Turning Press Releases into Ticket Sales – Measuring Results that Really Matter

Greg Jarboe, SEO-PR
Angela Vargo, Southwest Airlines
September 22, 2004
“It’s my birthday. Churn out some hype.”
Most PR measurement is still using a 1948 model of communication

“Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?”

Source: Harold Lasswell, 1939/1948
50,100 news releases distributed via wire services in past 30 days

39 percent of journalists indicated on average, they write 10 or more stories per month

Sources: Google News and Bennett & Company
Media layoffs have eliminated 720,000 or more stories a month

“This tabulation of news reports of U.S. media layoffs, begun shortly after the start of the dot-com bust, has recorded nearly 72,000 job cuts since June 2000.”

Sources: I Want Media and Bennett & Company
Counting *clips* (inputs) is useful, but tracking *leads* (outcomes) is crucial.

While press and analyst influence remain important, “lead generation and sales are the new metrics of marketing performance.”

Source: CMO Council survey, February 10, 2003
Two top current events and global news destinations have **no** editors.

**Unique Audience (millions), US Home and Work**

- **CNN**: 22.4
- **Yahoo News**: 21.0
- **MSNBC**: 20.6
- **NYTimes.com**: 9.3
- **USAToday.com**: 7.4
- **Google News**: 6.3
- **Washingtonpost.com**: 5.8

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings, June 2004
News search engines treat press release wires like “news sources”}

Source: Google News
19% of the “public” and 81% of the “media” use search engines daily

- 203 million American adults
  - 128 million go online (63%)
  - 107 million use search engines (53%)
  - 64 million go online each day (33%)
  - 38 million use search engines each day (19%)

- 98% of journalists go online daily
  - 92% go online for article research
  - 81% are searching online daily
  - 76% to find new sources/experts
  - 73% to find press releases

Sources: Pew Internet & American Life Project, Middleberg/Ross Survey of Media
News search reverses model of communication but is measurable

“Who seeks what in which channel from whom with what effect?”

Source: Greg Jarboe, 1998/2003
Free tools can tell you how many times a phrase is searched for.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wordtracker</th>
<th>cheap airfare</th>
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Source: www.digitalpoint.com/tools/suggestion/
An optimized press release can keep high ranking for up to 30 days.
You can measure number of times your release is read or picked up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS RELEASE STATISTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WinaZap Launches New Website to Help Wine Consumers Find, Price and Compare Wines; Subscribers to WinaZap’s Free Newsletter Offered 22% off Any Wine, Regardless of Quantity Purchased</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reads</td>
<td>84,141</td>
<td>This number tells you how many times your press release was accessed from our site and other distribution points where we have the ability to measure a click through. This number does not include the number of journalists that have received your release through email. In addition there are online distribution points that we currently have no ability to track.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Pickup</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>This number estimates the number of times your press release was picked up by a media outlet. This does not tell you how many times your story appears in the media. It simply attempts to estimate media interest of your release.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prints</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>This is the number of times that someone has printed your press release. We measure this by the number of times that the “printer friendly version” link is pressed. In reality, only a small percentage of users actually click this link before printing a release.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forwards</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>This is the number of times that someone has forwarded your press release to a third party using the link on your press release.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PR Web
You can track readers of release who clickthrough to your web site

WineZap Launches New Website to Help Wine Consumers Find, Price and Compare Wines; Subscribers to WineZap's Free Newsletter Offered 22% off Any Wine, Regardless of Quantity Purchased

WineZap today announced the launch of a new website, WineZap.com, a free online service that helps wine consumers to find, price, and compare wines. WineZap.com assists both fine wine lovers and casual wine drinkers to buy wines by making it easy to find a wine, compare it with other wines, and find the lowest wine prices across hundreds of U.S. retailers.

San Francisco, CA (PRWEB) July 15, 2004 -- WineZap today announced the launch of a new website WineZap.com, a free online service that helps wine consumers to find, price, and compare wines. WineZap.com assists both fine wine lovers and casual wine drinkers to buy wines by making it easy to find a wine, compare it with other wines, and find the lowest wine prices across hundreds of U.S. retailers.

To help promote the launch of WineZap.com, the Wine Library in Springfield New Jersey is offering anyone who subscribes to WineZap's free newsletter 22% off any non sale wine item, regardless of quantity purchased. To get the Wine Library coupon code, which is good through September 1, 2004, go to WineZap Wine Deals for full details.

WineZap.com offers five unique methods to discover new wines. The most exciting are wine ratings by consumers and the ability to search for wines by pairing food and wine. WineZap.com users write wine tasting notes and wine reviews based on their experience. Other users can then search by the wine ratings looking for high quality, top value wines. If someone is looking to enhance his or her dining experience, WineZap.com's unique wine search engine can find the perfect food and wine pairings.

Source: ClickTracks
Southwest Airlines case study: Measuring PR in ticket sales

Southwest Airlines Offers Low Fares to Philadelphia: Airfare to Philadelphia as Low as $29 to $99 One-Way

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 12 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Southwest Airlines (NYSE: LUV - News) today unveiled its low, low fares and flight schedule to and from Philadelphia. Customers can now purchase tickets for this new service with fares beginning as low as $29 one-way.

