



Vocus White Paper

What Journalists Want To See On Your Web Site

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The Background on the Journalist Survey

To learn more about why and how journalists use corporate Web sites and online newsrooms, Vocus launched a study in 2001 that included 1,000 reporters from print publications to include daily newspapers, newsletters and magazines. The results were first summarized in *The Ten Essential Elements for an Online Newsroom*. More than 5,000 corporate communications and public relations professionals downloaded that white paper in the first two years and the results have been covered in *PR Tactics*, *Marketing News*, *PR News*, *Media Insight*, *The Holmes Report* and even *The Daily Record*.

Annually, Vocus revises and re-launches the survey, and updates the white paper to reflect the new results. The last survey, completed in April 2004, marked a big change in the results. Today, reporters confirm they use Web sites to do basic research, fact check, as well as pursue story leads, and appreciate sites that provide them with content-rich factual details.

This paper is offered to provide some insight into how reporters use, and yes, even rely on your Web site.

Defining the Gap

Journalists' needs haven't changed since the first survey launched four years ago, but their expectations and the value they place on what you offer in your online newsroom have. This is good news for public relations. Journalists are now expecting to find much more information on your Web site – and they find it useful when provided.

It is easy to conclude from the survey results that PR people still don't understand what should be on the Web site of the organizations they support. And when they do understand, they believe providing it is too hard to manage. Since much of this information is already available, just in other forms, providing it online should be a simple next step. This paper covers both what should be online and how you can manage that task. With all of the discussion on the topic in trade journals, and in a variety of seminars, Webinars and conference sessions dedicated to the subject all over the country, the divide between what PR people think journalists want and what journalists expect to find in online newsrooms is perplexing.

After launching the 2004 edition of the survey to journalists, a second survey was issued to PR professionals. This survey took a few of the key questions journalists were asked and turned those same questions on the PR professionals. The results help demonstrate how the PR community views the importance of the online newsroom – and demonstrates how wide the gap has become between what reporters find valuable, and what is being provided.

In many cases, the difference between the two opinions was so great, it's easy to understand why many journalists feel that PR people aren't doing a good job online. Most assume reporters don't find the online information useful, when in fact they couldn't be more wrong.

There was only one point where PR people and journalists agreed – and that was for media contact details. When asked to rate how important varied information is online, whether it was "unnecessary," or "sometimes useful," "usually useful" or a "must-have," 97 percent of PR professionals felt media contact details were useful or a must-have. Every reporter agreed that contact information is important online. In fact, it was the only item that got 100 percent of journalists' votes.

Although PR professionals and reporters were close in agreement, too many comments from journalists about this information not being on corporate Web sites leads one to believe that, while PR knows it is important, it is still missing from too many Web sites.

The following chart shows just how different reporters and PR people feel online information to be – from close agreement of three percent to a difference of over 60 percent. In watching the attention to the topic by the PR community, one might surmise that PR would believe the information was more valuable than journalists do since, for many organizations, the small details are the story. Surprisingly, the reporters actually out-ranked PR professionals on the importance of online elements by a mile!

Online Information	Journalists	PR professionals	Variance
Contact information	100%	97%	3%
Research / study data	99%	82%	17%
Corporate background	98%	85%	13%
Press releases	98%	83%	15%
Media kits to support news	93%	71%	22%
Corporate financials	92%	73%	19%
Corporate statistics	92%	73%	19%
Executive team information	91%	58%	33%
Photos	89%	59%	40%
Links & related resources	88%	39%	49%
Media clips / past coverage	87%	26%	51%
Upcoming Events	87%	37%	50%
White papers	81%	39%	42%
Awards & Recognition	72%	11%	61%
Speeches	67%	21%	45%

Figure 1 — Side-by-side comparison of how reporters value online information versus how PR professionals perceive reporters value the information.

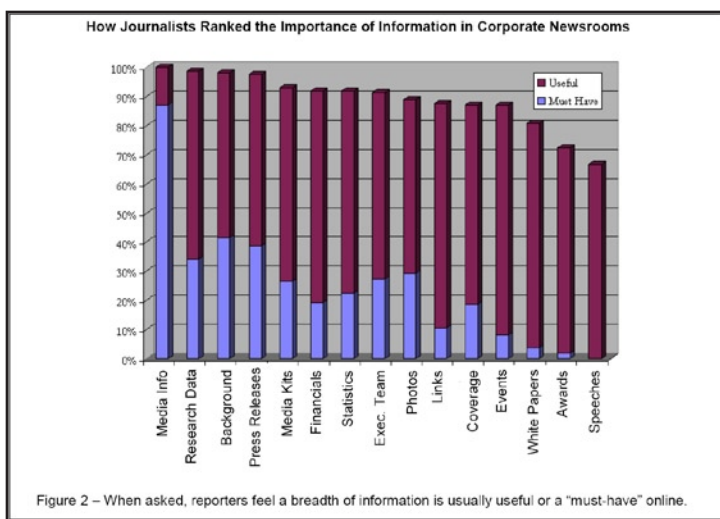
As shown in Figure 1, there is a huge disparity between what reporters think is valuable online and the impression by the PR community regarding the importance reporters place on the listed information. Not only is it important for you to consider how well your online media center represents you, but you also need to take into consideration how your key messages and language are represented on your Web site.

A colleague shared a story about a "big break" for the PR department that emphasizes the importance of controlling online content. For a smaller organization, landing coverage in a major business magazine can be quite a daunting task. However, after researching upcoming editorial calendars, this PR director pitched the company to a major business magazine for a feature story. The magazine was interested and PR managed the process every step of the way. All the interviews went extraordinarily well – which the director knew because he sat in on each and every interview. He had provided pictures, backgrounds and

biographies on all those interviewed. When the story was published, he was shocked to see an outdated description of the company that hadn't been used in any press materials or collateral in over eight months. How did it end up in the article? He called the reporter to find out and was pointed back to the corporate Web site. Ouch.

Recognizing the Power of the Internet

As PR professionals, you dream of the impact your news and information have on the key audiences you are trying to reach. The Internet gives you that power. It makes it easy for everyone to conduct research, and your sites are being used by consumers, prospects, partners as well as potential employees looking for the third-party insight that news coverage provides. Just posting a list of your press releases is not enough. That is where this paper begins, with the checklist of information that reporters expect to find in online media centers. But in the end, it's information that more than just reporters will use.



