FIVE TIPS TO SOCIALIZING YOUR NEWS RELEASE

for Optimized Story Sharing
Your organization is getting more social by the minute. You have a website and newsroom linked to your company social media profiles. You’re sharing important content through these new channels.

At the same time your social media ambassadors are tweeting and posting on your behalf. However, a question still remains ... What about your company news announcements? Are you socializing your news releases so they’re more meaningful, interactive and contextual for your audiences? Socializing your news releases is also a great way to customize and humanize newsworthy stories, making them more compelling for your champions to share.

When you socialize your news releases, you’re making a conscious decision to use social media to your benefit. You have an increased opportunity to showcase your content creativity, and to also highlight news that’s visual in nature. Turn on the social media functionality and suddenly you’re able to target your news by broadening your brand’s visibility, as well as uncovering new audiences and markets. At the same time, you’re able to deliver your perspective on a local community issue, or become a part of a larger breaking news story that’s making national or international headlines.

If you’re ready to socialize your releases, then there are five simple tips to raise the bar on news release engagement and relevancy, and, ultimately, how your news is perceived in the market:

50% of small businesses have acquired new customers from social media.

Source: Mediabistro
You must always start with a good, solid story.

There are questions you can ask to make sure your story is newsworthy and relevant, while at the same time, thinking about how to share your news story beyond your journalist community. Social media-friendly releases are accessed by all of your stakeholders, including consumers, so you want to ask some simple starter questions, which include:

- Will anyone want to read / care about my news and then share it with colleagues, friends, family, and peers?
- What meaning does my story have to the intended audience … does it provide education, offer value or benefit to the community, give a useful “how to” approach and/or practice, or reveal new groundbreaking information?
- Would the information be better communicated in a different format other than a news release?
- How will my story impact the community and is my news related to important community issues and activities?

Once you know you have a good story to share and you also have the facts straight, you can extend the reach and life of your story by making it social media-friendly and audience-interactive. If people can interact with and digest your information easily, and in a format of their choice, then they are more likely to share the story with their networks. Socializing the release means it has depth and breadth by being shared in many different communities by many different people beyond your media contacts. You’re creating a “pull” effect vs. a “push” effect with your social community members. For instance, bloggers, consumers, influencers, employees, investors, etc., who consume the information will naturally continue the social sharing with their friends.
Socializing your news means getting more familiar with the technical/functional areas of the news release—those areas that offer tremendous potential to take your news story further.

Getting technical is an exercise in learning how greater interaction leads to more activity around your story. These technical functions break down into four easily identifiable areas, which include:

**USING SEARCHABLE KEYWORDS FOR OPTIMIZED SEARCH ENGINE RESULTS.**
Social media-friendly releases are optimized for search by identifying and tagging the keywords that are easily picked up for natural placement on Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs). Your news release must include the words people frequently use to search for topics that fall within the body of your release content. You can also include SEO-friendly hyperlinks to channels with supportive information, which broadens and strengthens the message in your release.

**INCLUDING HYPERLINKS TO ACCESS MORE VALUABLE CONTENT.**
Google may have said “No” to PR news release links by requiring a “no follow” tag, decreasing SEO value. However, announcements with hyperlinks to outside resources are a great way to provide education and further the value of the news you share. Stories with hyperlinks become credible resources by helping your audience learn about the entire story beyond your part. Including hyperlinks in the release positions a business as the expert resource delivering a more comprehensive story and not just a self-serving piece of a story. Plus, hyperlinks to dedicated web pages can help generate valuable new business leads.
EXPANDING THE MULTIMEDIA CONTENT FOR CLARITY AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING.

Making news releases social media-friendly became a much more attractive proposition when businesses realized the clarity and value of incorporating multimedia content in their releases. Adding embedded video, interactive presentations, infographics with visual data points, and compelling images adds visual clarity and also supports the story’s messages, so they are understood and have a greater impact on your audience.

USING HASHTAGS FOR CONTEXTUAL COMMUNITY SHARING.

