

SEO PR: Five SEO Tips Every PR Pro Should Know

Posted by Frank Strong on Aug 30th, 2012

A daughter spots a yellow plastic bag on the lawn by the mailbox. It's been laying there for weeks.

"What is that, Dad?" she asks.

As they walk toward the box, he explains it's the Yellow Pages book. There's all sorts of useful information in there in alphabetical order, so when you need something – a taxi, a good restaurant, or a plumber, you just look it up in the book. They pick up the bag with the Yellow Pages and walk back into the house through the garage.

When the father drops the book in the rubbish bin — his daughter looks at him in astonishment. Why would he toss out such a useful book?

"Well, honey," he explains, "Today, when we need something, we just Google it."

That's a true story, based on my best recollection of a water cooler conversation I had some time ago with our SVP of Sales, [Norm Weissberg](#).

It's a powerful story that illustrates of why SEO is so important for PR. The point has been made many times over. "[Come on PRs, get a grip on SEO](#)," reads the headline of an Econsultancy post by James Crawford. "Frankly, it's embarrassing," he continues.

As a PR pro, I'm fortunate I'm surrounded by people like our own in-house SEO, Scott Benson, who wrote this must read post on [analytics for pitching](#), and the fine people at [TopRank](#) who have written a large body of content on [PR and SEO](#) for PR pros. Here are five SEO lessons I've learned along the way.

(Side note: there are two sides to every story. SEOs need just as much familiarity with PR as PR needs with SEO. After all, SEOs pitch links and get requests for content, while PR pros pitch content and often times get links.)

1. Search is long and short term. Search is effective for both long and short term PR efforts. In the short term, it's [newsjacking](#). Maybe the term "newsjacking" isn't pretty, but it's an effective technique. Reporters and bloggers use search just like the rest of us. In the long term, it can revive stories long tail style. Remember the story about [Giraffe bread](#)? A three-and-a-half-year-old girl wrote to UK-based grocery chain Sainsbury, to tell them that their store brand bread looked more like a giraffe than a tiger, its original name. The store wrote her back and changed the name. Her mother blogged about it, which kicked off a short flurry of buzz. Then it faded. Until [eight months](#) later, when someone spotted the story and it took off again. How did this happen? Search.

2. Use your customers' words. PR pros love to coin terms. Sometimes it's a new category to position a product or company, and sometimes it's polish to downplay the negativity around an existing term. For example, people like to talk about "challenges" as opposed to "problems." Here's the catch: if people are searching for the term "problem" but PR is talking about "challenges" we just might miss our opportunity to add our view point to the conversation.

3. Write for people before search. At risk of contradicting my previous point, PR needs to consider carefully their headlines. Consider this headline: [Tactical Patience: The Counterintuitive Art of Giving Good Pitches Time](#). When I submitted that post to our [managing editor](#), the original headline – Media relations, good pitches and tactical patience – had been written for the key search term "media relations." So what to do? Write with keywords in mind, but don't force fit them into content just to get them in. Ultimately, we want to attract readers and search is just one way to attract those readers; people prevail over technology.

4. Duplicate content is generally a bad thing. PR pros love to syndicate their blogs. Hook up the RSS feed to your favorite aggregator and let it fly. Great for exposure, right? Maybe. The SEOs I've talked to are split about this issue, but one thing is for certain: if the same content appears more than once in search, the search engine will categorize one over the other and instead of your blog, it might be the blog that published the duplicate content. To reduce this, try to ensure that the publisher includes a "[canonical link](#)" – it's a signal to search engines as to which piece of content should be considered the original and therefore ranked higher in search.

5. Keep an eye on search and social. Backlinks, or links from one site back to the source site, preferably hyperlinking keywords found on the source site, are still the most valuable signal a search engine looks at to determine search rankings. However, [signals from social shares](#) – like Google+ – are on the up and up. If you need another reason to consider Google+, consider this: at a conference a month ago, a Googler giving a presentation stated: "Google+ will be Google in the next five years." PR pros be well advised: keep your eye on search and social.

Link: <http://www.vocus.com/blog/seo-pr/>