

## **Create a media friendly media section on your web site**

*By Mark Hunter LaVigne, APR*

Web site media sections are an opportunity for an organization to provide the news media with an easy-to-use, multimedia platform to disseminate information about that organization and its news.

A web site “newsroom,” a term that seems to be gaining acceptance in mainstream usage, should contain that information in at least two easy-to-download formats, Word and PDFs. The news media have little time as it is, and DO NOT have the time to spend digging for information, cutting and pasting or reformatting information that they intend to use in a story.

“Often when we are on deadline, we have space to fill and need these materials faster than PR contacts can deliver,” says Gordon Brockhouse, editor-in-chief of Here’s How magazine. “This often happens after normal business hours. The company that makes it easiest for us, by having information and images available online is the one that gets the space.”

The web site newsroom should at the very least also contain high-resolution (8X10, 200 dpi) photography. MP3s are another information source, primarily for radio news consumption, that are easy to capture and inexpensively park in the web site newsroom. As the web quickly evolves into a broadcast medium, parking MPEG4 video should make sense as well. Eventually, providing short, broadcast quality video clips for download will be logistically operational and affordable.

Don’t forget that web video is also a good educative tool. “I wouldn’t be likely to use video myself, but I often go to a web site to find out about things, using the video archive,” says food writer and editor Liz Campbell. “I find I learn more quickly with auditory and visual input than by reading.”

Campbell also notes that the media section should be easy to find on the web site. Placement of the Newsroom link button should also be prominently displayed, such as to the far left where journalists are trained is the most important information on a printed page.

Content of the newsroom should not only be in multimedia format, easy-to-download text, still images and video, but it should also be brief in nature, a series of fact sheets, and quotes. Longer pieces can also be parked there, such as white papers, speeches, and annual reports. Over time, a significant archive can be built.

Lots of time and money are spent on web site design, but a survey of web site media sections shows that the media section is not given enough attention. “As part of our continued efforts to make our organization media friendly, we are looking at enhancing our web site’s media section in an overhaul in the near future,” says Richard Truscott, Director of Communications, CGA Alberta.

Journalists need 24/7 access to web site newsrooms so passwording the section can be problematic unless that function works very quickly and seamlessly. Understanding that this tactic helps with the media monitoring process, many journalists surveyed do not like it, find the process obtrusive and time consuming. Nothing but public information should be parked in a web site newsroom anyway, so passwording entry may be counterproductive.

### **Ten tips for web site media sections**

1. Enable text in the web site newsroom to be easily copied and provide text in Word and PDF formats
2. Photography should be high resolution (8X10, 200 dpi)
3. MP3 audio clips should be captured and parked there
4. Web video can be a great educative tool
5. Park short broadcast quality video clips if you have server space and budget
6. Other materials such as advertisements can be included
7. Create short, informative backgrounders and fact sheets including price lists and store availability
8. Also park longer documents such as annual reports, speeches, and white papers
9. Passwording the web site newsroom can alienate journalists and hinder their ability to gather information outside of regular office hours
10. Prominently display the “Newsroom” button, ideally far left, top corner.

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