

# **8 Warning Signs of Poorly Designed Press Releases**

*...and what you can do about it Now!*

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**A Publication of 48 Days Marketing Coach**

[www.OptimizedPressReleaseSecrets.com](http://www.OptimizedPressReleaseSecrets.com)

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## 8 Warning Signs of Poorly Designed Press Releases

### **Warning Sign # 1: No Strategic Plan for Your Press Releases**

One of the most common mistakes of the business owners I have worked with over the last three years is not having a strategic marketing plan. Many business owners are working at a break-neck pace just to keep up with the demands of serving existing customers and putting out fires. Oftentimes, their marketing strategy amounts to a string of unrelated tactics that have no real plan for moving suspects to prospects, prospects to customers, and ultimately moving customers to evangelists.

*All press releases should be a part of a well-defined marketing strategy. This strategy should seek to move suspects toward evangelists as you see on the continuum below:*



You always start with a **suspect** – a total stranger who doesn't know, like, or trust you. They are not on your opt-in list yet.

A suspect becomes a **prospect** once they join your opt-in list. They haven't purchased anything yet, but they are on your list, and they have opted-in within the last 365 days.

If a prospect hasn't opted-in in the last 365 days, they are not a prospect. They have gone back to suspect status.

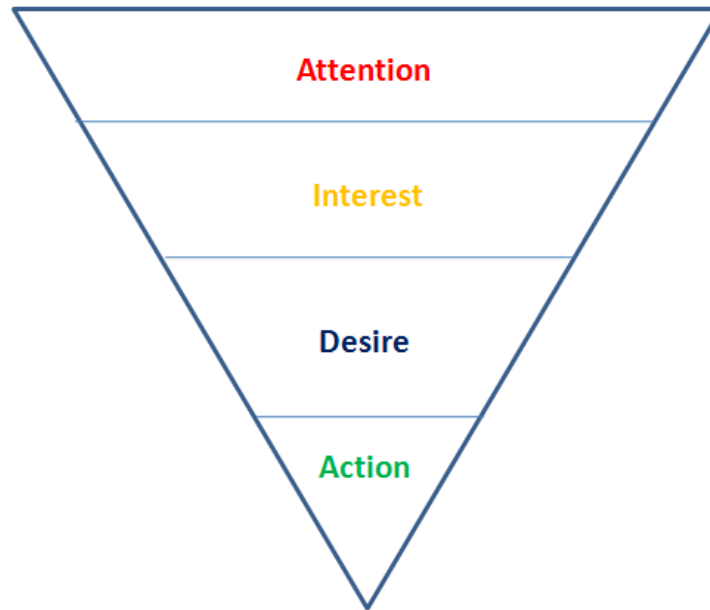
A **customer** is someone who has paid you \$1 or more in the last 365 days. If they paid you \$1 on a teleconference, or if they paid you \$1 for a trial offer, they are a customer. If it's been a year since they purchased, they are a prospect.

If you are a doctor, your customer is a patient. If you are a mentor or a coach like me, he or she would be a client.

Now to the **evangelist**. An evangelist is that 20% of your customers that make up 80% of your revenue.

## ***All Effective Marketing Follows this Formula...***

To maximize the value of your press release investment, there are four objectives that you will want to keep in mind. In the marketing world, it's a formula known as **AIDA**. **All good marketing must follow this formula to be successful.** Every aspect of your marketing strategy ought to follow the steps below:



A winning marketing strategy will always deliver the following four objectives:

- 1.) **Gaining Attention** – this is done by appealing to the things that have value to your prospects. You have to know what keeps them up at night.
- 2.) **Maintaining Interest** – people are always interested when you promise to deliver something they deeply need or want. All of us are interested in the benefits that promise to make our lives easier and better.
- 3.) **Arousing Desire** – your press release must cause the suspect/prospect to “feel” like they need to take action on what you have to offer. Effective marketing always touch our emotions. Whatever you are in the sales process, the press release is selling the next step, be it a visit to your website for more information, and opt-in for a free report, or a grand opening special that has a time limit. They must begin the feel the benefit of whatever it is you are offering.
- 4.) **Motivating ‘Favorable’ Action** – at the end of the release, tell them exactly what to do next. There needs to be a clear benefit for taking the action step. Beware of issuing press release with no call to action.

Every press release that follows those four basic steps will drive targeted traffic to your website. At that point, it's a matter of how well your website converts the traffic into opt-ins or buyers.



**ACTION STEP:** Make the commitment to insure that your press releases, websites, blogs, online and offline newsletters, and any other marketing pieces you employ are a part of an overall strategy that adheres to the formula above, and not just random tactics with no strategic plan where you connect-the-dots in a way that's meaningful to your bottom line. A well-planned strategy will cause people to know, like, and trust you. Those are the prerequisites for anyone to do business with you.

