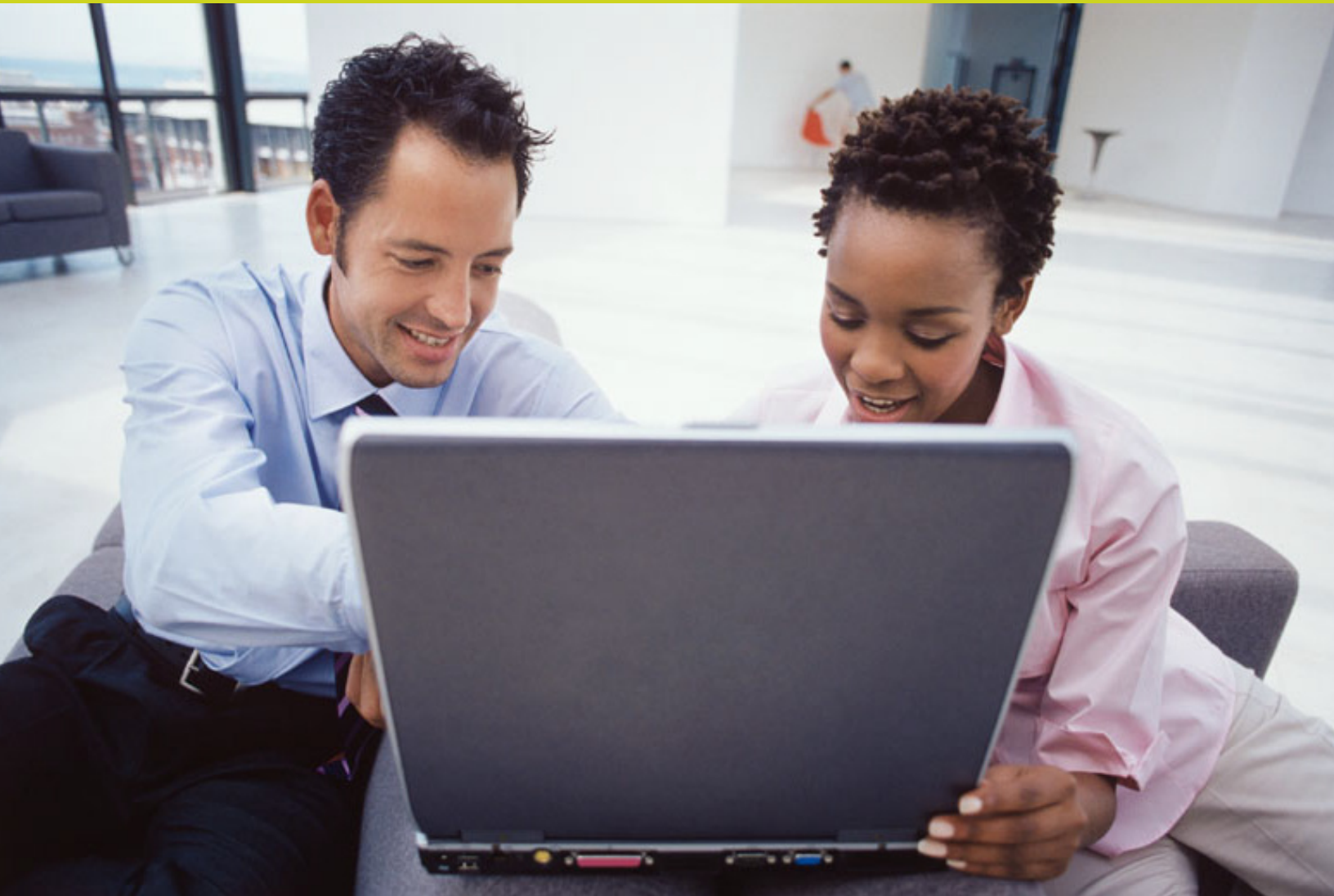# Best Practices for Managing and Maximizing PR on a Shoestring Budget

# Best Practices for Managing and Maximizing PR on a Shoestring Budget

You're a small organization- small budget, small team, no outside support for your PR efforts. With the pressures to produce results-driven public relations, how do you generate the mindshare and coverage you seek? This paper examines the PR process and provides best practices into how any small or resource- constrained organization can not only enhance their public relations and media relations, but compete with even the most powerful names and biggest budgets. We look at real-life organizations that have overcome lack of dollars, time, personnel and other challenges to create tangible and measurable PR success.

