How to Get More Mileage Out of Your News Release with Multimedia
Show, don’t tell. A picture is worth a thousand words. Seeing is believing. From the beginning of time, these maxims have summed up what we already know: Visual images attract attention and lend credibility to our messages.

Multimedia is even more important today as our attention span shortens and consumers gravitate to visual storytelling and popular social sharing sites like Pinterest and Instagram. In keeping with this trend, statistics from recent studies indicate that incorporating images, infographics, and video in a news release dramatically boosts pickup and engagement. So why, as PR professionals, don’t we always incorporate multimedia when we distribute our news and announcements?
If you think your news doesn’t warrant the use of visuals, think again. Today’s online environment and news release innovations make it easy and economical. You just need to think creatively. Here are five reasons why you should consider incorporating multimedia in your content whenever possible:

- According to the PwR 2013 Journalist Study, 81% of journalists are more likely to cover news that includes an image. And since journalists, bloggers and other influencers will likely put their own spin on your news anyway, your images and video assets give them new angles and help create a more compelling story.

- Consumers spend more time on content that contains multimedia than without. Imagery draws people in and can lend credibility and substance to your news.

- Content that includes an image or video gets shared more often than content that doesn’t. Some studies show nearly three times as much. People may not be as interested in your text as they are in your visuals.

- Optimized images can help your website achieve better rankings in search engines by associating keywords with images.

- Visuals extend the life of your news by giving it broader appeal. Photos and videos that accompany a release often remain on websites long after the text of your news release is gone.

With the proliferation of social sharing sites like Pinterest, Vine, Instagram and Tumblr – not to mention Facebook – the trend is definitely moving toward pictures and away from text. It may be only a matter of time before the text-only release is a thing of the past.

Even public companies, which traditionally shy away from incorporating multimedia when delivering financial information, are beginning to use sites like Pinterest to share presentations, videos, slide decks or even white papers. Think back to SlideShare and its success with presentations and infographics tied to public companies. Multimedia humanizes companies and helps them more closely connect with target audiences.

Retention rate for visual information can reach 65% versus 10% for text-based information.

Source: Social Media Today, 2013
CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE, MESSAGE AND GOALS.
How do you determine what type of multimedia you should use to increase pickup and social sharing? Begin by assessing the content of your news release and what action you want from your audience. Here are a few scenarios:

• A B2B tech company is announcing a technical product to a technologically savvy audience and wants to differentiate itself from the competition. A chart, graph and/or photo showing how the product works could expand on the concept described in the release. If that’s not available, a photo or video clip featuring statements from the development team behind the product would lend credibility and assurance to potential customers.

• A non-profit organization wants to attract donors and volunteers. Depending on its mission, there are many opportunities to display the work the organization does through photos and videos, ranging from volunteers participating in fundraising activities to the beneficiaries of its work.

• A start-up business is targeting a local or regional clientele. It could showcase its product or service in use through photos or a video – and even include a photo of the entrepreneur. Local media love to feature local businesses and their founders.

• An online retailer is selling a service to consumers in a competitive market. It’s not a major brand name so without an image, its news won’t carry the same impact as it would with the support of visuals. And the more engaging, exciting and colorful the imagery, the better. Depending on the service, a unique infographic that walks people through the advantages of the service could serve as sharable content and give the message more legs.

• A publicly traded company primarily distributes text-only earnings releases. Alternating those releases with announcements about the company’s charitable activities that include compelling photos and videos will give it a human side and better connect with investors. A recent Ernst & Young (EY) survey, “Tomorrow’s Investment Rules: Global Survey of Institutional Investors on Non-Financial Information,” found that 90% of investors view non-financial information as “pivotal” when it comes to making investment decisions.
TIPS FOR MULTIMEDIA SUCCESS

USE ORIGINAL IMAGES AND VIDEO IN YOUR RELEASES.
If you’re thinking of including stock content in your news releases, don’t. That's because it's not unique to your news. Chances are that others – and possibly your competitors – have used the same image or video in some form or fashion. Not only does it send out a bad message, but if you’re using the same asset that’s been found multiple times by search engines like Google, it will rank poorly.

UNDERSTAND HOW WEBSITES DISPLAY IMAGES (OR DON’T).
If you’ve ever distributed news releases with multimedia content you may have noticed that not all news sites and search engines display it the way you intended – and, in fact, they may not display your multimedia at all.

