

Paolina Milana, VP Marketing, Marketwire:

Hi Dominic:

I find myself reading your blog with increasing frequency, always finding its content most interesting. Thank you! And your recent post about readable releases...releases that make the most of the Web environment...is a topic with which I join in the intrigue. So do so many others; case in point, I would have posted a response to you earlier, however, I have been traveling, currently speaking to the PR Community at the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Annual International Conference in Philadelphia on the evolution of the press release (<http://www.prsa.org/conf2007/program/workshops.cfm?viewby=Track&ptid=1&pdset=1>).

Obviously, this topic is important to both PR and IR professionals, and given how much work you do on your end to educate your audience on leveraging the latest technologies to more effectively communicate, I thought you would want to share with them even more about Social Media and SEO. To that end, IR Magazine's September 2007 Leadership Guide: "New Web Trends: Social Media and SEO," (<http://easypr.marketwire.com/easyir/msc3.do?easyirid=594C608BE3245198&version=live>) (sponsored by Marketwire) is an 8-page publication filled with tips and tools and best practices and thoughts from leaders (Sun Microsystems, Cisco Systems) and peers (results from a survey we conducted at the June 2007 National Investor Relations Institute's (NIRI) Annual International Conference). Even when sharing this guide with the IR community in Europe just a few weeks ago during IR Magazine's UK Think Tank, which we also sponsored along with other industry thought leaders, it was clear that the interest, and yes, even the debate, is just as alive overseas as it is here in North America!

You had mentioned in your post, Dominic, the need for more guidelines. I absolutely agree. And I think you'll agree that there is movement on that front. Check out some of the latest social media releases and the suggested templates featured on the Web. (http://www.pr-squared.com/2007/10/two_more_social_media_news_rel.html) As the only newswire built on an HTML platform and the first to even utilize the Internet as a distribution channel, it's been exciting for Marketwire to see more PR and IR folks embrace technology and integrate all of its capabilities into their press releases. Indeed, no longer is the press release a static 400-words, but an interactive communications tool, rich with embedded photos, video, hyperlinks, and so much more.

Exciting! Look forward to more!

Paolina

Dominic Jones:

Paolina,

I think your comment is just an attempt to blow your company's own horn without actually contributing anything to the discussion.

I couldn't disagree with you more. Social media *wire* releases are a scam. They add no value for companies or their relationships with their stakeholders.

All they do is move the conversation away from the company and **boost some other site's search engine ranking** — usually the wire service's site — at the clients' expense.

In many cases, social media releases are simply a PR ploy to piggyback on the social media trend to try give their message some credibility. It is ultimately a deception.

And there is no SEO benefit to a social media news release pushed out via a wire service. What benefit is there to having people add a link on Del.icio.us to a wire release on some third-party site? It does not boost the PageRank of the company that is paying for the release. It boosts the PageRank of the sites on which the release appears. And how long will those bookmarks remain active when most releases on third-party sites are removed after a few weeks?

Social media *wire* releases **make no sense** as an SEO strategy.

Seems I'm not alone any longer in this line of thinking. The big boosters of the social media release just [last week endorsed](#) the view [I put forward in January](#). Here's what they say:

The best place to publish a Social Media News Release is on your company blog or social media newsroom (which is hosted on a blogging engine).

So how about you now respond with some clear points on why **social media releases** — not traditional releases — pushed out via Marketwire are good for conversation and good for SEO?

Paolina Milana, VP Marketing, Marketwire:

Goodness, you're up early, Dominic! Early bird gets the worm, I guess. LOL

And true, true, you saw right through my veiled attempt to blow my own company's horn. (Not really.) The simple truth, Dominic, is that your post missed it in terms of its fact-checking as well as it putting forth what's really out there...instead simply stating your own opinions and, forgive me, tooting your own horn and promoting your own site (which often is the case on blogs, isn't it? The opportunity to share your own thoughts without really any boundaries in public forum?). Actually, I'm a bit surprised at it. I'm a

former reporter for a 150,000 circulation daily newspaper, and I believe I remember you doing some column writing for IR Magazine, didn't you? I would think fact-checking and objectivity when wanting to comment on some topic and present to the public what's "out there" would be "101."

My comments shared REAL information and contributed a great deal: a major publication's SEO and Social Media report based on gathered facts and another respected blogger's postings of social media templates and examples. I actually was steering it away from Marketwire and onto other credible sources. As for your comment about press releases directing folks away from the company and to a wire service's site, you're absolutely correct...which is exactly why Marketwire makes sure that's not the case with releases sent through us (again, fact-checking Dominic).

Social media releases, just like any other format, can be a ploy to piggyback and give messages credibility. Some might say blogging is the same...lending credibility to pure opinion. Some might say traditional reporting is the same.

I will share more thoughts and specifics, as you ask; I am just wrapping up a bit of a global tour for Marketwire and am late for a morning meeting (7:30 a.m. ET). Promise to engage more. And once again, truly am enjoying your thoughts and the opportunity to share information via your blog. Thanks...and later!

:P

Paolina Milana, VP Marketing, Marketwire:

Okay, I'm in between sessions right now. In answer to your question, Dominic, here are some thoughts (apologies in advance for any trumpet blowing or long-windedness!):

Every story, every conversation starts from some kernel of thought/information. The press release is that catalyst. The Social Media Release takes it a step further, not just via its content or format, but even in its intent or goal.

