow you to connect with your target audience

through content while deriving tangible SEO benefits.

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