Trending hashtag topics tell a company more about an audience; for example, how they care and how they share. There are two ways to use hashtags in your social-friendly news release. First, you can identify if a currently trending topic applies to your business, event, or news story at hand. Making your story contextual to the interests in the community will increase the awareness and appeal of your story. You can also create your own hashtags for your social-friendly release. Remember, hashtag usage doesn’t have to be confined to the body of a story, or a “click-to-tweet” function. News releases are evolving. Today, companies are using hashtags in their headlines and photo captions, letting audiences search, find and then carry a story even further into their social communities.

People process visuals times faster than text. 60,000

71% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase based on social media referrals.

Source: Hubspot

Source: 3M Corporation
NOTE CHANNEL SHARING DIFFERENCES

Look at every social channel through a different lens.

It’s important to incorporate elements of content into your release that are highly shareable for different types of communities. Every community has a culture with norms, a language and an accepted way of sharing the community-critical news and information. Knowing the culture of sharing on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram and Pinterest allows you to capitalize on what the community wants you to share with them and to know who’s driving the conversations.

On the following page, consultant and well-known blogger Jason Mollica shares specific strategies for making your news releases appealing to your target audiences based on which social channels they frequent. The days of sending a ‘one-size-fits-all’ news release are gone. How you write your headlines, the tone of your messages and what types of images you include all play a big role in whether your news resonates with the right people or gets lost in the social noise.
In today's social world, how you communicate with your community is of utmost importance. Not understanding how to do this will cost you valuable opportunities to build champions internally and externally. The same goes for sending out a news release.

**YOU CAN’T HAVE A ONE-TRACK MIND WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR NEWS**

For public relations professionals, the days of just hitting ‘send’ on an email to reporters, stakeholders, and others are over. You can’t have a one-track mind when it comes to your news. By knowing how your audience wants its news delivered, you’ll have a leg up in analyzing how far your release goes, what is driving a conversation, and who are the influencers that are helping spread the word. Remember, each social channel has a different audience.

**TWITTER**

Want higher sharing? Make sure tweets are customized by reader for greater sharing. Steer clear of using the release headline and come up with something compelling and sharable. Got a hashtag? Use it for another level of measurement.

**FACEBOOK**

Keep your news focused and on point, but make it conversational. The ‘Like’ button is a pretty powerful thing and having compelling content to go along with an attention-grabbing Facebook post can go a very long way. Sharing the release on your page is two-fold. One, it allows current friends to see what you are up to; and two, it gives your champions an opportunity to share the news with their friends. Make sure to keep an eye on your statistics, too. As we said with Twitter, measurement is key.

**TUMBLR**

Not considering Tumblr to share your news? Think again. Tumblr offers a great opportunity for shareability and for visuals. If you have an infographic to share, Tumblr is the perfect place. But, you must understand your audience. Make certain you’ve geared it correctly. Tumblr’s audience skews younger, so a message you put on Facebook won’t work here. Be strategic.

**INSTAGRAM**

The great thing about Instagram is that, in some ways, it is an untapped resource. Just think: there are over 100 million monthly active users. If your company or brand is already sharing on Instagram, then you have a built-in group of champions waiting to like and comment on your news. They will give you immediate feedback and, in turn, help you spread the word about your business organically. And by using relevant hashtags, you can help cast a wider social net.

**PINTEREST**

We're coming back to infographics here, as well as using compelling photos. These are all great to consider for Pinterest. Up to 80% of all pins on Pinterest are re-pins so it's important to have consistent, original content that people will want to share. This is the best way to promote your news and to further get your brand name out there.

Remember, you can post your release to all the social networks you’d like. But, if it isn’t strategic or compelling to your audience, the news will be lost in the social noise. Stand out and be smart.
You must go beyond impressions and reach to engagement, interactivity and the analytics that let you know your socialized release is a social “hit.”

You can clearly see who is interested in your news and what kind of authority and influence they have in a community. Understanding why different analytics matter and how you can use them properly for your measurement program will help you to move forward strategically, further proving the value of your news release program.