Becoming a Better Media Resource

Only posting your press releases online does not meet the needs of reporters and should not be considered an online newsroom. With journalists expecting to find more on your Web site than most PR professionals are providing, you shouldn't be surprised to learn that journalists find most online media centers difficult to access and inadequate.

While everything listed wasn't considered a “must-have,” the overwhelming majority of reporters do feel the listed elements are useful.

A New Era in Media Relations

These results signify a new era in media relations. Public relations professionals have spent years developing relationships and working to build their credibility – and reporters are now saying the information provided is helpful.

Part of the change may stem from the fact that most journalists are also members of the same time-deprived era PR professionals feel they are working in. Journalists report they are using the Internet and corporate Web sites to do some basic research. Even news stories are starting to source items to a corporate Web site. Micheal O'Laughlin, editorial researcher, CFO Magazine, shared that he visits hundreds of corporate Web sites each week to confirm press releases and fact-check stories. On the day he was interviewed, he commented that only one in five of the sites he visited contained basic name spellings, mailing information and phone numbers. To improve the likelihood that the journalist will leave with a better and more favorable impression, there are some key design and functional elements to consider for your online newsroom.

How Journalists Ranked the Importance of Information in Corporate Newsrooms

Resist the temptation to be an information gate-keeper. Remember that your Web site puts your company or organization on display. Rather than have browsing journalists take away your sales message and try to decipher what's unique about your company, your products or services, make sure they can easily access the information they are looking for from your Web site. Tight deadlines are forcing journalists to use the Internet as a resource. Don't send the reporter away empty-handed from your site. Give them the information they need to develop a better story.

Information posted on the company Web site can help make or break your company's overall PR efforts. So what are reporters looking for, and how can you make sure they get it?

Make It Easy to Make News

The best way to ensure that you deliver the right message to journalists and your public is to create a special “online newsroom” that can be accessed directly from the main page of your corporate site. An online newsroom provides visitors with a clearinghouse of news-oriented information and helps you focus your PR efforts in one distinct area on your Web site.

“A dedicated PR site with downloadable information is better than a general corporate site,” commented one reporter in the 2004 survey. Since it was the overwhelming complaint in the survey for the three years prior, it wasn't even asked this year – however several journalists took the time to specifically comment on the need for easy navigation. A simple, well-marked



Figure 3— Alcon labeled their online media resource “News Center”

button will allow journalists to get right to the information they need. One-click access from your home page, clearly labeled should be your welcome mat.

The specific name you use to identify an online newsroom has not reached any kind of standard status. Whether you label it “News Center” like Alcon in Figure 3 (www.alcon.com) or ask the site visitor to identify who they are, and offer an option labeled for “A Media Representative” like Kaiser Permanente shown in Figure 4 (www.kaiserpermanente.org), it must be easy to find. A simple, easy-to-navigate site will take visitors further, in addition to being easier to manage.

The decision about home page content is most likely maintained outside of your department. Work with that group to clarify the audiences with whom you’re communicating. Most organizations will recognize that journalists are one of your key Web site audiences and therefore should be addressed.

Understandably, online retail and high-profile consumer companies dedicate 99 percent of their real estate to the consumer. However, you should carve out some space and make it easy to find in an “About Us” link.

Make sure to instill confidence in your site by keeping your newsroom current. Commit to a plan for updating, changing and adjusting the content in your newsroom at a moment’s notice. When issuing a news release, simultaneously post it to your online newsroom. Journalists, clients, prospects and employees will come to your site first for breaking news. Don’t let them leave empty handed!

The Key Elements for your Online Newsroom

Let’s start at the top with the key items reporters find most useful or “must-haves” in an online newsroom.

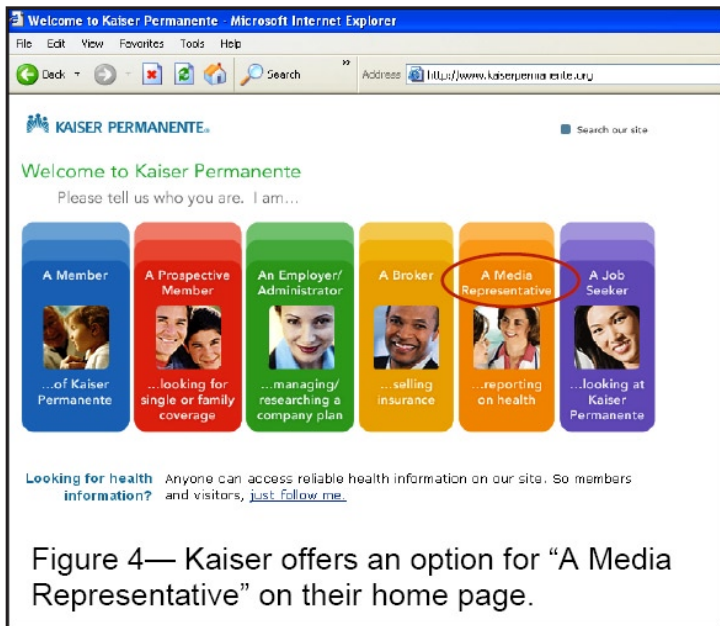


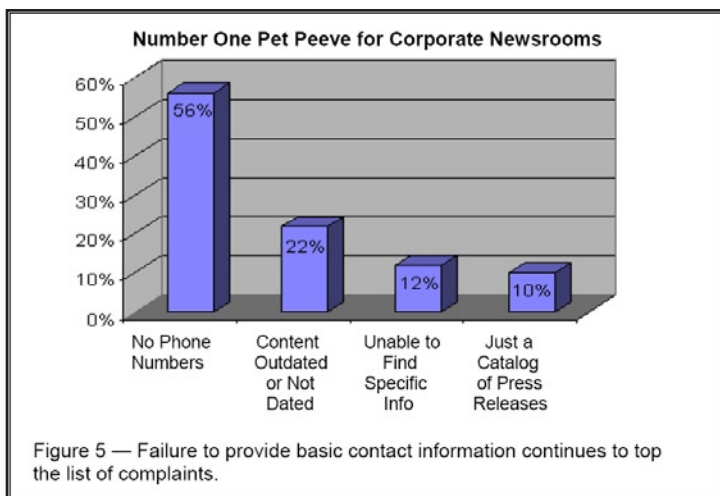
Figure 4— Kaiser offers an option for “A Media Representative” on their home page.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Providing contact information on your PR department and spokespeople would seem to be a no-brainer, yet on many Web sites, this information is either elusive or omitted all together. If you have resisted adding contact information on your site because of concerns about receiving unwanted calls like client complaints, consider that every reporter felt that this was useful. Eighty-seven percent deemed contact information a “must-have” for an online media center.

