

Do you take pride in doing work that matters?

NO



Subscribe to PRWeek
SAVE 25%!

Click here to
redeem this offer

Print This Article

<< Return to [Expanding Web sites helps readership](#)

Expanding Web sites helps readership

[Craig McGuire](#)

April 14 2008

Journalists are no longer the only ones thirsting for company news, a fact that corporate communications pros know all too well. In an effort to appeal to audiences beyond the press room, many companies are retro fitting Web sites.

In December 2007, FedEx debuted the international module of FedEx Newsroom, featuring news produced for more than 14 international markets. The newsroom launched in the US in August 2007, marking the latest milestone in FedEx's collaboration with Ketchum Interactive. The agency transformed FedEx's previous site into a Web 2.0 destination including video, images, social bookmarking, multimedia flash video, and subscriptions to news updates via SMS to mobile devices and e-mail.

The permission-based content management system allows the client to pre-determine content that is shared across all markets and enables local markets to customize aspects of its content.

The previous Web site narrowly targeted journalists and received 4,500 unique visits per month. FedEx Newsroom now boasts more than 65,000 unique visitors monthly.

So, how can a company give its online press room a public-friendly makeover? "Try to vary the format of your

information and tell a story... using a combination of video, text, and images," says Chad Latz, Ketchum's SVP of interactive strategy and solutions.

"Look for opportunities to cross-promote related content to keep... parties leaning in to your site for stories... that may be of interest to them," Latz adds. "Be certain to implement two-way communications mechanisms and establish robust metrics that can be used to drive your content strategy."

In terms of structure, more audiences might mean more site maintenance, but be practical. Ibrey Woodall, director of marketing and sales at online newsroom specialists TEKgroup International, advises against creating separate sites for media, government, investor, and consumer relations.

"Make it easy for journalists, investors, analysts, and consumers to find one centralized, 24-hour official company online newsroom that [has] targeted sections," Woodall says. "Make it easy on yourself... by making sure that you can manage all of these sections with one administrative tool."

Position and label the various sections accordingly; make sure that the person writing your company blog is well-versed in the subject matter, and leverage social media to seed and fertilize a positive, viral message, Woodall recommends.

"If your event, promotion, or story warrants posting on sites such as YouTube, do so, and link to that presence," Woodall says. "Going viral to expand the opportunity for more editorial coverage is powerful."

Meanwhile, Dee Rambeau, product specialist for PR Newswire's MediaRoom, says tapping an external service provider - which is not as cost-prohibitive as many may think - not only disentangles the IT and communication departments, but empowers the PR managers.

"Most clients start with four or five sections and begin to develop creative features and content," he says. "One way to start is to evaluate what is already out there and see if the features... may be elements you want to incorporate into your strategy."

Rambeau also advises offering an easy way to subscribe to news for all audiences, whether that is an e-mail alert or RSS feed.

"It is one way to build strong connections to... media, shareholders, customers, partners, and employees," he notes.

Social tagging, calendars of company events, and data sets are some of the features Rambeau says should be short-listed.

Kye Strance, director of product marketing at Vocus, an on-demand software for PR management, says audiences are seeking similar features and an easy-to-use site.

"If it's too complicated or too difficult to navigate, visitors won't be able to find the information they need," she says.

Do

- Track audience interest and allow feedback
- Lean towards simple, clean navigation
- Offer a means to subscribe to news

Don't

- Follow the herd
- Produce a variety of Web sites
- Let your content grow stale. Timely content is vital