Excerpted from 30 Days to Online PR & Marketing Success
By Gail Z. Martin

THE MAGIC OF MULTI-MEDIA RELEASES AND ONLINE ADS

Traditional press releases were static paper documents. A big PR roll out might include pocket folders stuffed with photos, CDs or DVDs, but those extras were expensive to produce and mail in bulk, especially when reporters weren't guaranteed to use them—or even look at them.

Many businesses new to online PR and marketing make the mistake of thinking "text" when they should be thinking "interactive." Words on a screen no longer pack the same punch they did before consumers, and reporters, became accustomed to the multi-media world online. You can add more impact to your releases for very little cost by thinking sight-sound-motion when you create your PR plans.

Make it Multi-media

In the old days, the only way to share video, audio and photos with a press release was through a bulky, expensive press kit package. Today, all of those elements can be easily (and inexpensively) embedded into an online press release, giving the reader, and reporter, a wealth of information in an appealing sensory format.

Programs like AudioAcrobat.com provide an affordable way to record and share Web audio without needing equipment more exotic than your phone. Whether the audio is a greeting, an interview with a CEO, or a customer testimonial, the ability to add sound to your release makes the content richer and more interesting. You can easily include the link to your Web audio recording in the body of the press release, making it easy for the reader to listen right away.

Photos also create interest and enhance your PR story. Sites like Flickr, Shutterfly and Google's Picasa Web all make it possible to upload digital photos from your latest event, awards program or tradeshow and share the photos through a link embedded in your press release. If you want to provide photos for reporters to publish or upload, consider having a page on your Web site where you upload photos in a variety of resolutions and formats.

Web video is also an easy to add attention-getter. Small digital video cameras are widely available for less than $200. Smart phones, tablets like the iPad and laptop computers make it easy to create Web-ready video, edit it and release it online. You can upload your video to

YouTube or to your own Web site, and then include the link in your press release, giving readers the choice to read on or view your video.

Get creative in using the multi-media options that are available to you. Consider including an audio or video testimonial from a satisfied client in your release, or a short audio clip from your president's speech. Include video from your public event, and get on-the-scene comments from attendees about how much they love the program. The trick is to keep video and audio snippets short and relevant so that they add to your release without bogging it down.

Embedded links to audio, video and photos are especially important since most reporters won't open attachments from sources they don't know. When you have live hyperlinks in the body of your press release text, you are able to share a wealth of multi-media information without sending large attachments.

Think Beyond the Snapshot

Help readers visualize. Imagine the power of a 30 second video demonstration for your new product. Take the reader on a one-minute video tour of your new facility. Use video to give your reader a 360 degree look at your product.

Photos can provide striking "before" and "after" views that make your point more eloquently than words. If your product or service creates a visual change, you're overlooking a powerful PR tool if you're not using Web video and digital photos to augment your releases.

Realize that online PR remains accessible through search results long after your news is no longer new. If you have used good keywords to make your releases come to the top of search results, your release can continue to educate and inform reporters and prospects for weeks, months or even years after your event is over. Your online release becomes a mini-web site to introduce a reporter or prospect to your company as well as to the news of the release itself.

If you plan to use photos or videos of event attendees or clients, make sure that you have permission. This can involve having the person sign a simple release form that allows you to use the video or audio for promotional purposes without compensation. You can also include a general release as a condition of purchasing a ticket to your event (most theme parks do this). Always make sure you show people in a flattering light in your photos and videos, and avoid any candid shots that might not look professional, such as pictures of people holding cocktails or acting silly. What was totally understandable in the moment may not look good out of context on the Web. If a photo is one where "you had to be there", don't post it!

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