In the survey results, reporter after reporter reiterated the need for easy-to-find contact details. Brooke Folkerth, assignment editor for both NBC and Fox affiliates in Ohio, asks that PR professionals “make sure the Web site is updated with the right information and contact numbers.” While another NBC assignment editor out of California,

David Reese, adds to that sentiment: “Providing contact info for a media representative 24/7/365 is imperative.” But it wasn’t just broadcasters who complained about the lack of contact information. As shown in Figure 5, 56 percent of the respondents made “no phone number or contact information listed for PR” their top pet-peeve when it comes to the online newsrooms they visited.



Offering a generic email address for reporter requests like pr@mycompany.com is ineffective since it gives the reporter no idea when they will get a response, or with whom they should follow-up. Lisa DiCarlo, senior editor, Forbes.com commented, "That's a black hole. We have no way of knowing who will get back to us or when. A phone number is a thousand times better." Considering that your job includes developing good relations with the media, how well can you relate if you want the reporters to talk to you through a generic email account?

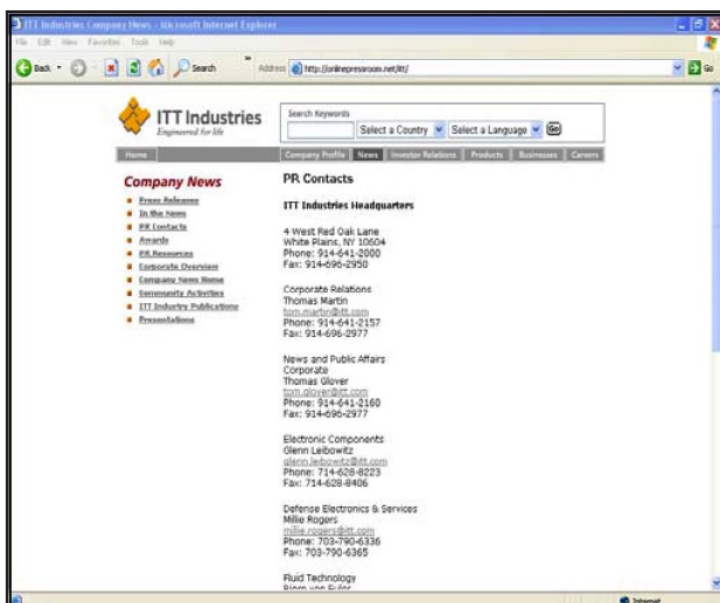
Give reporters a quick, easy and obvious way to find your public relations contact. A well-marked link from both your "Contact Us" section and your newsroom main page lets reporters find you quickly and easily. Contact details should include direct office number, email address, after-hours instructions, and can even include directions on how to reach an alternate company representative should the main public relations contact be unavailable.

For after-hour options or for large companies concerned with the number of consumer calls that would result by posting contact information, consider using your customer service department or an answering service to screen calls that are routed to a pager and allows you to respond in a timely manner.

If your PR group is fairly large, include a searchable database for specific experts or spokespeople. Do whatever it takes to make it easy for a reporter to get to the person he or she wants to interview on the first try.

With an up-to-date "Media Contacts" area on the Web, you can also eliminate contact information on your online press releases so when a contact leaves or moves to another department you don't have to spend your time making updates.

If your Web site also features a "General Contact" section, include your public relations contact information there as well. Journalists will appreciate that you have provided them with a clear and easy way to reach the organization's representatives.



RESEARCH/STUDY DATA

The demand for validation and confirmation of facts continues to grow as scandals on false and unsubstantiated reporting continue to make the news. Provide additional details and access to research reports when you can. Ninety-nine percent of the reporters want this information and would find it useful on your Web site.

Not only can the information be research data from your own organization, but it could also include third-party results of studies that support one or more of your news claims. In offering healthcare cost research online, BlueCross BlueShield (BCBS) provides a valuable resource for journalists looking for detailed information and statistics on the subject. By demonstrating its expertise on the subject, BCBS increases the chances that, when a reporter is looking for a spokesperson on a subject, he or she will most likely turn to BCBS to find an appropriate "expert."

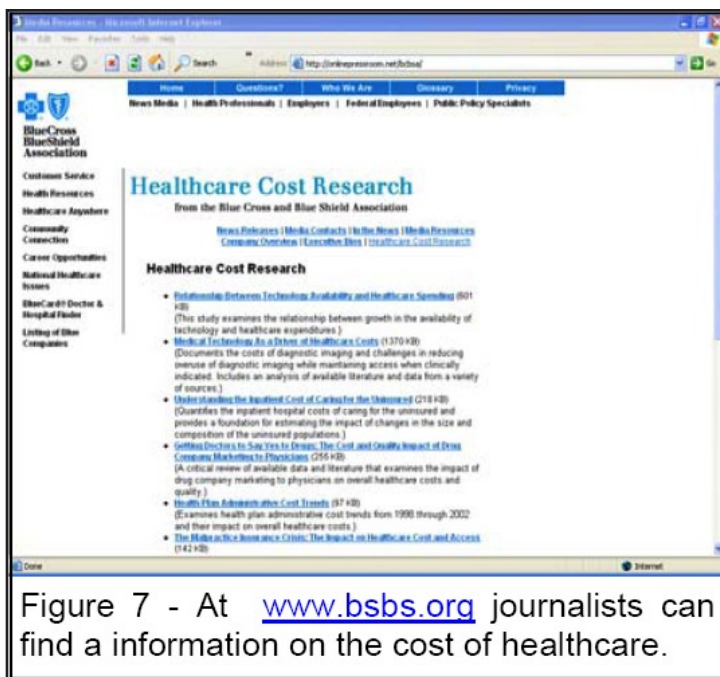


Figure 7 - At www.bsbs.org journalists can find a information on the cost of healthcare.