**Warning Sign # 2: Not Optimized to be Search Engine Friendly**



**Each month, an estimated 27- 30 million people in the U.S. tap into online outlets such as Google News, Yahoo! News and MSN News to find up-to-the-minute information about a wide range of topics that interest them.**

According to Enid Burns of Search Engine Watch, almost 12 billion U.S. searches were conducted in July 2008. Google related sites took in 61.5 % of those searches, and Yahoo related sites took in 20.9% of those searches. Within those two major search engines, we have Google News and Yahoo News. According to Forbes.com (October 2007), Yahoo had solidified the No. 1 position as the leading provider of general, financial, and sports news on the internet.

U.S. Core Search Engines by Search Share, July 2008			
Core Search Entity	June 2008 (%)	July 2008 (%)	Point Change
Total core search	100.0	100.0	N/A
Google sites	61.5	61.9	0.4
Yahoo sites	20.9	20.5	-0.4
Microsoft sites	9.2	8.9	-0.3
Ask Network	4.3	4.5	0.2
AOL LLC	4.1	4.2	0.1
<b>Notes:</b> 1. Locations include home, work, and universities. 2. Data are based on the five major search engines, including partner searches and cross-channel searches. Searches for mapping, local directory, and user-generated video sites that are not on the core domain of the five search engines are not included in the core search numbers.			
Source: comScore, 2008			

**One of the greatest ways for you to capitalize on all of this search engine traffic is to write your press releases so that they rank well in the search results.** Anyone who is writing press releases as a simple telling of the facts without regard for making them search engine friendly is missing the boat.

More specifically, getting your press release to rank well online starts with proper keyword selection. Every press release that goes out in today's world needs to be optimized with keyword phrases that will cause your release to be seen by searchers who are looking for news online. Internet marketing professionals understand how to do the keyword research and write the release in a way that will maximize your chances of being listed in the search engines.



**ACTION STEP:** Make certain that you commit to learn the fundamentals of keyword optimization, or utilize someone who understands search marketing when designing a press release strategy. You can research keywords for free at <http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com>. Second, learn to build your press releases around themes that will capture attention. An example of a theme includes that of controversy, piggy-backing on current events, a new spin on an old idea, or good ole human interest. We all like to hear a good story from time to time.

### Warning Sign # 3: **Poor Formatting**

How motivated are you to read a document that is not well written? Well...this has a bit more to do with grammatical correctness and punctuation. Not that those aren't important. However, there are formatting cues that need to be followed if you want your press release to be taken seriously by editors and journalists who will be reviewing it. Let me offer you seven that are noteworthy:

1. **Proper Contact information** – be certain to have contact information where you can be reached for follow-up after hours.
2. **Initial Case** – Your headline ought to have the first letter of each word capitalized unless the word is shorter than three letters.
3. **Include a Dateline** - Your release body should begin with a dateline, which looks like this: City, State (DISTRIBUTION AGENCY) Month, Day, Year. Including the city and state related to your news is optional, but helpful for readers. The date should reflect the date of distribution for your release.
4. **Grammar** - Be sure your news release follows the accepted rules of grammar and style. Grammatical and punctuation errors affect your credibility. Excessive errors will cause your press release to be delayed when it comes to distribution.
5. **Spacing** - Each paragraph should have natural line wraps, not forced line breaks. Leave one line break between each paragraph. It's not necessary to include dashes, asterisks or other symbols to separate sections in your release.
6. **Length of Release** - It is nearly impossible to announce your news in a few sentences. If you do not have more than a few sentences, you may not have a newsworthy item. We recommend release lengths between 300 and 800 words in paragraph form.
7. **Concluding the release** should always be done with '###' or -30-.



**ACTION STEP:** Be sure to proofread your releases 2-3 times. While this form of marketing is a lot more cost effective than traditional advertising, you do not want to make a poor first impression by overlooking these formatting cues.

### Warning Sign # 4: **No Real News Value**



Any press release that has no relevant news value is dead in the water. When coming up with PR ideas, be sure to ask yourself the question, "Why should someone care?" From the headline (which

is the MOST important part of a press release) to the last sentence, you want to make sure that everything you say has a value to the market that you are looking to impact. How is your 'news' adding value to their life or business? Are you saving them time, money, or making their life easier in some novel way? Is the topic of your release something that an editor would be motivated to pass on to their audience? Oftentimes, the news value is there, it's just knowing how to tell the story.

As an example, we know that many people are concerned about developing financial security in this time of economic uncertainty. Almost anything that will assist someone with earning an income, or protecting their assets would be of interest and carry a newsworthy value. The *newsworthy* tie-in could be related to the 'recession'.

