



20 New Year's Resolutions for Better Press Releases

MARKETWIRE

Beyond Words

Introduction

Did your press releases perform in 2012? Did they help take your brand to new places, introduce you to new customers and drive more sales for your company? Or did they go completely unnoticed?

Press releases can be powerful promotional tools for your company; they're cost-effective, highly targeted, content-rich vehicles to support your marketing efforts. But without the right preparation and execution, they can fall flat and have little impact.

Make 2013 the year your company resolves to write and send better press releases. We've put together 20 New Year's resolutions – these tips are all easy-to-implement and will help your press releases get picked up by the media, read by your customers and shared across social networks.

1

Do More SEO Research

Use the words and phrases that boost your search engine discoverability. You can find those keywords by looking into the global and monthly searches for terms from your industry. Google AdWords and Microsoft's Free SEO Toolkit will give you an idea of your target keywords, which makes your release accessible for people searching for news on your industry or products.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "Picking SEO and Social Media keywords to maximize pickup."

2

Make Your Content Likeable, Tweetable and Shareable

Give your audience a reason to share your release and make it easy for them to do so. Be sure to add as much interesting, relevant multimedia as you can. Pictures and videos always play well in the social space, plus, they add to your release's search engine visibility. Also, make sure you're adding hyperlinks, so your audience has somewhere to go next, like to your website or a landing page that supports the content in your release. Most important, make use of the "share" functionality your press release provider can include.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "5 quick and easy ways to make your press releases more social."

3

Target More Online Influencers

Find the people who influence your audience's purchase decisions. They might be influential industry bloggers, analysts or journalists. Identify them with a Twitter search for a company name or brand, or a Google blog search for the same. To take a deeper dive, consider implementing paid social media monitoring tools like Sysomos MAP that allow for more detailed and robust influencer identification. Once you locate your influencers, don't just send them your content. Engage them in a conversation. Talk to them about what they need. Build an ongoing relationship with them.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "The truth about influence."

4

Make Sure You're Sending Releases, Not Ads

You're sending press releases to boost your organization's visibility, but don't publish a thinly veiled ad. Always offer your readers something other than information about your organization.

This could be industry news, interesting statistics or expert advice.

Editors, bloggers and influencers are all very weary of promotion that's disguised as news. If your content comes off as too "salesy," they will quickly move on to the next press release.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "Is your news release just an ad for your organization?"

5

Tweak Your Boilerplate

Make sure your press releases end strong. Try to tell your organization's story in about 100 words. Don't overwhelm your audience with a long chunk of text at the bottom of every press release. Give them simple and concise info about who you are, and be sure to provide ways for people to learn more and engage with your company (Email, Twitter handles, websites, Facebook pages, etc.).

 To learn more, read the blog post, "What's on your plate? Using boilerplates to tell your story."

6 Don't Just Send it Over the Wire

Sending your content over a newswire is an important step, but not the only one. Make sure you also post your release to your company's newsroom/media room.

Share the content on Facebook and Twitter. Also, take full advantage of the content you've created by repurposing (but not duplicating) it for blog posts or articles.

7 Write Better Quotes

Use short, but intelligent quotes. Speak as an expert or spokesperson for your industry, without bogging the quote down in too much rhetoric or industry jargon. Smart, pithy or witty beats longwinded every time. And be sure to include quotes from relevant company spokespersons – if your release is about a new product launch or marketing campaign, a quote from the CFO is probably not appropriate. Don't be afraid to ask influencers for a quote about your product.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "Press release structure: making your content stand out on the screen."

8 Add More Images

Do more than just add your company's logo. When adding images, think beyond photos and consider adding a product shot, map, headshot of the CEO, a chart or an infographic. It may sound cliché, but a picture really can help tell a richer, fuller story than text alone.

Also remember to include your SEO keywords in your image caption, ALT tags and even the filename of the image itself. This can really boost your discoverability.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "News release basics: part two."

9 Add More Video

Make your content really stand out by adding a video. This could be an ad, a product demo, a walkthrough, an executive commentary or some sort of animation.

Embedding or linking back to videos posted on a sharing site (such as YouTube) not only showcases

company video, but allows for interaction by way of its comment and sharing functionality.

Like your pictures, remember to include your SEO keywords in your video caption, ALT tags and the filename of the actual video.

10

Write Better Headlines

Seasoned writers still struggle with this, so there's always room to improve. Write a short and concise headline to grab the readers' attention and include your primary keywords to grab the search engines' attention. And remember, Twitter likes headlines that are fewer than 140 characters; Google fewer than 65. So whenever possible, try to make your headlines search and social friendly, too.