Does that mean it’s a waste of time and resources? Not at all. Sites fall into three categories in how they display the multimedia assets they receive with news releases:

- Those that display both images and their links in your release (Ein Presswire);
- Those that only embed multimedia in the body of the release (American Business Media);
- And those that provide multimedia links at the end of the release (TD Waterhouse).

Don’t use this as a reason not to incorporate multimedia in your news releases. There are many websites your news reaches that do display your images and video, and even those that don’t include a link to your multimedia assets. In addition, your images are accessible and crawled by search engines where they reside on your news distributor’s website and other sites they’re hosted on, such as YouTube and your own website.
“Tips for Multimedia Success” continued

**MAKE MULTIMEDIA EASY TO SHARE**
Embed images in releases to be displayed on popular websites, such as Yahoo!, with links to full-size files for easy reposting. Consider this: The type of content that is most frequently shared is survey results, infographics, big data and, of course, humor. According to research, multimedia shared the least includes free trials, product information and/or documentation.

**GET CREATIVE WITH VIDEO**
Videos should be short, compelling and share-worthy. At the same time, remember that quality video can be created without investing thousands and thousands of dollars in production. Brands are now experimenting with looping video apps on social media platforms, which means you should experiment too.

**BRING QUOTES TO LIFE**
Add some personality with a short video or audio file. While reporters typically like to conduct their own interviews, they’ll also grab a quote from a release if they’re under a time crunch. Make your sound bite of choice even more appealing to reporters and bloggers by giving them a video file to embed with their article.

**EMBED CONTENT WITH CROSS-OVER SOCIAL MEDIA APPEAL**
When creating multimedia content, think about content that will serve multiple purposes in different forums. If your most loyal online advocates are entrenched in YouTube, then it makes sense to include video in news releases that can be repurposed on your YouTube channel. If your audience lives primarily on Twitter, then it’s a must for you to reach them there. Twitter offers inline images to tweets, making them more visual and engaging. All it takes is a tap on the photo or video (hosted on Vine) to see a larger image or play the video. But if your audience spends more time on Pinterest, then you’ll want to create “pinnable” content (images or video). Likewise, if you’ve built up a strong Tumblr following, include multimedia in the release that can be effectively used on Tumblr.

**THINK ‘MULTI-USE’ CONTENT**
If you’re going to create an infographic, can you also create a series of related blog posts that incorporate pieces of data from that graphic? As you begin to incorporate more multimedia into press releases, don’t let it be a one-time use. Instead, repurpose that content in other ways to strengthen your overall content marketing strategy.
Keep in mind: search engines don’t speak in pictures – they only decipher the words you assign to them. That’s why it’s crucial you understand how to assign text so your images are properly catalogued on search engines, websites and social channels. You also need to know how to prepare your images for embedding in a press release so they display properly.

BEGIN WITH GOOD QUALITY IMAGES
Multimedia assets are becoming increasingly popular in brand marketing. They are part of good storytelling and bring your message to life. They give influencers such as journalists and bloggers more reason to feature your story. And they’re an excellent way to drive traffic to your website. So when you create your images, think ‘quality’—how they enlarge and how they appear as thumbnails on Twitter and search engines. A rule of thumb is to ensure the images you upload for distribution are at least 300 dpi. Blurry or unclear images will hinder your success every step of the way.

NAME YOUR IMAGE AND VIDEO FILES WITH SEARCH ENGINES IN MIND
Spiders are continually searching for filenames to index, so make sure yours describe your image and video assets accurately. If your news release is about a new Android tablet and features an accompanying photo, name it for the way people search for your type of product, not “295086.jpg.” Another fine point: for the most accurate description, don’t just use a single word. But when using multiple words, put a space between them or use dashes and not underscores. That’s because Google reads underscores as word joiners:

dual-core-android-tablet = dual core android tablet

dual_core_android_tablet = dualcoreandroidtablet

Over 500 million photos are uploaded every day on average.

Source: Mashable, 2013
In XHTML code, it would look very similar:

```html
<img src="imagename.jpg" width="10" height="10" alt="Image Description" />
```

When submitting a release through news distributors such as Marketwire, you don’t need to worry about the HTML coding since it’s automatically created once you enter your text. But it’s helpful to know what goes on behind the scenes.