Southwest Airlines will begin its Philadelphia service May 9, 2004, with a total of 14 daily nonstop flights to the following cities: Chicago Midway (three daily), Las Vegas (one daily), Orlando (three daily), Phoenix (one daily), Providence (five daily), and Tampa Bay (one daily). The airline will offer direct or

Date: February 12, 2004
29 days later, optimized release still #1 for “airfare to Philadelphia”

Date: March 12, 2004
Release initially generated $42,000 in ticket sales, now over $80,000

- Unique tracking links only appeared in the press release, not in any of the articles in the media
- Unique landing pages enabled Southwest Airlines to track clicks, sales, revenue and passengers

Source: The Measurement Standard, April 6, 2004
Southwest.com/vamonos release generated $38,000 in ticket sales

Southwest Airlines Spanish-Speaking Customers Can Now Make Their Online Flight Reservations in Spanish at southwest.com/vamonos

New Feature on the Internet at southwest.com/vamonos

Low Air Fares are Available in Two Languages

DALLAS, June 30, 2000 (PRNewswire-FirstCall) -- Southwest Airlines (NYSE: LUV) today celebrated the launch of its Spanish booking engine available at www.southwest.com/vamonos where Customers can make their flight reservations entirely in Spanish on the Internet. With the online booking tool, travelers can take advantage of Southwest’s low air fares and frequent flights as offered (in Spanish). For more information, visit http://www.southwest.com/press/pressrelease.html?source=PR_vamonos_063000.

“Our goal is to be innovative when it comes to Customer convenience in Spanish. We wanted southwest.com to be the first U.S. major airline web site to offer Customers the choice of making their flight reservations from start to finish in Spanish on the Internet,” said Kevin Kruse, Southwest’s vice president of Interactive Marketing.

According to Census Bureau figures, the Hispanic population, the nation’s largest minority group, reached 36.8 million on July 1, 2000. The Hispanic population grew 13 percent from April 2000 to July 2000, almost four times that of the total population which increased 3 percent. Also, according to the America Online/RoperASW U.S. Hispanic Cyberstudy, about half of online Hispanic consumers (49%) want more web sites in Spanish. With today’s launch, Southwest Airlines is addressing the growing Hispanic community and their online preferences.

At www.southwest.com/vamonos, travelers can obtain information in Spanish about Southwest’s policies, travel tips, airport information, a route map, fare rules and restrictions, and Company information. Travelers also can read a monthly Customer message in Spanish from Southwest’s President and Chief Operating Officer, Colleen Barrett. For a screen shot of what the Spanish online booking tool looks like, go to http://www.southwest.com/about_southwest development/vamonos.html.

Southwest Airlines partnered with Ion Global San Francisco, an Internet professional services firm specializing in building multilingual web sites, to translate the in-language Spanish functionality. “Ion Global has developed multilingual web sites for global companies since 1995, but over the last year we have seen an increasing demand from clients to reach ethnic groups within the U.S.,” said Simon Mathews, head strategist for Ion Global. “We are proud that Southwest Airlines selected Ion Global to help it become the first U.S. major airline web site to offer its customers the choice of making online flight reservations in Spanish.”

“If you look at the areas we serve such as California, Texas, and Florida, we are in a favorable position to serve the growing Hispanic population. Southwest Airlines is providing an additional resource to better serve our Spanish-speaking Customers traveling for business or pleasure,” said Jayneoggle, Southwest’s senior vice president of marketing. “Our Customers can now book their flights online in Spanish or call 1-800-VAMONOS to make their reservations in Spanish over the phone. With these options available, we encourage Customers to choose Southwest when traveling on business or when visiting their families and friends.”

In 1995, Southwest was the first major airline to launch a web site in the airline industry. Today, southwest.com is considered the largest airline web site and ranks as one of the largest e-commerce sites with the likes of Amazon.com. Southwest now estimates that more than 57 percent of its annual revenues — in excess of $3 billion — is generated through online bookings via southwest.com.
Southwest Airlines made four big announcements on July 15, 2004
Release about 22 new daily flights generated $1 million in ticket sales
Southwest’s PR has generated over $1.5 million in ticket sales

- Service to Philadelphia
  - Began with 14 daily flights to 6 cities
  - Expanded to 28 daily flights to 14 cities
  - Expanding again to 41 daily flights to 17 cities

- Revenue passenger miles for the eight months ended August 31, 2004, increased 11% to 36.3 billion

Source: Southwest Airlines
The first step in this new process is optimizing your draft press release

- Conduct keyword research to identify at least two relevant search terms that your target audiences are likely to use for a news search
- Edit your press release and optimize it with the relevant search terms so it receives high keyword ranking for up to 30 days in the news search engines
- Build anchor text within each news release to link with related content on your web site
- Insert JPEG images into a news release ensuring your photo gets picked up and displayed in Google News
The second step is distributing your release through multiple channels

- PR Web provides same-day distribution when you need it, which is faster than its normal next-day distribution
- PR Web distributes releases via opt-in email to its database of over 100,000 media outlets, industry analysts and freelance journalists
- You can also add PR Newswire to reach more members of the news media, investment community, and general public
- PR Web also uses paid inclusion to get you news release into major web portals such as Yahoo, AltaVista, AlltheWeb and more
- PR Web distributes your news releases through PR Web’s daily and your own customized XML/RSS news feeds
- Finally, your press release is archived indefinitely on PR Web’s site, which generates over 8 million pages views a month
The third step is measuring results and tracking web traffic and leads

- PR Web provides stats on:
  - Number of times each news release is read
  - Which search engines were used to find it
  - What search terms were used to find it

- ClickTracks can show:
  - Clickthrough rates
  - Site navigation patterns
  - ROI stats
You can start transforming your news archive into a corporate blog

Source: http://sempo.prweblogs.com
News search engine promotion can revitalize (or replace) traditional PR

"Who says/seeks what in which channel to/from whom with what effect?"

Sources: Harold Lasswell and Greg Jarboe
"There are exceptions. Sometimes it’s possible to have buzz without any hype whatsoever."