11

Write Better Lead Paragraphs

Like your headline, the lead takes practice. Assume your audience will only read this far. Try to capture the 5 Ws here in 3-5 sentences – the inverted pyramid style of writing that is so familiar to many of us is still relevant in the digital age. Put the most salient points up front; you can elaborate later. And don't forget to include your keywords in your lead, too.

12

Make Better Use of Hyperlinks

Smart and strategic hyperlinks add SEO enhancement to your press release, quickly and inexpensively. They also give your audience somewhere to go next and a reason to experience your other digital properties. Try hyperlinking some of your SEO keywords to applicable pages on your website, instead of to your home page. Drive traffic to specific landing pages that are part of your marketing campaigns. Send people to product pages where they can see more detailed information or download collateral. Or link them to your online newsroom where they can learn more about your company.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "Search Engine marketing and the art of adding hyperlinks in the text of your press release."

13

Be More Strategic About When You Distribute Your Release

The ideal days and times to send out news are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, anytime between 6:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. EST. Avoid Monday and Fridays, especially around long weekends.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "News release basics: part one."

14 Know Your Audience

Journalists, editors, and bloggers make up your target market. Remember, they have to go through hundreds of emails and filter the relevant from the spam. So write with their attention span, time limits and mandate in mind.

At the same time, you're also writing for consumers who will find your press release via Google searches and social searches. So use straightforward language that can be easily digested by the general public.

➤ To learn more, read the blog post, "Who's going to read this? Writing your press release for journalists."

15

Proofread, Proofread, Proffread

Don't just rely on spellcheck. Spellcheck will catch simple spelling mistakes, but it won't catch most grammatical mistakes. A single typo or oversight compromises the professionalism of the entire release.

Don't just use one proofreader. Multiple perspectives are always the best way to find tiny mistakes that lead to big problems.

And don't just proofread the words. A single wrong number in a financial release can be disastrous.

16

Stop Putting Off the Writing

Remember that each day you delay writing your release can cost your content timeliness and relevance. Don't miss your window of opportunity to respond to something that's happening right now.

17

Don't Let Your Interns or Sales Staff Write Your Release

Press releases often get tasked to junior members of the organization, and this can be a mistake. It's better to have a staffer who has experience with press releases handle it. Or outsource to an experienced freelancer or agency, if you like. It takes them less time to write and they often produce a better product.

18 Ask Yourself: Who Cares?

A simple and blunt question like this can help prove your content's relevance. If you can't clearly answer why anyone outside your organization would care about your release, you may consider changing your angle or messaging. After every paragraph you read, imagine you're the recipient of the release and ask yourself, "So what?" A good idea is to have a colleague read your draft release – if it's relevant and impactful to him or her, chances are good you've hit your mark.

 To learn more, read the blog post, "Five Questions to ask when writing a press release."

19 Consider Sending Abroad or in Other Languages

Does your company have offices in other countries? Does your competition? If you have customers, stakeholders and potential new business prospects in other parts of the world, it is often worth sending your content to media and influencers in those areas, and in relevant languages where necessary. Don't forget to track how well that release performed – your newswire should be able to provide reports.

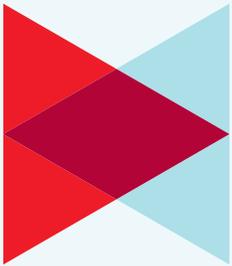
20 Look at Your Competition

Don't mimic what they're doing or try to directly one-up them. But it's helpful to see what types of press releases your competition sends. It's always good to know the verbiage that people in your industry use.

The Bottom Line

Try to implement these resolutions into your social strategy for 2013, if you're not doing them already. Most of these suggestions are free and simply cost you the time it takes to carry out the necessary steps.

Any one of these resolutions can spark more exposure that can quickly bring your brand to new places, expose you to new customers and generate more qualified leads from your press releases.



About Marketwire

Every day, Marketwire plays a critical role in shaping the conversations that happen in newsrooms, corporate boardrooms and social networks around the world, helping communicators move markets, change public opinion and affect consumer behavior.

For everyone from a start-up to a Fortune 500 enterprise, Marketwire is a social communications company that provides its clients with powerfully simple solutions: Global press release distribution, industry-leading social media monitoring and analytics, and a fully integrated marketing communications platform for content creation, optimization, distribution and measurement.

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