

## CDROM News Kit Hits Primetime

As the majority of news media finally catch up technologically, electronic news dissemination directly from media relations practitioners is becoming more and more cost effective and logistically sensible. This climate makes both the CDROM news kit and e-mail media relations quite viable.

Costs have fallen in the CDROM production area, with software such as Adobe Acrobat making them easy to produce for practitioners and easy to use for news media. The hard cost of a CDROM news kit is about half of a traditional news kit (double-sided folder, news release, backgrounders, photo). For example, a CDROM costs about \$5 per unit including postage for a run of 100, compared to about \$10 per unit for a traditional news kit (including postage).

Clients like the price, practitioners like the ease of mailing and reproduction (CD burners are easy to use and getting cheaper by the minute) and media like the ability to quickly cut and paste information, and have everything in one place, including high resolution digital images that exceed floppy capacity.

One tip: high tech and electronics journalist Gordon Brockhouse, Editor of Here's How magazine, advises that a one-page hard copy news release accompany the CDROM so time-pressured news media can make a decision in five seconds whether or not to even load the CDROM into their system.

If the story is not of interest, the CD can join the coaster or dog Frisbee stockpile of Internet CDs one receives bundled with trade newspapers and by snail mail.

Former W5 Executive Producer Peter Rehak now works as a freelance high tech journalist and web site producer/editor. His sites include [www.spinoff.com](http://www.spinoff.com). He says CDROM news kits are far less cumbersome than paper-based news kits, and don't clog up computer memory the way e-mail news releases do.

He also finds CDROM media kits much easier to use than going to web sites looking for images, even when direct URLs are supplied. He recommends the hard copy news release accompanying the CDROM include a menu of what's actually on the disk, to speed up the news processing even further.

Doug Willoughby, editor of the successful Victoria-based Hi Tech Bulletin web site ([http://vvv.com/hi\\_tech/](http://vvv.com/hi_tech/)) says a CDROM format that includes news releases, backgrounders, images, as well as the most recent software for download in both Mac and PC formats works very well. It saves time, which is money to both freelance journalists and self-employed webmasters.

Time is also the key element according to senior high technology journalist Myles White. He sees a use for CDROM news kits accompanying high tech product for review. He stresses that 100-word copy blocks and prices should be included.

Mr. White advises the best way to reach high technology journalists, at least those in the Toronto area and particularly those of the freelance variety, is through e-mail, and not through other routes. He often advises PR practitioners to neither fax nor send releases by courier unless invited to do so. White and other senior journalists in the field, compiled an e-mail media relations protocol that includes:

- Embed the news release within the e-mail message. Attachments are time consuming, and can be infected with a virus. Therefore, many journalists simply delete attachments.
- Format the embedded news release. Transferring from word processing software will always leave unsightly and hard-to-read aberrations. Take the time to correct those before hitting the send button.
- Blind copy your distribution. Often the number of contacts a practitioner would hit would use up a page or two of names and e-mail addresses before getting to the copy. This will frustrate a journalist who may very well hit the delete button in response. Also, you may not want to share all of your contacts with everybody.
- Use specific subject lines. Using something such as “Company XYZ news release” will simply get lost in the shuffle!
- Attempt to research beats properly so media are properly targeted.
- Include prices in the news release if it’s product related, as most high tech news releases are. A lot of the freelancers work when many practitioners and clients are sleeping. Make sure the prices are in Canadian funds!
- Include a direct URL with the release so news media can quickly go to a section of the client’s web site to retrieve high-resolution product images or other lengthy works such as backgrounders, annual reports, and white papers.
- Include a technical contact with releases to help with installation or other problems.

CDROM news kits become particularly useful at media events, or to send along with product shipments, whether hardware or software. E-mail media relations, if the above protocol is followed, is also very effective. Combining both is the best way to go, so key media are reached by two channels and invariably can at least find one of the communications under deadline pressure.

The time-pressure these journalists are under is very important to keep in mind. Ipsos Reid, in their comprehensive media survey in 2005, found on average that business journalists receive about 150 news releases per week. About 18 per cent are used. They also get an average 19 news conference invitations per month, with about 50 per cent getting a reporter to attend. 60 annual reports per year on average. 16 per cent used quickly. 20 media kits per month. 19 per cent used.