A rule of thumb in creating your alt text is to use no more than four to six words. The recommended maximum is 125 characters. Keep it simple and choose words people will directly associate with the image. In some browsers you can see the alt attribute text when you move your mouse over an image. Here are a couple of examples of alt text:

**Good:** Dual Core Android Tablet  
**Better:** 8” Dual Core Android 4.1 Tablet

**USE DESCRIPTIVE IMAGE CAPTIONS FOR CONTEXT**

Google recommends always placing images and videos near relevant text. In news releases, captions are great places to elaborate on the content in your images and video, but make sure this text aligns with and supports all the other descriptions you’ve used, including file names and alt text, so you avoid confusion and ensure people searching for your multimedia assets will find them.

**UPLOAD YOUR VIDEO TO A POPULAR HOSTING SITE**

When submitting a video file for embedding in a press release, it’s advisable to upload the embed code from a site such as YouTube or Vimeo rather than submitting the video from your desktop (e.g., in a .mpg, .mov or .wmv format) as this can be a large file that is cumbersome to upload and store. To find the embed code in YouTube, simply scroll down below your video and click on “Share” and then “Embed” and copy the code. When your video is hosted on a site like YouTube you get the added exposure from that site, plus the embed code in your release points back to it for further visibility.

*Check with Google to ensure you’re following its most up-to-date image publishing guidelines.
TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR USING MULTIMEDIA IN NEWS RELEASES

1. Begin with good quality, original images
2. Name your image and video files with your audience in mind
3. Use an alt attribute so your images are more likely to be indexed by search engines
4. Use descriptive captions with words people search for
5. Upload your video to a popular hosting site such as YouTube, Vine, etc.
6. Link images to your website to drive additional traffic
7. Submit images of at least 300 dpi – preferably as high-res JPEGs

“Technical Guidelines” continued

USE IMAGES TO DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE
When you upload your image during news release submission, you have the option of adding a URL to the image that links to a web page. This helps drive traffic to your site. To boost your success, link the image to a dedicated page that contains supportive information about the content in your release or about the image itself. In addition to added educational value, on this page you can encourage comments and discussion, and even include a response form to generate sales leads.

IMAGE FILE FORMATS AND SIZES
Although news distribution services vary in the types and sizes of files they accept, there are some rules of thumb to keep in mind when you save and convert your images. Marketwire recommends images of at least 300 dpi, which is the minimum standard for print publications, and to keep your high-resolution images to a maximum size of 100K, or 800 X 1020 (W X H). That’s because websites and most news sites want graphics with file sizes as small as possible to allow for fast-loading pages but of sufficient resolution to display well without pixelating. For file formats, most journalists and influential bloggers prefer high-resolution JPEGs.
THE PAYOFF: MULTIMEDIA ROI

We’re a visual culture. Pictures – still images and those with sound and movement – have always inspired people to care and become engaged. This, of course, applies to news releases. There’s no question that photos, illustrations, infographics and videos help your audience better understand and retain your messages. According to the most recent State of Content Marketing Study by CopyPress (2013), the content strategy with the second-highest ROI was video, cited by 51.9% of marketers. And photos, at 37.8%, came in at fourth place with infographics at 27.9%.

Whether you’re a B2B or B2C company or a non-profit organization, incorporating multimedia in your news releases is a smart PR and marketing tactic.

Content with the Best ROI According to Marketing Professionals Worldwide, Jan 2013

From a January 2013 study of marketing decision-makers worldwide conducted by CopyPress, a software company specializing in content marketing tools.
Marketwired is a communications leader offering best-in-class news distribution and reporting as well as state-of-the-art social media monitoring and analytics. We open up new opportunities for our clients – helping them tune into the conversations that count, find insights that matter, and influence the right people.

**Marketwired Resonate: A Communication Platform Made for Multimedia**

*Marketwired Resonate* is an integrated platform for content creation, media targeting, distribution and analysis. When you issue a news release, you can include an unlimited number of multimedia assets with your release at no additional cost. You pay only one flat, affordable rate for your news release distribution. Along with that, you get an unlimited number of words so you can exercise your creative freedom without having to worry about exceeding your budget.

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