I just saw a news release with the title, '[Recession? What Recession? Arizona Couple Increases Sales Ten-Fold and Shows Other Beauty Businesses How to Do It](#)'. That's a newsworthy topic in any economy.

To contrast that with the old style of writing wherein a new business is started, and the owner issues a release with the basics of who, what, when, where, and why the business started. (Example: John Brown is starting a new web design business in downtown Atlanta this coming Monday.) That's the essence of the news in the release. The challenge with that approach is...the news is centered around the business, and not the benefits being delivered to the customers of the business.

A much better approach is to list the main benefits that customers will receive as a result of doing business with John Brown. (Example: Aspiring business owners will receive a complimentary strategy session valued at \$997. This webinar is the grand opening event wherein Web Design Essentials, Inc. will provide insight to their proprietary method that has helped over 35 startups generate a six-figure income in their first 24 months in business.) Now that's newsworthy!



**ACTION STEP:** Take the time necessary to identify the news value that will make your press release appealing. Again, a key question you should be able to answer is, "**Why should they care?**" One benefit of online press releases is the ability to get your news directly into the hands of the consumer via social media and blogs. However, thousands of journalists still search for new ideas online. Using the right angle when identifying the news value can be to your benefit when it comes to persuading traditional and non-traditional publishers to offer you free publicity. If you are not sure what to do here...just look at some of the headlines in major news publications today to see what's currently being published. Look at the headlines in your industry, and ask yourself... "What can I contribute to what's already being said?"



## Warning Sign # 5: **Not Giving your Market What They Want/Need**

Everybody is stressed out in some way. Yours and my success will largely be determined by how well we solve the problems of those in our market. If we go back to the **AIDA** formula, it's critical to get in touch with the needs, wants, and desires of your market. Once you know what keeps your market up at night, then you know what solutions to provide.



Too many business people attempt to launch a business based on ideas they are in love with. Your press release ought to be relevant to the felt needs within your market. People love to buy things that improve their quality of life. Give your market what they are looking for.



**ACTION STEP:** Write a release about the solutions you are providing to specific problems. Tell an unusual success story that has human interest. Have you received any rave reviews lately? Why? Document it and get permission to tell the story. Talk about what your market wants to hear, and you will gain their attention and maintain their interest.

## Warning Sign # 6: **No Incentivized Call to Action**

If you've maintained interest to the point that your reader gets to the end of the press release, it's **IMPERATIVE** that you provide an **incentivized call to action**. There is a difference. Many marketers now understand the importance of putting a call to action in their copy. 'Call us today', or '[Click here](#) for more information' are examples of calls to action. But what's the incentive for taking that action? **There has got to be a WIN for the prospect or the customer for following your desired course of action.** In our time-starved world, you must give your press release readers an incentive for responding. What will they get for picking up the phone, or coming to your site to opt-in? If you make an irresistible offer at the point of that call to action, you are that much closer to influencing them to become a first-time or repeat buyer.



This report is a prime example of an incentivized call-to-action. You understood the value of learning 8 of the warning signs of poorly designed press releases. Obviously,

you could be using your time for many other things. Anyone reading this far into this report is a potential client for my optimized press release service. I firmly believe in providing value that demonstrates my credibility in my effort to earn your business.



**ACTION STEP:** At the end of the day...when it comes to promoting your business, you ought to provide an incentive that prospects can truly benefit from if they never subscribe to your paid services. People crave new information. Write a free report, or a white paper. Provide answers like I have in this brief document. Give your market something that's worth their time to read. Do that well, and your prospects will know that you are committed to assist them in eliminating their problems.

### **Warning Sign # 7: Distributed on the Cheap**

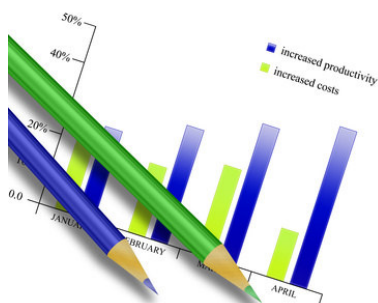
Like so many other things...you get what you pay for in most cases. There are many options for distributing your press releases. If you use the most inexpensive options, don't be surprised when your results are less than impressive.

Not that I am suggesting that you go out and invest a full \$360+ to distribute your press releases, but you can get great value out of some of the options that range from \$30. To \$200. depending on your needs.



**ACTION STEP:** Review the several distribution services if you are handling your own PR. Compare the benefits and investment required for each one before deciding on a service. Simply do a Google search on "press release distribution" and you will have several selections to choose from. One of the best is PRWeb.com.