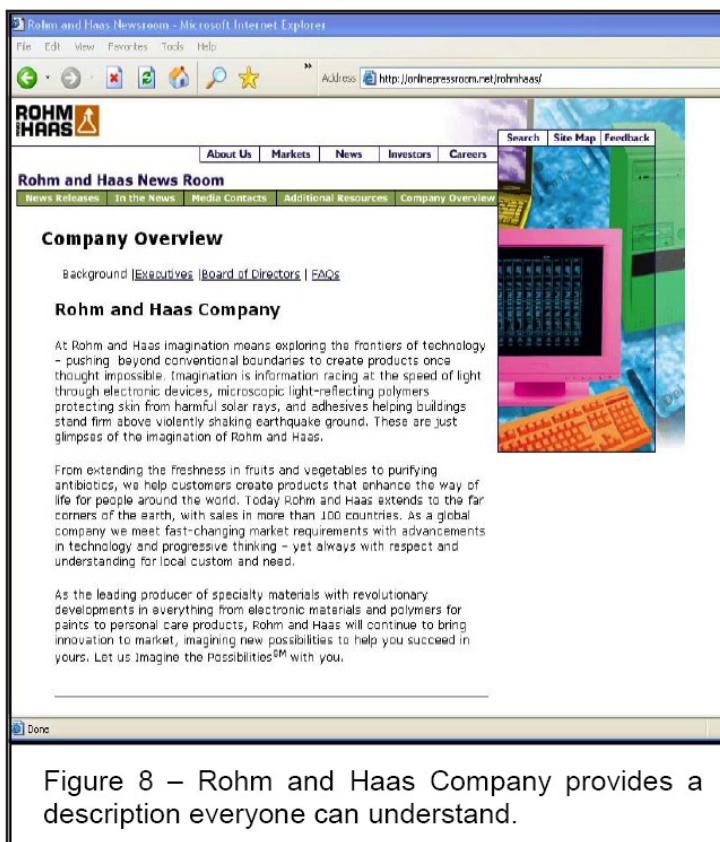


Figure 8 – Rohm and Haas Company provides a description everyone can understand.

CORPORATE BACKGROUND

Corporate information was the third most popular item desired on corporate Web sites. Journalists are looking for vital statistics: number of employees, year founded, annual sales, revenues and operations, as well as a listing of holdings and subsidiaries.

"Don't make me hunt for the 'Inc.' or 'Corp.,'" shared Doug Caldwell, Associate Editor for the Silicon Valley/San Jose Business Journal. With four years of tenure based in an area saturated with technology companies, he also discusses the issue of language. "Tell us in simple, non-jargon, what the company does. If it does something for the 'enterprise,' are you referring to the aircraft carrier or the spaceship?" Several news editors reiterated that theme. Steve Smith, new media editor, MIN Magazine, said, "Many corporate backgrounders and descriptions are filled with non-descriptive vagaries like 'solution providers.' It is not always easy for outsiders of a business to discern what that means." Provide information in clear and understandable language.

More specifically, the survey also asked for journalists' view of corporate financials and statistics. Both of these were rated as useful or a "must-have" by 92 percent of reporters. Many times, this type of information provides journalists with the confirmation of the news or the story you are telling and helps them bring additional depth to their stories.

It's not just about employees or revenues. In its newsroom, the Utah Department of Community and Economic Development includes details on population, household makeup and demographics.

PRESS RELEASES

Considered a key ingredient for an online newsroom by 98 percent of reporters, news releases are an important element. Many journalists will go to your corporate Web site as their starting point when conducting research for a story. If you've sent them a press release but don't have it posted on your site, you instantly lose credibility. How can they be sure that the rest of your information is valid and timely when the release they just pulled off a news wire isn't posted on your Web site?

Reporters from Newsweek and Hispanic Business Magazine specifically commented about having "clear press releases" and "a catalog of press releases" that can be "very informative if complete." A reporter may also have received your printed release but not have it handy. Posting it on your site makes the reporter's job easier, and shows that your company is dedicated to informing the public of important news. Journalists also frequently commented on the importance of having an up-to-date site. Kristen Zhivago, editor, Revenue Magazine, was one of many reporters that specifically added "up-to-date releases" to their survey response.

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Figure 9 – Utah provides some general statistics on Utah's population and growth.

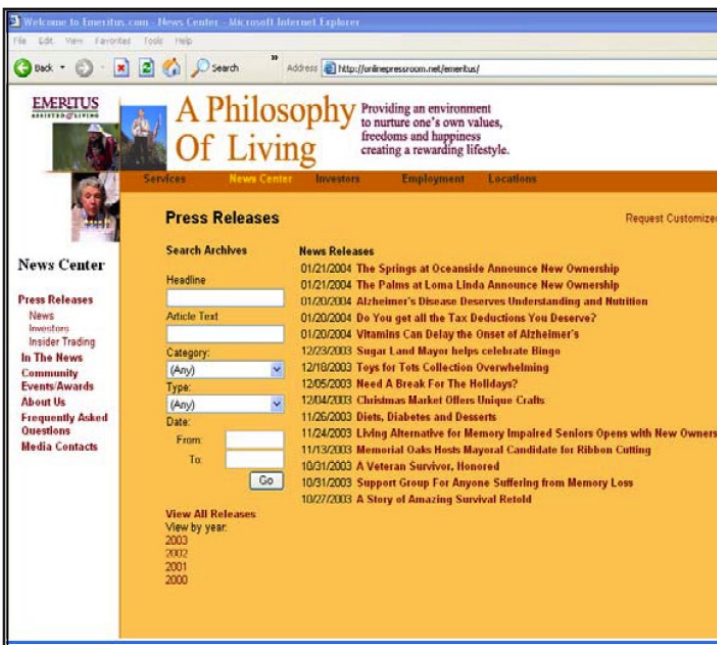


Figure 10 – Emeritus offers a searchable database of releases online.

Make Your Press Releases Searchable

After four years as the number one item in the survey results, the category of press releases has fallen to the fourth most useful item in an online media center. With only 39 percent of journalists seeing them as a “must have” and the other 59 percent finding them useful, just listing them in chronological order isn’t enough. To make reporters’ research easier and your site more helpful, provide a way for them to search your press releases. Help reporters seeking to broaden a story angle by keeping an orderly archive of all past corporate news releases, searchable by headline, text, type, date and year to allow for a targeted search for background news and additional history.

