press release essentials

Create An Online Media Room

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Creating an online media room (some call it a press room or press page) is a great way to introduce the public to your business or services as well as to advertise your own personal achievements and goals. Creating a space online that's exclusively for your news allows reporters and your target market see why you are the expert in your field.

Online media rooms are an important part of any organization's website and a critical aspect of an effective media relations strategy. Research shows that pages in the online media room are among the most highly trafficked on a site. Done well, a good online media room will turn journalists who are just browsing into interested writers who highlight your organization positively in stories.

But there is another reason why such areas on websites are the most trafficked. And this is vitally important: all kinds of people visit your online media room, not just journalists.

Stop and really let that soak in for a moment.

Your buyers are snooping around your organization by visiting the media pages on your website. Your current customers, partners, investors, suppliers, and employees all visit those pages. Why is that? Based on casual research I've done (I often speak with people who are responsible for their organizations' online media rooms about visitor statistics), I'm convinced that when people want to know what's current about an organization, they go to an online media room.

Visitors expect that the main pages of a Web site are basically static (i.e., they do not update often), but they also expect that the news releases and media-targeted pages on a site will reveal the very latest about a company.

So you need to think of your online media room as your public relations office online.

However, the vast majority of websites and most online media rooms fail to deliver compelling content. Sure they may look pretty, but often the design and graphics are in the forefront, not the content that journalists require.

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What should go into your media kit.

Contact information. Make sure you provide quick and easy ways for reporters to reach you any day at any time. This may include after hours phone numbers.

About the company. In the media room online, offer briefly the mission of the company and remind them what it is that your business can do.

Bios. Journalists need to know more about you in order to interview you. So make sure you provide them will a biography that's well written and relevant to what you are doing in business. (After all, no one cares if you were on the college badminton team unless it's relevant to what you are doing now.)

Company fact sheet. A fact sheet offers the basic information about your business that clients and media outlets would want to know.

Facts concerning your expertise. Offer findings and statistics to emphasize the importance of your field and how those facts are newsworthy.

FAQs. Listing frequently asked questions can help address what reporters and clients want to ask about in addition to their concerns without wasting the time of exchanging emails.

A photograph of you. A picture can be used by reporters or producers when quoting you as an expert source and also creates a source of familiarity with clients over the vastness of the Internet. Make sure this photograph is downloadable and high resolution (300 dpi+). It should be in color.

Product Photos. If your story is about an ACTUAL (physical) product, make sure you have photos of it. Use the same tips for your photo for product photos.

Client list. Mention clients that you have dealt with in the past. This can establish the success of your business with your client list and provide you with the credibility to prove you are an expert.

Story ideas. Listing story ideas in your field of expertise can give reporters topic ideas to cover. Journalists sometimes are looking for stories to write about. By doing some of the legwork for them, you are more likely to get coverage.

Articles. Including articles that you have written shows and establishes you as the expert. Also, with your permission, these articles can also be used by media outlets to republish.

Video and audio downloadables. There are very few excuses now for not offering corporate video and audio presentations as part of online press rooms. Creating your own short multimedia downloads (playable on iPods and other mp3 players) doesn't require a degree in engineering, and it allows journalists who come to your press room to watch or listen to presentations even when they're not in front of a computer.

Create Your Media Room on Wordpress

Although you can add an online media room to a traditional website, I highly recommend creating on that has a unique domain name and use wordpress to create a site you can update easily, if you currently use a designer to update your website. There are several reasons why this is advantageous:

1. A unique domain provides another opportunity to create backlinks to your main site

2. Wordpress makes it easy to update your site with new press releases because of its built-in content management system.

3. With easily updated content using press releases, Google and the other search engines will crawl your site more often. This allows you even more high search engine rankings in your selected keyword.

4. Wordpress offers RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds without any additional work. This way you can easily automate your press releases onto your social media sites, as well as your main website. Plus journalists often subscribe to RSS feeds instead of having to visit your site to see if you have new news to offer them.

5. It becomes an all-in-one point of access for journalists who may be interested in doing a story about you and your business. Since the media room I'm advocating includes a media kit and your press releases, everything is easily accessible to journalists any time of day.

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How to set up your media room

Keep in mind this information is strictly for if you do not normally update your own website or if it not on WordPress, otherwise setting up your media room on your own business website works just fine.

Step 1: Purchase a domain name. I use NameCheap for my domain purchases ever since GoDaddy's SuperBowl ad ticked me off. I suggest finding a domain that relates to your business site. For example: YourNameMediaRoom.com

Step 2: Get your domain hosted. Many website hosting accounts offer unlimited domain hosting. If yours does, simply move the domain hosting over to your webhost, creating a new directory in the process. If yours does not, I suggest getting hosting from MomWebs.

Step 3: Install WordPress on this website. This is completely free. You can often use Fantasico or Simple Scripts on the control panel of your webhost for easy, push-button installation. MomWebs offers installation.

Step 4: Customize your WordPress site so it's branded with your identity and contains categories for your media kit and for your press releases. Marketing Witchcraft can help you find a designer, customizer or template designer if you get stuck.

Step 5: Create your media kit. (See what should go into your media kit.)

Step 6: Use the blog portion of your WordPress site (the area where you would most commonly put multiple blog posts) and start using it to add your press releases. Each time you have a new release, simply add it as you would any blog post.

What to do with everything in your media kit

Once you've created your media kit, you need to make it accessible to the media by making each of the items listed above it's own page on your Wordpress site. That way it's easy to copy and paste.

Also offer the entire kit (excluding your press releases) as a downloadable PDF. Take the content of each of the items and put them on your electronic letterhead, then create your PDF.