The Social Media Release can offer a less-biased, more substantive view of the message you are trying to communicate using effective linking of content throughout your release, and strategic content development throughout your social web presence. The Social Media Release sets the stage for a broader effort to convey your message in multiple formats and locations, and includes the opportunity for discussion with your audiences.

Sending out your Social Media Release via Marketwire (and yes, I run the risk of tooting my company's horn) ensures you are taking advantage of our newswire's HTML platform (allowing for ease of interactivity between your press release and the Web environment...for example allowing for things such as hyperlinks and embedded images/video...no one wants to have to click on a link just to see a photo which is what

happens with newswires built on ASCII platforms...and no one wants an advertisement to pop into the middle of your press release, which is what often happens when a press release is sent out via a newswire not offering Marketwire's social media capabilities).

(See http://www.pr-squared.com/2007/10/two_more_social_media_news_rel.html for great examples endorsed by third parties as such.)

SEO via Marketwire allows for hyperlinks throughout your press release to direct readers back to your own website (or wherever you wish)...not back to Marketwire's website (you're right, Dominic, what good does that do the originator of the release and its message?). In addition, the use of keywords allows search engines to associate those with your company, your website, your message, thus, boosting the chances that when someone does do a search for what you have to offer, you and your offerings pop up higher in results and rankings.

I don't have the numbers handy, but several studies including those done by Forrester (<http://www.forrester.com>) prove that nearly 80% (I believe) of consumers research online before they buy...even if they physically walk into a store to make the purchase...and that same number trusts and relies on what their perceived peers are saying (not the company, per say, but the company's message is the catalyst)...the online conversations of consumers, those are most important in making decisions to buy. Hence, it is key to make sure you're part of the online dialogue.

Some tips on creating an effective social media release:

- Provide core news facts in a bulleted/reader-friendly format
 - Link to other pages for more information
- Use hyperlinks to demonstrate a broader web presence
- Link your users to other social sites where they can get a broader understanding of the story you want to discuss
 - Embed multimedia elements
 - Share images and video that readers can embed in their own pages to help further the discussion
 - Use targeted keywords to attract interested readers from the search engines
 - Select just two or three keywords to optimize your release
 - Use the keywords in positions of prominence – the headline, metatags, and first paragraph – and use them frequently
 - Include relevant social tags
 - Include tags for social news and bookmarking communities like Digg.com, del.icio.us and Newsvine.
 - Offer Technorati tags to generate searches for keyword-relevant blogs
 - Distribute your release wisely; use a distribution that supports distribution of social tags, hyperlinks and multimedia elements

What's important to remember is that the Social Media Release allows readers to choose which pieces of information they want to learn more about. It then links them to third-party destinations where more information can be found. The originator of the release

needs to realize that in doing so, however, there is a relinquishing of control over the message.

I hope this is more of what you wanted, Dominic. Again, thanks!

Dominic Jones:

Paolina,

Links in releases are not specific to social media releases. You can do them in a traditional release and IR folks have been doing so for years. Nothing new there, except the array of links.

How about substantiating your claims that I didn't fact check. Marketwire's releases on Yahoo! are not distributed in HTML. I thought at the time of writing that that was an indictment against Marketwire, the firm that makes the most noise about "social media" and its releases on the biggest web portal are in ASCII. The emperor has no clothes!

Frankly, I want smart readers and your comments are not smart. You're on the "social media" bandwagon and aren't providing anything new. Perhaps you can bamboozle a lot of stupid people, but you won't be able to do that here. We have smart readers.

Your company is hurting the very clients its seeks to help, boosting its own PageRank and having its clients foot the bill. Those two social media releases you point to are not distributed in any meaningful way. They are hosted on Marketwire's website, so anyone using the bookmark links will be pointing to Marketwire's page, not the client's page. That does not help the client or further the conversation in a meaningful way.

Sorry, but there's a lot of spin and not much substance to what you're saying. Readers of this blog know that I am a champion of real engagement on the Web. They trust me to see through the BS.

So what I've been saying is that you don't need wire services to do social media, and in fact you shouldn't use them for this purpose. You should use your own website. As I pointed out above, **the PR folks who have been pushing the social media release are now saying the same thing.**

Paolina Milana, VP Marketing, Marketwire:

I think my intelligence is pretty much on par with the average bear, Dominic. :) I actually may even start my own blog to share my own thoughts. ;)

Regarding your most recent comments, in my humble opinion, I must say that we'll have to agree to disagree...until you get your facts straight. LOL To that end, I invite you to have a real demo/true tour of Marketwire, who we are, what we offer...perhaps speak to our tech/new media experts (they're much smarter than me). I'm sure I can find some smart clients of ours who might be willing to talk with you. Let me know if you're interested.

Dominic Jones:

Paolina,

And you are welcome to actually read what I've written on this topic. You wouldn't be so "surprised" by my replies to you if you had done that before commenting.

Again, instead of making unsubstantiated claims that I don't have my facts straight, I invite you to point to a single fact in the post that is incorrect. Quote from the post and provide the correct information if you can.

I thought so...