How many press releases will reporters visiting your site need to wade through to find what they are looking for (i.e. specific information to source a quote or to find detailed story particulars)? If you have any volume of releases, you need to provide journalists with a way to search your press releases. Offer a text-search option on your listing of releases by keywords, product name, executive name, division, financial information or topic. Also consider offering a “type” search. If you are a large company with many divisions and a high-volume of releases, offer some sub-category searches for your press releases.

MEDIA KITS TO SUPPORT NEWS

With 93 percent of all reporters believing a media kit is useful, one must wonder why PR professionals seem to have dropped these as a general practice. Including every detail in a press release isn’t practical, so create a place for reporters to get the detailed information they need to write a complete story. On the heels of the data regarding the press release, it seems that most reporters are using your online newsroom to gain a bigger picture of the news you have sent them. A media kit is a great way to enhance the press release you just issued. Photographs, diagrams, illustrations, related releases, audio or video demonstrations and technical specifications – any additional details the media may call for – should be available online for easy download. With the emergence of 24/7 coverage online by all media outlets – journalists are working around the clock – and so should your online newsroom.

Most likely you already have all the additional details created. Offering them online for immediate access won’t require much additional time. Several reporters will tell you they would prefer to have access to the text of your news release so they can cut and paste key information into their story. Previously, the distribution of media kits may have been limited based on budget or resources constraints. Today, you can provide these details to everyone faster and with little or no added expense. With more than 9 out of 10 journalists believing that media kits are useful, take the next step to meet their needs.

If you are trying to explain a new medical procedure, can you provide an animation or drawing that will help explain a concept? Can you show a client using your news product or include the floor plans of your new building? Take the time to use the interactive nature of the Internet to enhance your news release with an online media kit.

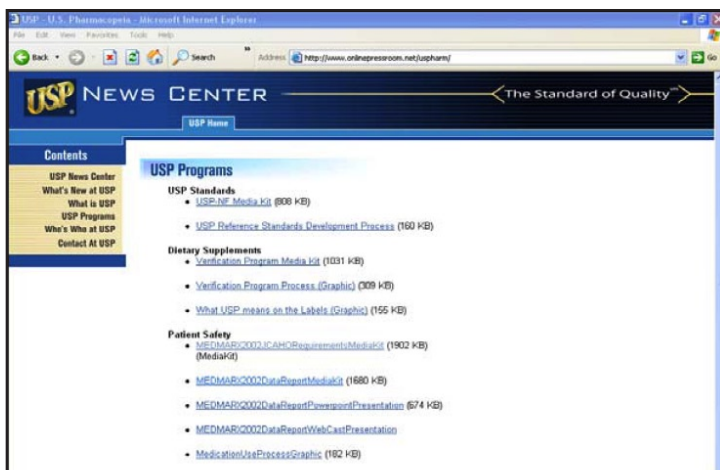


Figure 11 – USP offers a variety of online media kits.

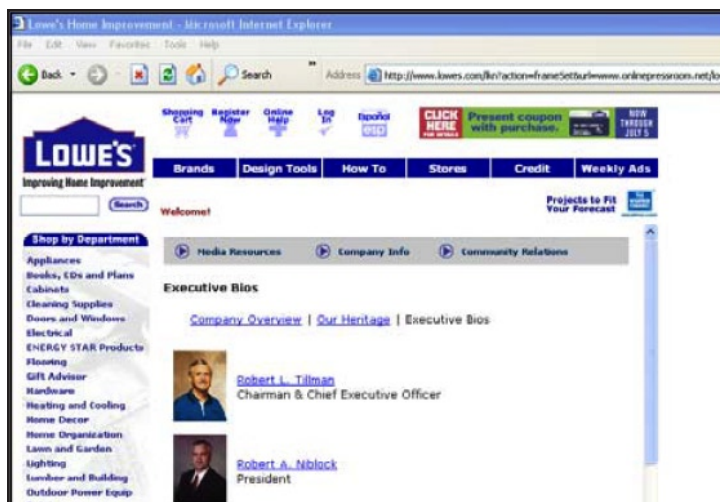


Figure 12 - Lowe's includes a photo, complete title and a biography for each key executive.

You can simply offer a link in your news release that takes the visitor to your media kit that is provided electronically, regardless of how you sent your news release. Most PR professionals are surprised at the response by reporters when an online media kit is offered.

A great example is the USP site (www.usp.com), which offers detailed studies on patient safety in its newsroom. USP provides media kits with detailed information on a third-party study as well as a copy of a presentation to walk individuals through the study and results.

One major clothing retailer uses its online pressrooms to better serve the needs of media interested in discussing new fashions. During the height of fashion season, the PR team was having difficulty handling the hundreds of media calls that came in each day requesting information and photographs. By offering this information online, the company was able to address the general needs of the media interested in getting more information on its products and also had time to address the more intensive media requests, instead of returning phone calls and mailing out media kits.

EXECUTIVE TEAM INFORMATION

More than 91 percent of all reporters said details on the executive team are helpful. Reporters will search your Web site for basic "who's who" information that can lay the groundwork for their stories. Include photographs and biographies of your key executives to provide background, and give reporters the added option of including a photo or playing up a more personal angle to one of your stories. If you are working to establish and support your CEO and other executives as thought leaders and visionaries in their field, make sure your Web site supports that. Position your executives as resources to provide understanding on key issues related to what you do. Include links to printed articles along with executive biographies.

With only 51 percent of PR professionals believing journalists want this kind of information online, it's no surprise that most online newsrooms today are missing this important element.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Consider basic items that used to be the standard for media kits – photographs. Only 59 percent of PR professionals felt photos were important on the media site, while 89 percent of reporters said that they would use them if offered – and these were a variety of print, online and broadcast journalists. With 89 percent of reporters desiring photos in an online newsroom and 80 percent of reporters saying they have used a photo (Figure 13) offered online, leaving these off your site is a huge oversight. Consider including downloadable logos, product photos, video demonstra-

