

Blinded by the Site -- Press-Friendly Functionality Provides Reporters With A "Go-To" Source

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A well-developed, press-friendly website is critical to a company's effort to make it a "go-to" source of reliable information and to help leverage the corporate profile with a wide-array of audiences.

Too often companies neglect to look at the corporate website from a reporter's perspective. As a result, companies, especially smaller ones, often miss excellent opportunities to further strengthen and broaden their profile.

Just as public companies offer a financial-page, dedicated to current and potential investors, so too should they develop a page solely for the media. The corporate website is, after all, one of the first resources used by many reporters to gain an initial understanding about a company or to check a fact. The two pages can be linked, but mixing them together rarely works well.

Reporters, ranging from news services to industry trade publications to weeklies, often are rushed in finding information they need for stories. When a reporter logs onto a company website and can't immediately find what he/she is seeking, more often than not the reporter will seek a different site, usually a competitor. The log-off happens fast and the loss may be permanent.

Many of today's corporate websites have enormous amounts of information and lots of flash, but lack the ease in navigation for reporters (or others for that matter) to swiftly glide through an assortment of valuable company and industry news and background. Too often reporters have to search multiple areas of a website to obtain what they need, or are misdirected by poorly titled buttons.

With various links strategically located in one specific area, reporters are able to easily and quickly access information. And, they are more likely to attribute information to that company in their story. Additionally, the information found may spark an interest for the reporter to pursue expert commentary from a company official or reach out to a company spokesperson.

But if the reporter can't find out how to reach a spokesperson when on deadline all the information on the site fades in importance. Recently, at a Business Wire panel discussion, Claudia Deutsch, a New York Times reporter, emphasized this issue. She expects to be able to go on a site and easily find a spokesperson's telephone number and e-mail-- one that is answered during the business day, after hours, a weekend, or a holiday.

Implementing press-friendly functionality doesn't necessarily have to be time consuming or costly. Following are some simple, basic, and cost-effective examples of links that can be created to provide a press-friendly environment.

- Have an obvious link on the home page of the corporate website which enables reporters to go directly to a dedicated press area.
- In the press area, provide clearly defined links to key news, background and contact information.
- Keep the site up-to-date.

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