## Centralize The PR Process

Managing and coordinating a number of separate systems, from Excel spreadsheets to clipping services, is expensive, time-consuming, and difficult to track and manage.  Why invest the time and expense when you can do it all from one place?

Automated, integrated PR solutions help you eliminate the burden of juggling multiple PR tools, and can even reduce costs. With all your information in a single location, accessible via the Internet, efficiency improves exponentially.  You can eliminate the time spent calling and emailing to learn the status of a project or pitch.  Clips and contacts are accessible at the touch of a mouse, and reporting and measurement can be pulled directly from the software.

Today, organizations of all sizes and budgets can take advantage of the benefits of PR management software solutions that help manage all phases of the PR process. Vocus PR software offers improvements in every aspect of the PR practice –list development, contact management, news distribution, news management and measurement- helping you better contribute to bottom-line results.

A good example is The City of Bryan, Texas. A small organization, The City of Bryan, TX understands the benefits of centralizing PR activities into one solution. Jay Socol, Public Information Officer, felt there were great stories coming out of the city and wanted to find a resource that would help him more effectively manage PR efforts, while at the same time eliminate manual PR activities. Socol sought to extend media outreach efforts, more easily track news coverage about Bryan from around the country, and measure and report on PR programs and activities.  With an integrated PR management solution from Vocus, Socol also found an easy way to organize and access information – from archived news to projects - in one central location.

> "As a fully automated and comprehensive solution, Vocus gives me the resources and ability to extend my PR efforts more than I thought possible to target other markets, interest groups, and the media."
> -Jay Socol, Public Information Officer, The City of Bryan, Texas

"Vocus lets us be a much bigger PR department than we actually are," says Socol. "As a fully automated and comprehensive solution, Vocus gives me the resources and ability to extend my PR efforts more than I thought possible to target other markets, interest groups, and the media. Using Vocus, I can easily compile and share tangible results of our efforts with our mayor, city council and other stakeholders."

## Make Media Outreach More Effective

Media lists are one of the most prized possessions of any PR professional. An up-to-date, accurate list of journalists that write about your company or your industry is a valuable commodity.  It is not uncommon for media lists to be maintained manually in spreadsheets and updated sporadically. Some lists take months to prepare as data is pieced together from disparate sources, including hard copy list books. PR team members may not have access to the same lists, and there is no way of knowing when and if the information is up-to-date. Sound familiar?

The irony is that many organizations rely on this manual list building process because they believe they have no cost-effective alternative. The reality, however, is that the amount of time and expense involved in building lists in this manual way are typically extremely costly, making inefficient and unproductive use of PR time. This is particularly so with organizations with limited resources.

Today, any organization can easily and quickly create targeted and up-to-date lists of journalists and other media contacts with Vocus PR software. The data available includes details about journalists, outlets, and more, and provides convenient and

relevant information that can be targeted by specialty or geography.  This is the first step to assure your outreach efforts are as successful as possible.

Well-known and respected within the satellite industry, iDirect Technologies sought to extend its reach into a new market segment, the cellular industry, with the launch of its GSM Backhaul service. Traditionally, the small iDirect PR team would research and filter through a variety of resources to compile media lists. This time-consuming process proved ineffective, as it wasted valuable staff time as well as resulted in often outdated and inaccurate lists.

Jon Douglas, PR Director, iDirect Technologies, found that an integrated PR software solution enabled the company's PR staff to tap into a well of information about media contacts and outlets.  Using Vocus PR software with its database of over 800,000 media contacts, iDirect can now quickly and easily generate contacts on both a national level and global level. The PR team has saved significant time and effort in both building media lists and interacting with journalists and other key contacts, even in the most remote, global locations. The team has also been able to justify PR's beneficial role in supporting product launch and generating leads and sales.