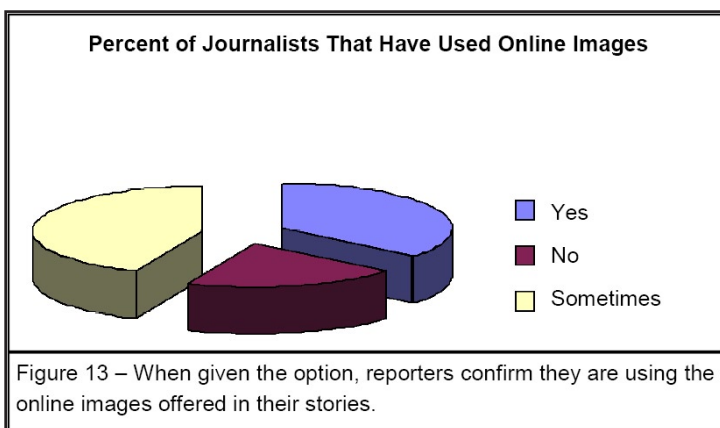
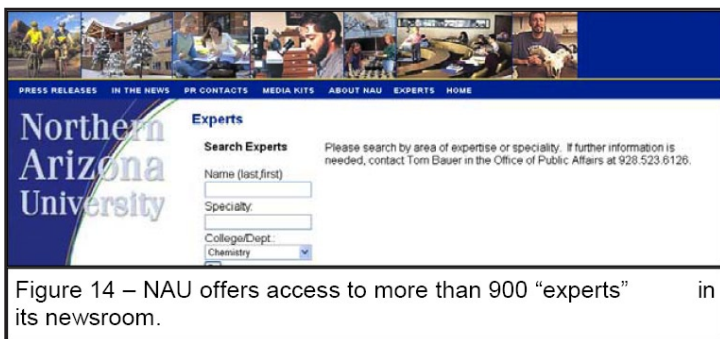


Figure 13 – When given the option, reporters confirm they are using the online images offered in their stories.

tions, annual reports, and other information that is helpful to reporters on a tight deadline. With tighter deadlines and smaller budgets, finding a product photo or illustration on your site may be all that is needed, so make it available. The same retailer that uses media kits to support the high demand for information on its products during fashion week found that, after adding product photos to its online newsroom for download, image placements in its coverage increased by 30 percent.



LINKS AND RELATED SOURCES

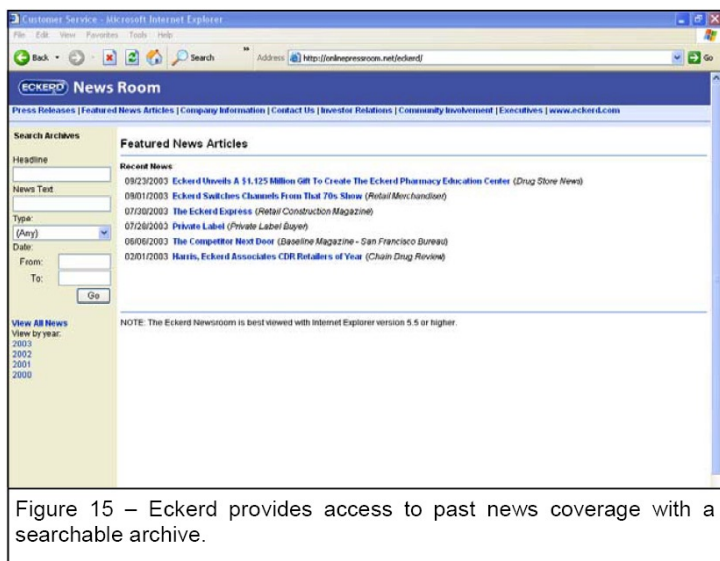
As public relations professionals, we strive to be valuable resources for the media. It is important to apply this approach online, too. Are you providing content for reporters to take advantage of when they hit your site? Find some unique ways to support the needs of the media and facilitate research on your industry by including some unconventional items in your newsroom.

Northern Arizona University (www.nau.edu) provides an experts database in its online newsroom. NAU allows journalists to search by topic to find a list of professors and educators who are “experts” on that topic (Figure 14). Journalists receive an immediate list of matches with ad-

ditional information on the expert that includes phone and email contact information. Offering an expert or spokesperson resource is a great way to make your Web site a valuable resource to the media.

As a member organization, do you have certain members that could provide additional insight into a specific issue? If your organization is large and you have internal spokespeople, could you provide that information in a database that a journalist could query to find organizational contacts to field specific types of questions? NAU shared that this resource garnered a large amount of media attention when anthrax was being sent using the U.S. Postal Service in 2000. The university has continued to update it and share it as a resource with the key media they deal with on a regular basis. The feedback has been very positive and NAU continues to maintain this online resource today.

Lowes includes a map of its stores in the online newsroom. This provides immediate understanding of the scope of Lowe’s market. Is there something you can provide online to distinguish your newsroom?



PAST COVERAGE

While only 26 percent of PR professionals believe reporters want to find this online, 87 percent of journalists said this kind of information online is helpful. A journalist working on a breaking story or an exclusive will be happy to know whether a particular topic has already been covered. Dan Gillmor, technology columnist, San Jose Mercury News, shared that his favorite newsroom is by an organization that offers all of its coverage online – good and bad. Mr. Gillmor asked the organization about the reasons behind this, since so many organizations failed to be so candid online. The PR director told him that the organization figured that, if a reporter sees that a negative story has been done before, they would most likely leave it alone. Additionally, the organization included its facts on the issue and could provide an editorial along with the initial coverage.

Mary Reeves, lead reporter, Andalusia Star-News, succinctly stated, “Less puff, more facts.” One way to do this is to provide reporters with access to all the news about your

organization. Posting your news online can also demonstrate that your organization and executives offer an expert viewpoint or a tried-and-true voice on a particular issue. Posting recent coverage also gives journalists ideas for expanding the angle of a story. Include audio and video coverage as well as printed clips. Make archived clips searchable by headline, type and date

ranges. The point is, providing recent coverage and up-to-date information shows journalists that your company is committed to providing a level playing field. It also means journalists won't have to leave your Web site to find this information.