### **Warning Sign # 8: No Testing & Tracking**



Advertising and marketing professionals understand that testing and tracking are the only way to know whether you are getting the best bang for your buck. Whatever you do, do not underestimate the value of testing the results in order to know what to continue and what to stop. You test things like your headlines, calls to action, distribution services, days of distribution, attachments to

the release, graphics, video files, etc. All of these items can affect the conversion factor. Of course, this means you need to know what results you are looking for from the individual releases, and the overall strategy that you are employing. Is your objective to build your list of subscribers so that you can do follow-up marketing, or are you attempting to monetize the increased traffic with immediate sales? Your goals will determine what and how you track.



**ACTION STEP:** First off, get clear on what you would like to accomplish with your PR strategy. Once you know what outcomes you are reaching for (list building, registration for an event, or the sale of a product/service), isolate and track the following items:

1. PR Headlines
2. Calls to Action
3. PR Distribution Services
4. Days of Distribution
5. Attachments / Photos

One landing page with a particular combination of headline, body copy, and call to action will produce a certain conversion rate. When you change the headline –being sure to keep everything else the same—your conversion rate will change. Keep the winning landing page and continue to tweak for maximum conversion. At the end of the day...the number of visitors that convert to opt-ins or sales is what you are after.

## What Next? ...Two Alternatives

1.) Go to [www.OptimizedPressReleaseSecrets.com](http://www.OptimizedPressReleaseSecrets.com) to learn more about how we can assist you with developing an online press release strategy. **There is a special promotion until January 19, 2009 for those who use our press release writing service.** Click on the link above to learn more now.

2.) Scroll down to learn more about the best available resource if you are interested in learning the step-by-step process to writing your own online press releases that can catapult you to the top of the search engines.

**Either way...start getting the benefit of online press releases today. There's no better way to accelerate targeted traffic coming to your website!**

To your success,

*Ramón E. Dees*

## A PR Resource for Online Press Releases

**PR Traffic Course** – [www.PRTrafficCourse.com](http://www.PRTrafficCourse.com)



A comprehensive, step-by-step course that segments Online Press Releases into four distinct phases: 1) Keyword + R&D Strategy; 2) Copy and Optimization; 3) Distribution and 4) Testing, Tracking & Conversion. This program is ideal for those who want a cost-effective solution that can even be given to a staff member for successful implementation.

Go to [www.PRTrafficCourse.com](http://www.PRTrafficCourse.com) for more information.

### **Testimonials:**

**"This is the definitive course on Web PR..."**

"Look, if you want get the fastest, easiest and most strategically-placed publicity on the Net, you need Marc Harty's PR Traffic. This is the definitive course on Web PR and that's probably why many of the most influential Internet marketers now follow Marc's step-by-step strategies to get more online publicity, faster, easier, better and with the least amount of human effort."

**Alex Mandossian**

Traffic Conversion Strategist and Info Publisher

**"You can't do effective SEO without doing Web PR..."**

"You can't do effective SEO without doing Web PR – and sending out your current press releases won't cut it. Most marketers are missing easy publicity opportunities that'll improve their site's search engine rankings.

By following Marc's simple system, you'll learn to how to create buzz for your business while driving targeted traffic to your web site. Invite your future customers to come to you!"

**Catherine Seda**

Search marketing expert & author of *Search Engine Advertising*

## About the Author



Hi, I'm Ramon E. Dees, and I have a passion to assist others with the fulfillment of their dreams. (This is the page where I'm supposed to speak in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, but I like this approach better!)

*My mission is to assist small business owners, life coaches, and independent service professionals with getting and keeping clients by clarifying business goals, designing and implementing high-impact marketing strategies that generate highly qualified leads and eliminate sales resistance. This process is designed to accelerate the growth of your business in 48 days or less.*

I started Empowerment Resources Unlimited, LLC because I wanted to equip others with the tools, insight, and resources that we all need to accomplish our dreams. [48 Days Marketing Coach](#) is one way in which I do that.

I have a B.A. in Mass Communications, with an emphasis in PR and Advertising from Hampton University located in Hampton, Virginia. When it comes to marketing, I offer my clients the street-smarts I've learned in the real world over the last 3+ years working as a marketing consultant.

I believe in entrepreneurship as a means to build the kind of life that many of us have dreamed about. Business ownership is still a leading way for those of us wanting to create generational wealth. What many people have not realized is just how critical marketing skills are to the success of any endeavor.

Having been an entrepreneur for more than 15 years, one lesson I have come away with is this...**80% or more of your ability to succeed in business will be determined by how well you market.** No matter how good your skills are, potential clients **MUST** know that you exist if you are going to be able to meet payroll and cover your expenses on a regular basis.

The beauty of online press releases is their ability to garner you free publicity when done correctly. Another reason I love them is their ability to drive targeted traffic to your website in 48 hours or less!

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