> "The cellular market is so huge it would be impossible for our team to filter through the data to compile lists. Now, we have complete, up-to-date media information in seconds."
> -Jon Douglas, PR Director,
>  iDirect Technologies

"The automated Vocus media database in our PR software is invaluable," says Douglas. "The cellular market is so huge it would be impossible for our team to filter through the data to compile lists. Now, we have complete, up-to-date media information in seconds."

## Build Solid Relationships With Key Journalists

Some organizations may benefit from blasting a release to every journalist knowing that someone will cover their news. Today's journalists, however, are inundated with emails of pitches and releases and, likewise, the consumer is overloaded with information. To make the most of media outreach efforts, you need to rely on targeted, strategic campaigns or pitches. It is extremely important to understand the background, history, preferences and other details about each individual reporter to target communications appropriately, increasing the chances of coverage and maximizing outreach activities.

Software maker Cincom Systems faced this challenge. A decade-old organization, its PR department is in its infancy. Though new, the two-person PR team has its work cut out for it handling PR for six different divisions or messaging campaigns. As a new department, Public Relations had to build most of its relationships, processes, lists and campaigns from the ground up. Cincom brought in Vocus PR management software to automate and simplify many of its activities. The database also supports the team's need to build a variety of unique lists. In fact, Cincom PR created 13 different lists to date. With continuous access to current information about media contacts that are automatically updated, the team can easily revise lists to ensure they remain fresh and current.  The Vocus media database also includes pitching profiles, tied to each media contact, that include the journalist's preference for delivery method, delivery days and times, and topics. More than a simple list of contacts, the Vocus database provide details that offer valuable insight into each contact and help build stronger relationships with key media contacts.

## Explore Beyond Conventional Wire Services

Many PR teams rely on wire services for press release distribution. These services, however are extremely costly and represent a luxury few small organizations can afford.  In fact, wire services do not provide information about which journalists received the news, or provide a way to follow up. The good news is that newswires are just one of the many options available to getting your news seen and heard.

Internet technology gives corporations considerably more options when it comes to news distribution, allowing you to distribute news to contacts direct, inexpensively- and quickly.  Direct distribution of news to key journalists, in the format and method they desire, helps support those relationships you work so hard to build. You can also post your news directly to your newsroom- no IT support needed- so that any visitor to your site, including the media can find your news at any time.

Another avenue that leverages the benefits of Internet technology is online distribution of news.  While reaching the appropriate media is a critical part of any media outreach plan, today's technology makes it possible to reach your keys audiences,

such as your buyers, directly.   Vocus PR software integrates an online news distribution option as part of its suite of services, enabling you to not only reach key media contacts, but also extend the reach of your news utilizing the benefits of the online channel.

Online distribution of news has many benefits to businesses with limited resources. Unlike wire services, distribution costs are low. In addition, this distribution channel helps level the playing field with larger or more resource-rich organizations, insuring news reaches most important audiences directly. According to Juniper Research, the number of online adults who prefer the Internet as their main source of news has grown over 35% in the last four years, at the expense of television and newspapers. With the increasing number of people searching for their news online, all organizations- large and small- have equal opportunity to get news noticed.

When used as part of an overall distribution strategy, regardless of what the media is saying, your audiences have immediate access to key messages from multiple channels. Releases can be search-optimized to insure that news gets seen by those searching for information. In addition, press releases can include TrackBacks, which encourages outside discussion of press releases in the blogosphere and syndication of news to thousands of sites through RSS feeds.  This distribution method insures a greatly expanded reach for organizational messages and the ability to affect a much larger audience than provided by traditional wire services.

The Thompson Group is an online retailer of cigars, linens, and fashion apparel seeking to build awareness. The company's use of search engine optimized (SEO) distribution has enabled the company to reach buyers and consumers directly. Greg Hoffman, PR Manager, Thompson Group, has relied on the social networking capabilities of PRWeb's online distribution services to help 'spread the word' about Thompson and its products on a limited budget.  PRWeb, a Vocus service, is the leader in RSS syndication and the first to incorporate online technologies into news distribution. PRWeb gets news to thousands of web sites, news sites such as Yahoo!News and Google News, blogs, and syndicates news through more than 20,000 corporate feeds.

> "The integration of PRWeb's press release services into the Vocus solution enables me to maximize my news distribution. I can target the most accurate and comprehensive list of media contacts and at the same time, with PRWeb services, I am able to reach the cigar-lovers directly through the blogs. It's a really powerful combination."
> -Greg Hoffman, PR Manager, Thompson Group

"Cigar lovers tend to get a lot of their information from blogs," says Hoffman. "The integration of PRWeb's press release services into the Vocus suite of services enables me to maximize my news distribution. I can target the most accurate and comprehensive list of media contacts and at the same time, with PRWeb services, I am able to reach the cigar-lovers directly through the blogs. It's a really powerful combination."

**Manage News In Near Real Time**

Getting news coverage is a primary goal of a PR professionals.  However, it can be tricky to collect and understand the coverage you receive. Some organizations hire clipping services that sift through hardcopy news sources for mentions of an organization or their competitors.  With per-clip, search term, and other fees, these services are often costly.  With days or weeks required to pull together clip books or files, it becomes impossible to make changes mid-campaign or gain any useful, measurable analysis on coverage.

Today, electronic news management services are part of a centralized PR system.  In Vocus PR software, electronic clips are received automatically from thousands of worldwide news sources based on established criteria. Clips can be collected and stored based on any relevant search terms, which are then catalogued in the PR system. They can then easily be forwarded via email to other colleagues, the same day a story runs. You can even review and measure coverage – and change tactics or messaging mid-campaign to enhance results. Online news monitoring services built into PR management software provides the timeliness and reporting capabilities needed for one low annual fee- letting you accurately budget for news monitoring.

The PR team at CRVA (Charlotte Regional Visitors' Authority) sought a solution that would help manage news in real-time, compile reports, administer editorial calendars, and distribute news and information. CRVA chose Vocus News-On-Demand, which provides automated news monitoring and reporting. With access to real-time results, Delilah Counts, PR Coordinator, says she is able to better manage incoming news to stay on top of issues of interest to the CRVA and the tourism industry as

a whole. She is also able to dramatically reduce the costs associated with using a traditional clipping service. Counts also appreciates the solution's analysis capabilities, which enable the CRVA PR team to easily measure and evaluate the progress and success of any campaign or PR program.

"Vocus allows us to be a much more productive and responsive public relations team," said Counts. "Previously, our news collection took weeks. Using the automated Vocus PR software solution, all our news can be managed and shared in seconds. Best of all, we can easily generate professional reports and PR analysis worthy of presentation to our management."

> "Vocus allows us to be a much more productive and responsive public relations team."
> -Delilah Counts, PR Coordinator, CRVA

## Conclusion

While it may seem that organizations with unlimited PR budgets often wield the power with the press, effective public relations does not have to be costly. Whether you're managing public relations at a small company, a non-profit, or a start-up, an easy, smart way to generate more targeted and effective PR and increase your exposure without increasing your budget is to leverage today's available technology.

The cost-effective Vocus PR software solution can help any organization- regardless of size or budget- meet its PR goals. By taking advantage of automated list and contact management, media outreach, news monitoring and measurement, as well as leveraging online communications as part of a centralized PR management solution, it is possible to increase productivity, reduce costs, and compete with the most resource-rich PR organizations.

## About Vocus, Inc.

Vocus, Inc. (NASDAQ: VOCS) is a leading provider of on-demand software for corporate communications and public relations. Our web-based software suite helps organizations of all sizes manage local and global relationships and communications with journalists, analysts, public officials and other key audiences. Our software helps customers manage media relations, monitor and analyze their news, conduct interactive email campaigns, build online newsrooms, and manage government relations activities. Vocus' PRWeb platform is also recognized as one of the Internet's leading online news and press release distribution services. Vocus' software is available in five languages and can be accessed from any computer via secure login over the internet with no need for internal hardware, software or IT support. Vocus is based in Lanham, MD with offices in North America, Europe, and Asia. For more information please visit www.vocus.com or call 800.345.5572.