

## A checklist for your online media room: What you should have ready for reporters

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Ten years ago, the online press room for your company featured little more than a back-grounder, a few press releases and an e-mail link to you. In 2007, the online press room has been transformed into a multimedia communications center. Here's what your dream online press room should have:

WITHOUT CONTENT MANAGEMENT,  
YOU'LL HAVE TO GO TO IT FOR  
EVERY CHANGE IN YOUR PRESS  
RELEASE CONTENT.

- \_\_\_ 1. **RSS (Really Simple Syndication).** If you do only one upgrade to your media room this year, this should be it. Here's why you should add this:
  - a. You create a list of subscribers that actually want to read news about your company.
  - b. Your IT department can add a sign-up button very easily and voila! No more onerous media lists to maintain.
  - c. A bonus: People pay much more attention to RSS than they do to their e-mail.
  - d. Even if you think many of the media contacts that follow your company aren't yet using RSS, offer it now. Just the fact that you feature it may help you get noticed by reporters who do use it, and who otherwise might not track your company.
  - e. RSS feeds also level the playing field when you break news. With an RSS feed, everyone gets the news at the same time—you don't have to worry that you forgot to send it to someone on your list.
  
- \_\_\_ 2. **Content management for press releases.** Without content management, you'll have to go to IT for every change in your press release content.
  
- \_\_\_ 3. **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) 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.
  
- \_\_\_ 4. **Interactive press releases.** Press releases on the Web should incorporate multimedia and spark conversations.
  
- \_\_\_ 5. **The "trackback press release."** Using the same trackback features found in many blogs, your press releases are posted to PRWeb's site and include comments made by bloggers about the news itself. In other words, a discussion is built around the press release, making it a richer tool for the media and the public.

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And the trackback release creates news even before the media gets around to reading about it.

- \_\_\_ 6. **What about low-tech?** The fact sheet is still a must-have. “On Web site after Web site, the document that is most often not available is a simple fact sheet about the company,” says media expert Charles Pizzo.
- \_\_\_ 7. **Company boilerplate:** “The five-line description of a company seems to have fallen off the radar,” says Pizzo. “It needs to be easily accessible to reporters, too. Reporters complain they have to wade through everything else in the press room to get to that nugget.”
- \_\_\_ 8. **E-mail news alerts.** Offer reporters the opportunity to register for e-mail alerts to keep them informed about company news. Let users choose the type of news they want to receive, and watch the number of registered reporters on your Web site jump.
- \_\_\_ 9. **Easy access to photos.** Make it simple for reporters to download frequently requested images. You’ll save money and time by not burning photos on CDs and shipping them to the press.
- \_\_\_ 10. **Downloadable press kits.** Post a PDF version of your press kit online. Again, you’ll save time and money. Reporters will stop calling you on the telephone and you won’t be wasting time digging up info and faxing it or e-mailing it to reporters.
- \_\_\_ 11. **Story ideas.** Provide reporters with a list of 20 or so good story ideas. They’ll use this list if you’ve done a good job.
- \_\_\_ 12. **Industry news and trends.** “If you give them access to general news that’s not just about your company, your site will become a destination.” says Linda Dentino, Web site administrator for ATOFINA Chemicals.
- \_\_\_ 13. **An expert source guide.** Provide a list of company or faculty experts searchable by topic or name who can offer quotes and commentary. Add their biographies and contact info, too.
- \_\_\_ 14. **Contact information.** Don’t make reporters search for a phone number. You could also ask them to send an e-mail to you with “Help, I’m on deadline” as the subject if they want emergency service from your Web site.
- \_\_\_ 15. **SEC filings.** Post your Exchange Act reports on your Web site as they’re filed with the SEC. The SEC might require you to do that in the near future anyway.

“Online Press Room 2.0. How Many Bells and Whistles Does the Media Need?” *Media Relations Report*, June 2006. pp. 1-2. Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc.

“Tips for Designing a Useful Media Site,” *Web Content Report*, April, 2002. Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc.