

Writing Effective Press Releases for Search Engine Marketing

Press releases are taking on new life for Internet marketing as business owners are discovering that their press releases often show up in Google searches more than their own website marketing pages. With the advent of automated electronic press release services any business can have a press release distributed to major news feeds in minutes. However, our experience has shown that many advertising agencies are not writing press releases that work effectively for search marketing.

If your company issues press releases and would like added Internet marketing exposure (and links back to your website) you must rethink the traditional formats for press release writing. With thousands of press releases being added to news streams each hour, how do you create an effective document that accomplishes your marketing goals and also builds traffic back to your website?

Our study challenges traditional thinking on press releases. From our press release study, we believe that most companies are missing an opportunity for connecting with their target audience on the Internet using a simple press release. We contend that if press release titles are filled with "fluff" they will never be indexed and seen by your target audience. Our study showed that over 80% of press releases still use old fashioned of "Headline Grandstanding" techniques and did not include effective keywords.

Case In Point - Quick Real Time Analysis

On January 30, 2008, the day we posted this article, a press release was submitted on a distribution service with the title:

"Massachusetts Academy of Dermatology Uses VisualDxHealth Web Widgets to Educate Consumers"

The key point of this release was that "Web Widgets" from Logical Images, the posting company, were being used at the Massachusetts Academy of Dermatology. From the text on the press release, Logical Images seems to want to create brand awareness for their specific web widget called "VisualDxHealth".

In this case this product and its "function" should be the first words in the title. We would rewrite the Press Release Title to:

"VisualDxHealth Web Widgets Educate Consumers on Dermatology Website"

The new title is keyword focused, shortened to fit on a Google SERP listing and removes ineffective words. (Disclaimer: We are not affiliated with this company or the technology they offer)

Old Fashioned Thinking

Years ago, when press releases were mailed or faxed to news services, they were reviewed by a human that needed to be "sold" on the opening heading. Unless you were a large company with a well know brand, your chances of getting news coverage from your press release were slim.

So writers found that if you had Press Release Title that commanded the editorial interest, you had a better chance of inclusion. This created a copywriting culture of making the opening title and first paragraph of a press release "glamorous" and using words strings that were unique or even controversial.

We are challenging traditional press release creative processes in light of how electronic press releases picked up by the major search engines. In most cases, the press release "title" becomes the HTML <title> tag on a press release web page. From a search marketing perspective, the Title tag is very important for attracting clicks since it is often used as the listing header in Google, Yahoo and MSN. The press release title tag should contain words that are researched in advance and confirmed as phrases used by the target audience.

Takeaway: - Research the top keywords which describe your press release and make sure the Title includes your strongest keywords.

Our study found that press release titles need to be more technically crafted and not just whimsical sentences from a marketers mind. The study found that there is also a correlation to the order of the words in the press release title, which requires testing for each press release. Press release titles need to be more strategic and tied into your online marketing goals. Your advertising agency has to work hand in hand with your SEO consultant to maximize the potential of press releases in the Internet age.

Press Release Title Study

A new magazine is being started in New Jersey called “NJ CEO” and my client, Allan Gorman, was asked to be a contributing editor. Allan’s expertise in brand creation, marketing and advertising as well as his books on branding qualify him as a subject matter expert for the magazine. If I were to craft a press release, my goals would be to promote “Allan Gorman” as a brand but also to latch on to the advertising buzz the NJ CEO magazine was creating themselves.

After doing keyword research it was clear that the search term “NJ CEO Magazine” was a unique phrase that did not have many exact matches. If this new magazine is well funded, I would expect that their launch will include a multi-channel awareness campaign that will attempt to brand “NJ CEO”. In that case, I want Allan and his website to get as much publicity and traffic clicks from the thousands of dollars the magazine is spending on the launch.

Here are some titles that are not optimized in our opinion; the last title was crafted by an ad agency:

“Allan Gorman selected as a Contributing Editor at new CEO targeted magazine”

“Allan Gorman, marketing expert, joins editorial team of New Jersey Magazine Startup”

“Allan Gorman, CEO of Brandspa is selected as a Contributing Editor for New Jersey CEO Magazine”

“Brandspa’s Allan Gorman Chosen as Contributing Editor to NJ CEO Magazine”

These are just quick ideas that in the past, forced the reader to ask “What magazine?”, “When is the first issue?”, “Who is Allan Gorman?”

In my mind, the exact phrase “NJ CEO Magazine” is the rich phrase that will bring Allan the attention that he wants. Why? Because that will be the short and sweet “search phrase” that once the magazines branding campaign kicks off, will educate consumers to search for their online edition.

Another consideration is the fact that Allan Gorman is a branding expert. So I would want to create a press release title that includes the word branding. There are so many companies using the word marketing and advertising and less that use the term branding; the area that Allan excels at. The title listed below is the revised text that we would suggest for the press release title. In fact, we used a variant of this title on the page where we posted the press release on Allan's website.

NJ CEO Magazine selects Allan Gorman, branding expert, as Contributing Editor

Starting the title off with the strongest search phrase is not always possible but in this case, it works very well. I also have the opportunity to build a strong association with the word "branding expert" which will appear in the search result title and in the RSS new reader title. I did not choose to include Allan's company name "Brandspa" in the title because his website is called www.brandspa.net and already appears as the top listing for the word "Brandspa" and thus it's not needed in the title.

Type in "NJ CEO Magazine" into Google and see that the web page we created that started with "NJ CEO Magazine" is the #1 listing in Google and it beat out the press releases with the traditional PR title wording. The article also comes up #2 on Google for the term "NJ Branding Expert" so both marketing objectives were accomplished with a simple press release.

Anyone who has subscribed to news feeds in advertising, marketing and branding will clear be made aware of Allan's skill set. With a press release title crafted like this and placed on Allan's website as well as in the major news feeds I would expect that the press release will show up for the term "NJ CEO Magazine" quite well. Thus, the more notoriety that the magazine receives, the more eyeballs will see a title that advertizes Allan Gorman as a branding expert.

Study Conclusion

We have tested many press release title combinations and also various press release feeds and have come to the conclusion that press releases are being under utilized by traditional advertising agencies. They continue to write press releases with ineffective titles and absent of internal hyperlinks. Many continue to ignore new electronic distribution forms and few test the effectiveness of press release feeds.

If you are looking to super charge your press release content, give Pasch Consulting Group a call. We can advise you on how to tweak your existing press releases or work with your advertising agency to maximize your web exposure.

If you would like to contact the author Brian Pasch or add your comments to this topic, send a note to brian@paschconsulting.com.