

Creating a Media-Friendly Website

By Kevin Boothroyd - President, P3 Communications, Public Relations Consultant to POC.*

Having a domain name and building and maintaining a website is an expected requirement for most organizations today. Although most of us spend a lot of time thinking about user interfaces, architecture and branding, very few of us consider how to make our site media-friendly. Along the lines of “build it and they will come”, a good media oriented site may greatly increase your chance of gaining valuable exposure for your organization, products or services.

To shed some light on this, I recently interviewed Dale Slattery, Vice President Creative of *Graphically Speaking*, a Vancouver-based web design and Internet Marketing company. With more than twenty-eight employees, *Graphically Speaking* is the second largest company of its kind in British Columbia. It has created websites for a stellar list of companies, associations and government agencies that includes The Jim Pattison Group, TransLink, Science World and the British Columbia Pharmacy Association. By following some of these guidelines, you can create your own media-friendly website.

KB: Why do I need a news/media section on my site?

Slattery: Our research on web user behavior tells us that News and Media pages are among the top 3 most requested subject areas. News and Media pages provide your audience with current and diversified information about your organization. Dedicated media pages offer reporters and researchers quick and easy access to relevant information.

KB: What are the most important elements of a good news/media section?

Slattery:

- Recent Press releases. Any news older than 6 months should be relegated to a news archive.
- “What’s New” pages are very compelling provided they are refreshed on a timely and regular basis
- “Events” pages invite participation
- Media contact info/Press kit. These work by locating everything in one place, which will make the reporter’s job a lot easier.
- Corporate profile, background and company photos
- Executive team with bios and photos

KB: Are there standard media formats that I should be considering when creating a news/media section?

Slattery: HTML for the content. Windows Media Player for video. PDF's can also be used.

KB: Where should that section be located on the site architecture?

Slattery: Ideally, this section should appear in the first level of the site navigation. It should be titled "News/Events/Media" or "What's New/Media".

Where this section appears in the second level of the navigation include it in "About Us" and then title it "Media".

KB: Are there any tactics to help drive media to that section?

Slattery:

- One can effectively drive the target audience into a website via Search Engine Optimization (SEO). News articles are particularly useful for SEO as they will contain material that the press is interested in.
- Email alerts to reporters
- [RSS feed](#) so your site can be a central source of industry information
- Your blog covering topical information

KB: Should it be password protected or not?

Slattery: Not usually, the web is all about free access to information.

KB: Can I track media hits to that section?

Slattery: With a good analytics tool you can easily track visitors to your site, the pages your audience has visited, and much more.

KB: Are there any particular websites that you think that have excellent news/media sections?

Slattery:

http://www.panamericansilver.com/investorrelations/news_releases/default.htm

http://www.translink.bc.ca/About_TransLink/News_Releases/news05160701.asp

KB: Are there any other important points to keep in mind when creating a good news/media section?

Slattery: Keep the information on your website current and post news regularly. If a user sees that nothing has been posted in the last couple of months they are not likely to visit that section again.

Always write descriptive headlines, a brief overview sentence and include a link for more. This style is suited for the web as it lets your visitor scan the headlines and quickly drill down into the relevant content.

RSS, or **Rich Site Summary**, is a form of **eXtensible Markup Language** or **XML**. It is a method of distributing links or syndicating content in your web site that you'd like others to use. RSS allows people who publish online to notify subscribers when they have updated their website.

*Kevin Boothroyd is recognized as an expert on strategic communications planning and stakeholder development, especially in the highly complex and challenging area of public-private partnerships (P3). His public relations career has included senior positions with private and public sector corporations, industry associations, not-for-profit agencies and government. He is a former board member and past-President of the Vancouver chapter of the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), former National Board Member of the CPRS. He is currently POC's Public Relations Consultant.