

Google Me This

10 ways to combine the power of PR and search engines in your marketing strategy. **BY PAUL MACCABEE**

THE HOLY GRAIL for public relations firms used to be: “How can we get our products featured on *Oprah*? Today, marketers have a more urgent plea: “How can we get our company mentioned higher in Google searches?”

That’s good news: The hunger for coverage in high-profile media outlets has given way to a wiser strategy of developing engaging content that will lead to web links, higher Google ranking and turbocharged web traffic so it can be converted into sales. Here are 10 ways to leverage PR for search results, based on advice from two search engine optimization (SEO) experts, Lee Odden of TopRank Online Marketing and author of the upcoming book *Optimize*, and Nina Hale, president of Nina Hale Inc., Search Engine Marketing:

1 OPTIMIZE THY NEWS RELEASE

News distribution services (such as PR Newswire and BusinessWire) will automatically optimize your release for discovery by search engines, but keep in mind Odden’s counsel: “It’s important that news releases are optimized for people first, and search engines second.” Go beyond pushing out releases: “If it’s searchable, it can be SEO’d,” says Odden. So your

Google-findable content can include white papers, case histories, e-newsletters, blog posts, op-ed commentaries, video and social media conversations from blogs to Twitter.

2 ALL WEB LINKS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

Integrating PR and social media is the best way of building links from online content to your site, says Hale. An ad featuring your web URL may provide short-term traffic, but the conversation inspired by content at online sites that are archived for years gives you a more lasting impact on traffic and sales. “Google gives its own quality score or ‘thumbs up’ for highly linked content like the *New York Times*, so a link to your site from the *Times* counts more than a link from Nina’s Backyard Blog,” adds Hale. But if you’re a manufacturer, a link to your site from a trade outlet with a modest but relevant audience may be more valuable than *Newsweek*.

3 UNLOCKED AND LOADED

It’s not enough to have links to your site at online content sites; Odden emphasizes you must have “crawlable” links that are open to Google. Go further

than just acquisition of links, so you’re pursuing links to sites that don’t have their content “locked” behind passwords. If your customer must log in to a site, then Google can’t get in to find your link and drive customers to you, agrees Hale.

4 BALANCE LINK QUANTITY AND QUALITY

An interview about your new lab equipment posted to *Lab Equipment’s* site is smart, but don’t stop there. “Go for quantity within reason, as well as quality links. A large number of links from lower-level sites is important and can outweigh your one good link,” suggests Hale, “but hundreds of thousands of links from unrelated sites can hurt you—links must come from sites with real value in your field.”

5 KNOW THY AUDIENCE—ONLINE

Are your customers searching for “weight loss clinics” or “fat farms”? Recognize that the keywords searched by your investors, retailers, journalists, analysts and customers in your product/market segments will differ.

6 WAG THE LONG TAIL

Press releases hosted on many online sites will not live forever, so ensure that your content is maintained online for the long haul. Post releases to your website’s newsroom, and consider services such as PRWeb, which excel at long-term dissemination of online content about your company.

7 ONLINE VIDEO AND YOUTUBE

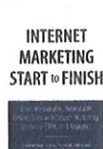
With 3 billion videos viewed per day, online video sites like YouTube should be central to your marketing attack. “Google decided that if you have video as part of your online content, those pages will get higher rankings,” says Hale. But Google can’t watch that video of your CEO—it only knows if that video is relevant from reading its title and

RESOURCES

• BOOKS •



Search Engine Optimization
by Kristopher Jones



Internet Marketing Start to Finish
by Catherine Juon, Dunrie Greiling



Search Engine Marketing, Inc.: Driving Search Traffic to Your Company's Web Site
by Mike Moran and Bill Hunt

• ARTICLES •

“8 Social SEO Questions Public Relations Pros Need the Answers To” and “Top 10 SEO Tips for PR Professionals”
by Lee Odden on the TopRank Online Marketing Blog

“14 ‘PR & SEO’ Tweetable Tips”
by Heather Whaling on her PRtini blog

descriptions of what your video contains. “As soon as Google incorporated multimedia content in its results, marketers had to embrace what I call digital asset optimization—holistically optimizing every bit of content you’re producing,” says Odden. Your video can be optimized by tags, annotation of graphic images, the addition of transcripts of your video content and the embedding of key words into the image itself.

8 SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING


“Google now integrates social media into its search,” notes Hale. “Google decided that content shared on Facebook and other social sites is relevant for search. So if your company is not using social media, your search rankings will drop.”

9 DON'T FORGET TWITTER

Google takes into account Twitter followers and tweeted conversations. “We tell our clients: You cannot improve your search rankings if you are not doing social media, including Twitter, in a real way,” says Hale.

10 BE WISE ABOUT WHAT YOU OPTIMIZE

Our agency discovered why thousands of Christians were flocking to our PR firm’s site; we had posted an article, “10 Commandments of Social Media Marketing,” for download. The jpeg was so optimized for search that anyone seeking information on the 10 Commandments (cf. Thou Shalt Not, etc.) would be directed to our site!

Even if you earn a front-page ranking on Google, you should ask: What business goals are you reaching for with PR and SEO? “Many companies emphasize superficial metrics like web traffic, placements and rankings. That’s not enough,” says Odden. “It’s vital to create content that will impact search visibility but also result in business outcomes that are trackable all the way through conversion into sales and revenue.” 



« Paul Maccabee is president of Maccabee Public Relations, a Minneapolis-based national social media marketing, online content and corporate communications agency. maccabeegroup.com.