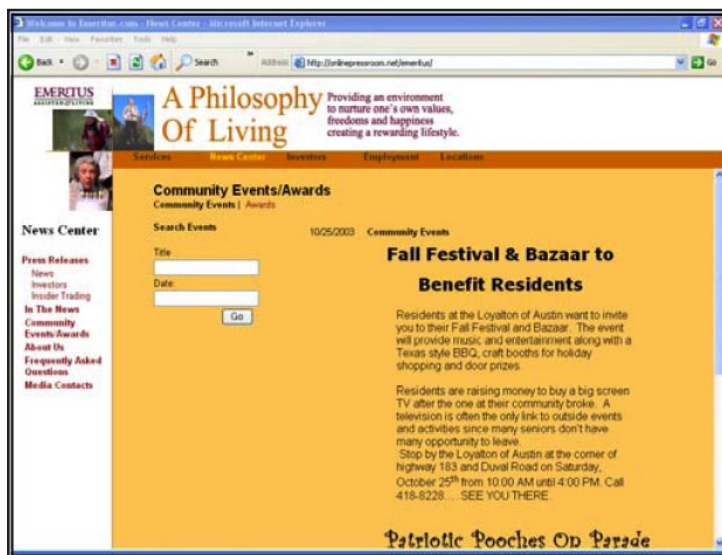


Figure 16 – Emeritus provides a listing of all community events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Eighty percent of the journalists listed events information as one of the items desired on a corporate Web site. Listing trade show involvement with descriptions, booth numbers and onsite contact information is a positive way to enhance your PR exposure at the event. Also list upcoming speaking engagements, conferences or educational seminars on your site to demonstrate your organization's involvement in your industry or community.

Both Emeritus (Figure 16) and the Georgia Department of Labor (Figure 17) include additional information that helps the media get a better understanding of the service and value the organizations provide to their customers, their community and even to the tax-payers.

WHITE PAPERS

Eighty-one percent of journalists expressed interest in having access to these on corporate Web sites. Whether a reporter has been assigned a new beat or a seasoned pro is looking for a deeper understanding of how something works, providing links to your white papers should be considered in your online newsroom planning. Having them online can also help establish and confirm your organization's expertise on certain topics.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

In our survey, awards and recognition received interest from 72 percent of the respondents. Awards add credibility by demonstrating the recognition of your peers, the industry, and other outside sources. Only 11 percent of PR professionals thought journalists may find this information useful. Including this kind of information helps establish a company's standing by offering third-party validation.

While ITT provides a listing of all recent awards, Kaiser Permanente offers information on third-party measurements of the quality of its services. The site also includes links to other third party quality assessments published in Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report.

SPEECHES

Whether a reporter is looking for some insight into one of your executives, trying to learn more about your organization or seeking a quote related to a specific topic, including the text of speeches on your Web site is still a valued component.

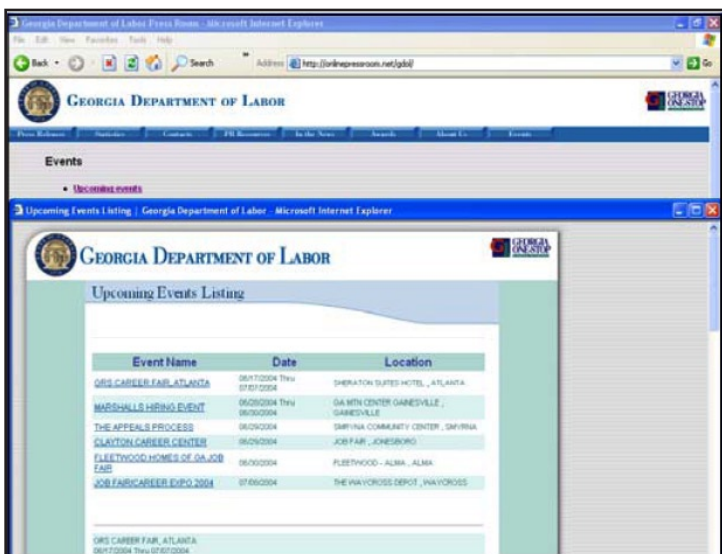


Figure 17 – The Georgia Department of Labor lists all training events in its newsroom.

Recently, media interviews with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld were offered online. Whether an organization is facing the glare of media attention or wants to provide a deeper look into the leadership, speeches can be a valuable resource online. Providing information on where and how often your executives are involved in their business community offers a more comprehensive picture of your executive team, and goes a long way to establish credibility or thought leadership.

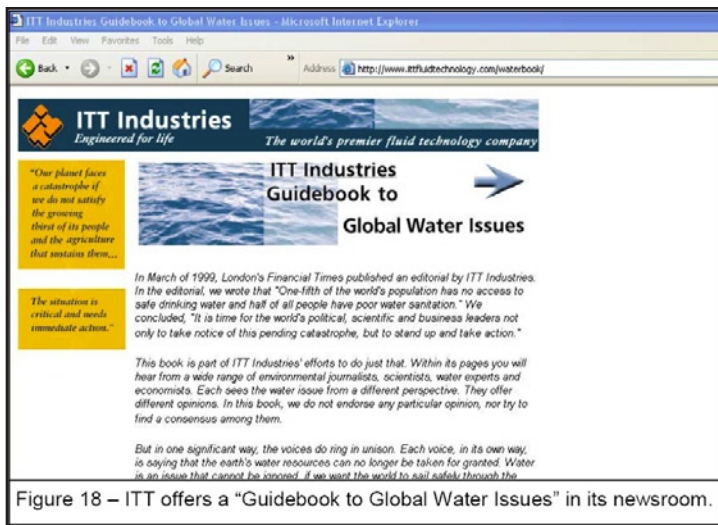


Figure 18 – ITT offers a “Guidebook to Global Water Issues” in its newsroom.

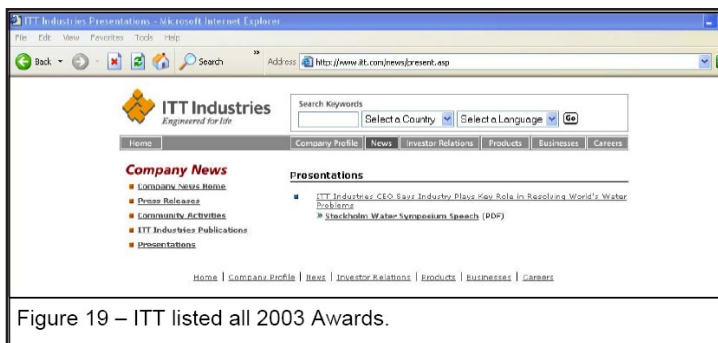


Figure 19 – ITT listed all 2003 Awards.

Making the Online Newsroom Benefit Your Media Relations

If you have reporters on your Web site, don't let them leave without providing a way to stay up-to-date on your organization. Make it obvious and easy for a journalist to request future news and self-certify their news interests in your organization. Offer a list of topics about your organization that they can select to be added to your media lists. Once you know what they want, you can send them only the targeted information they've requested.

