

Make the Most of Online Press Releases

Online press releases can help boost search engine optimization for your website—when done well.

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Online press releases represent an important tool to gain exposure for your practice. One of the key benefits of online press releases is that they can help boost the search engine optimization (SEO) prospects of your website. You can distribute a press release through free sources like PR.com or PRLog, but for more comprehensive distribution, you may opt for paid PR distribution channels, such as PR Newswire.

Here are a few tips for generating and distributing quality press releases that can help maximize SEO and online exposure.

USE PRESS RELEASES TO SUPPORT LINK-BUILDING

According to the new search algorithmic guidelines of Google and other search engines, links within a press release are no longer valuable from an SEO perspective. However, this does not mean that press releases cannot play a role to support your link building efforts. A press release continues to be one of the most significant ways to get your news before journalists.

Journalists can provide you a link within a published article, which is typically a strong and sustainable link, because it is on an independent, high-quality website. That will generate long-term SEO value and help bring targeted traffic of local patients to your site. Furthermore, other media representatives, bloggers, and writers may use that news story to create independent posts of their own, which may link to your site in the process, thereby creating more SEO value for you.

MAINTAIN A SINGLE FOCUS AND CLARITY IN THE MESSAGE

Your press release should ideally focus on a single important announcement or development related to your prac-

SOME TIPS FOR BETTER PRESS RELEASES

- Keep to a narrow focus
- Content should
 - Provide facts, not opinion
 - Be novel and interesting
- Send to a targeted audience
- Use images effectively
- Have a solid structure
- Be ready to follow up

tice. If you try to pack too much diverse information into a single press release or try to tell too many stories, it may not appeal to news editors.

It is tempting to provide all possible information through your press release, but it is better to narrow down the focus and highlight only the most exciting part. You can, however, provide a link to additional information for those who may like to learn more about the issue.

USE PRESS RELEASES SELECTIVELY

Make sure that you employ the power of a press release only in a judicious and selective manner. Only when you have something highly newsworthy to share should you go ahead with creating a press release about it. Opinions, ideas, and suggestions do not usually constitute good material for a press release. It must provide facts or something novel and interesting that a publication, magazine, website or blog may like to carry prominently to inform their readers.

TARGETED DISTRIBUTION

Sometimes a good press release with highly newsworthy content fails to make its mark because it simply does not reach the right people. There is not much of a point in making a mass distribution of your press release to a standard list of journalists and publications and hoping for results.

It is better to choose a handful of journalists that usually write in the area that is a subject of your press release. Approach these journalists in a personalized manner, and engage them individually. Over a period of time, you should be able to develop sustainable relationships with a few local journalists or outlets for effective dissemination of your newsworthy content.

MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF IMAGES

Many people mistakenly assume that just any image along with a press release will be good enough. An image is an extremely crucial element of a press release. The image should contribute to your story, catch immediate attention, and make the desired positive impact on the reader's mind.

Therefore, you should choose the right image after a detailed and careful evaluation of various image options that you may have at hand. Journalists usually welcome images because they understand how it can enhance the story very effectively.

STRUCTURE THE RELEASE APPROPRIATELY

The press release should ideally have a headline accompanied by a second, slightly more descriptive line. The headline should be short and attention grabbing. The second line in support of the headline can talk about some other valuable aspect or highlight of the news story. The first paragraph of the press release should immediately seize attention by talking about the main news story.

Press releases should typically avoid indirect introductions and come to the point. The body of the message should be included in one or more paragraphs following the first paragraph. Finally, the press release should have an effective closure with a concluding paragraph. Contact details should be provided appropriately at the end of the release.

EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up can be a two-way process with press releases. Journalists are busy people and typically receive dozens of press releases every day. If you are confident that one of your releases could be of interest to a particular journalist, it is always a good idea to follow up in case of no response.

On the other hand, it is equally important to have complete knowledge and facts to back up your subject. If the

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From the publishers of *Practical Dermatology*

journalist is keen to publish your news, they may come back to you with pointed queries or request for more information, facts, or documents. You should be in a position to address their requests adequately in order to achieve your goal.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING THOROUGH

One of the most important aspects of both generating and distributing an effective press release is to ensure that it is comprehensive and accessible. That means being thorough (yet concise) and using a ready-to-publish format. Making the journalist's task easier increases your chances of getting published.

Apply these ideas to your next dermatology press release and expect positive results. ■

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