Often news release performance analytics turn out to be nothing more than “pretty wall art,” as ‘queen of metrics’ Katie Paine states on the next page. To ensure that you provide meaningful, actionable insights and not a series of bar and pie charts that don’t offer value, Katie offers tips that begin with defining objectives, then agreeing on which metrics will best measure your progress, and finally, ensuring clean, spam-free data that your organization can use to make strategic business decisions.
START WITH AGREED-UPON OBJECTIVES
Whatever definition of success you use, it all comes down to one question: How is what you do going to help your organization achieve its goals? Put another way, what is the connection between what you do and the bottom line? Typical answers might be: My efforts help increase the marketable universe more efficiently; or My efforts start someone on the path to purchase. Without clear definition of your contribution to business objectives, all measurement systems will fail.

AGREE ON YOUR METRICS
Once you’ve made the connection between your efforts and the bottom line, the next step is to agree on the specific metrics you will use to measure your progress. Metrics typically start with a % sign, i.e., % increase in names added to the marketable universe from social media, or % increase in touch points with prospects that contain the 5 elements that drive a purchase decision. Gather all the relevant managers in a room, and get them all to agree on the 5 or so metrics by which you will be measured. (No one can keep more than 5 metrics in their head, so if you decide on more, assume that the rest will invariably be forgotten.)

KEEP IT CLEAN
Whether you are using a sophisticated monitoring platform or Google Alerts, your metrics are only as good as the search strings and filters that you are using. Budget (both time-wise and dollar-wise) for adequate time to test your search strings, dig into the results, modify them, test them again, and tweak as necessary. For complicated programs it is not unusual to have upwards of 1000 terms within a single search string. Next, check for spam. In one database for a restaurant all we had to do was put in “Viagra” and we eliminated about 25% of the mentions! Look for calendar listings, weddings, police blotter notifications and anything with similar but inappropriate terms. One recent example was a search for Johnson & Johnson that contained a remarkably revealing discussion of sexual innuendo and puns that had very little to do with the products the famous medical supply company provides. If Twitter is part of your data, look for and eliminate Twitter handles of people with similar names to your brand. Make sure you eliminate duplicate items as well.

DELIVER INSIGHT, NOT WALL ART
Too many communication professionals lose credibility when reporting results because they focus on making them “pretty” rather than insightful. Lose the pie charts—they seldom tell you anything meaningful. Show trends, highlight the failures and what you’ve learned from them. Ideally, you’d create a quadrant chart like this that shows the success of each program you’ve managed, the level of investment, and what programs can be eliminated because they didn’t work.

For more information on measurement, subscribe to Katie Paine’s newsletter, The Measurement Advisor: painepublishing.com/measurementadvisor. Or check out www.painepublishing.com for white papers, courses, and training materials. @queenofmetrics or measurementqueen@gmail.com.
BOOKMARK YOUR BEST EXAMPLES

There are great examples of companies socializing their news releases, adding the creativity and interactive components that attract attention and optimize the sharing of their news. KFC Canada is a one example of the socialized news release at its best. The release, which introduces KFC Canada’s new double burger, “The Big BOSS,” prominently features the campaign hashtag #NewBOSSInTown to reinforce the marketing campaign promoting the burger and encourage sharing. The company also takes advantage of Marketwired's Social Media 2.0 news release, which incorporates multiple sharing and viewing options, a link to the company’s website, and a high-res, mouth-watering photo of The Big BOSS.

Don’t stop at simply socializing your website and company newsroom and just sharing content through your social media channels. Take the extra steps to socialize your news releases by applying the tips offered here. Socializing your news release not only makes you more social, but also socially accepted, as your news and storytelling improves visibility and pickup, which leads to greater brand recognition, better customer/stakeholder/influencer allegiance, and easier sales.
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 News Release Platform that Encourages Sharing**

*Marketwired Resonate* is an integrated news release platform for content creation, media targeting, distribution and analysis. You can add your social channels and campaign hashtags to your news releases so to encourage sharing and gain valuable market intelligence. Post-distribution analytics extend beyond traditional reporting to give you in-depth insight about audience sentiment and engagement—even perhaps revealing influencers you may not know you had. And package pricing allows for unlimited words and multimedia, letting you write a good solid story and add the most compelling visuals—all without worrying about exceeding your budget.