Better Access to Information Means Better Exposure

Properly crafted, your online newsroom will prove a vital tool for serving journalists – and your PR goals – more effectively. But ultimately, the most important feature of your online newsroom will be your company's commitment to it. Keeping your site accurate and timely is vital to realizing the true value of a project that has taken considerable time, planning and resources. In the end, your efforts will translate into good news for the image and reputation projected from your Web site to journalists, employees, business targets and all your key audiences.

Getting it Done

Now that you see the breadth and depth of the information reporters would like to see in your newsroom, you might feel overwhelmed. Don't worry, you already did the bulk of the work by creating all the materials that journalists would like to find on your Web site. Now, you just need to translate them to the online world.

How to Pay For Your Newsroom

Before even discussing how to get it done, the issue of funding how the site will be updated and managed should be addressed. Many organizations have been able to repurpose funds to pay for the new Web site. One used the \$80,000 in overnight shipping fees of materials and photographs they saved the first year to pay for the new Web site. The company used a portion of the money it would have spent to purchase a content management system to drive its online newsroom.

If your IT Department is “charging” you for its time, you may want to determine how much your department was charged over the last year posting news releases and updating content. One organization received funding for its newsroom by providing an executive with information on how much money a competitor spends on its online media room. After finding that the other company was paying 3 full-time staffers and had a total budget of over \$500,000, the decision to reinvest in the PR function allowed the group to develop and pay for a new media center on its corporate Web site.

In 2003, research done by Hobson and Company reported that the average organization that posted an online newsroom saved \$20,000 annually. That same report also found that “a typical PR department spends approximately 300 hours per year formatting postings for the Web site and answering simple questions that could otherwise be answered by self-service” in an online newsroom.

Besides the monetary factor, don't forget the issue of responsiveness to the media. In times of crisis or during peak media periods, can your Web site help address a majority of the basic press calls and requests for photographs or details that don't require your staff?



Figure 20 – ITT offers access to a recent speech given at an industry event.

Add to that the fact that reporters said they would find a host of information useful on your Web site, and are frustrated by the fact that most organizations aren't meeting their needs. It's important that you find a way to develop a comprehensive online resource to meet the media's needs.

What to Offer Online

Take the time to determine what elements you think should be online to support your goals. You have the insight into what journalists want, so what makes sense for your organization? Do you have additional items that could serve as a great resource for the media? Create your checklist before you consider how to get it accomplished.

How to Develop, Launch and Manage Your Online Newsroom

Once you know what content you'd like in your newsroom, and have an idea of possible funding to achieve your objective, you need to decide how you to get the job done.

Basically, you have 4 choices:

- Use current IT or Web master – You should already have someone on staff who manages the Web site. Can they address and manage the needs for the online newsroom? Do you have any time-sensitive needs and are they able to meet those needs?
- Hire a Web master – Hire someone who can implement your online newsroom strategy and make them part of your department.
- Outsource the position – For smaller organizations, the job won't require a 40-hour week and can be supported by an external resource or freelancer.
- Purchase Content Management Software – A host of products is available to manage and maintain your online newsroom. The PR department can create a site that matches the look and feel of the corporate Web site but that simply requires cutting and pasting of Word documents to add or edit your information and news.

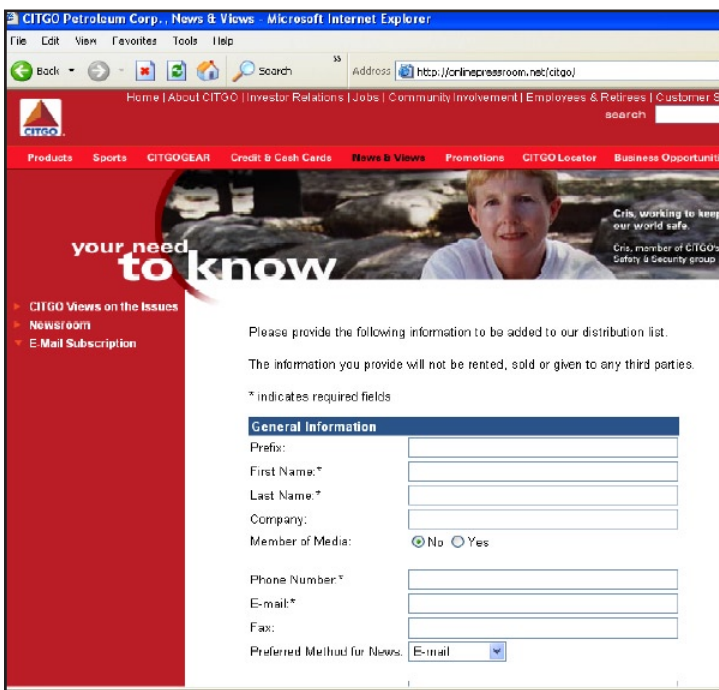


Figure 22 – CITGO gives reporters a way to request specific types of news.

Vocus developed a product just for public relations that automates many of the functions most requested by journalists. Vocus' online newsroom maintains the exact look and feel of the rest of your Web site. All of your graphics, colors and fonts are maintained. Vocus' newsroom is a complete, professional turnkey product that you maintain without assistance from your IT staff or a Web master. The key benefits of having an online newsroom include the ability to maintain a 24/7 media presence, have journalists visit

your Web site and selfcertify their news interests in your organization, and instant access to site metrics for your newsroom so you have basic demographics on site visitors and which pages were the most accessed.

To request a demonstration of how Vocus can solve your online newsroom needs, call 866.459.2590.

ENDNOTES

i "Don't Make Us Navigate," Media Relations Insider, May 2002

ii "Don't Bogart Contact Info", Media Relations Insider, May 2002

About Vocus

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Vocus (NASDAQ: VOCS) is a leading provider of on-demand software for corporate communications and public relations. Our web-based software suite helps organizations of all sizes manage local and global relationships and communications with journalists, analysts, public officials and other key audiences. Our software helps customers manage media relations, news monitoring and analysis, interactive email campaigns, online newsrooms, and government relations activities. Vocus software is delivered as an easy-to-use and cost-effective annual subscription, with no need for internal hardware, software or IT support. Our software is currently available in five languages, and is in use by customers around the world. Vocus is based in Lanham, MD with offices in North America and Europe. For more information please visit www.vocus.com or call 800.345.5572.

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