

Tutorial: Optimized Press Releases

What are some differences between the optimized and traditional press releases?

An optimized release is often shorter than a traditional release. The optimized release has been adapted for Internet use and is easier to find by search engines. The optimized releases are written to include key search words. These key search words are words used by your audiences.

An optimized release often includes video, images, and other documents such as research papers or presentations.

Lastly, an optimized release is typically distributed by online press release distribution services, rather than by you. These services specifically target online media channels, such as Google News, Yahoo! News, and other news outlets.

What are some benefits to using an optimized press release?

Benefits include your ability to:

- Distribute your news directly to consumers in addition to media
- Use hyperlinks that will drive people to your Web site
- Use video, photos, or logos
- Enable audiences to download materials
- Take advantage of tools such as “social bookmarking” and “tagging” to allow people to easily share your news with others
- Increase traffic (Internet visitors) to your Web site
- Drive your audience to a particular location on the Internet (a specific page, for example)
- Increase the online visibility and awareness of your organization or event
- Raise the visibility of your Web page on search engine results pages

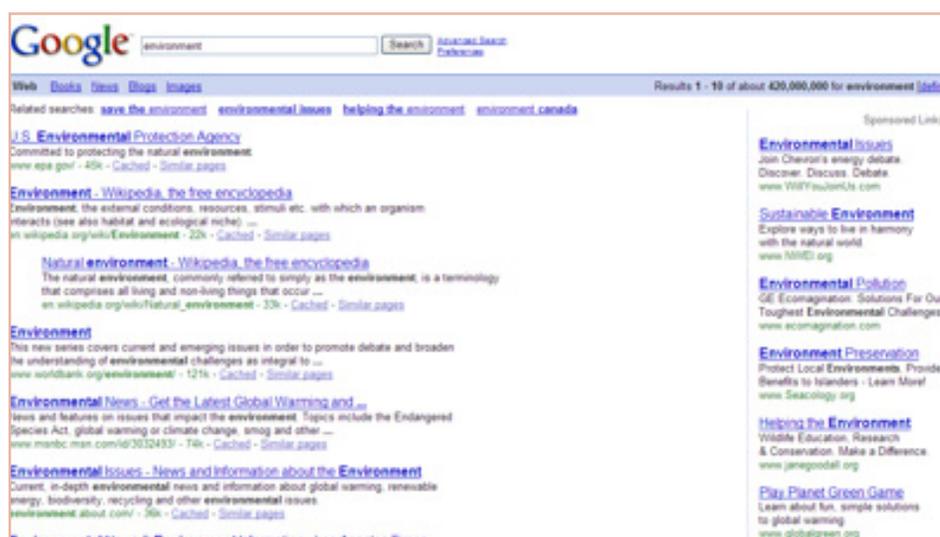
My traditional press releases already show up online, so why should I optimize a release?

People who are getting their news online use search engines. The majority of online searches are done through Google. There are other popular search engines as well, including Yahoo! and MSN.

Search engines are important because you want your news to be easily found and indexed. Search engine optimization (often referred to as “SEO”) is the process that helps organize the information on a Web page to make it most easily found and recorded by search engines. Optimizing your release for search engines will make sure your information is getting to the people who are searching for it.

When I search for something using a search engine, different results appear in different areas of the page. What are the different sections, and what do they mean?

You often see two types of results when you search for something using an Internet search engine like Google. One result is called “Paid Search” or “Sponsored Links.” These are often on the right side of the screen, but can also appear at the top or bottom. Regardless of where they appear, they will always be labeled as “Sponsored Links” or highlighted with different colors. Think of these as advertisements. Someone is paying money to display an ad to people who search for particular content online. This can be a very powerful tool, but not one covered in this toolkit.



The other type of result is called “Natural Search Results” or “Organic Search Results.” These results are ranked by the search engines based on a variety of factors and cannot be bought. The closer to the top of the list a result or “hit” is, the more relevant and valuable the result is to the string of words you used to search by. The goal of search engine optimization is to get your information at or near the top of the list.

Keyword Research

FNS has provided a basic list of relevant keyword research results, but you may wish or need to supplement these results with additional research of your own. To do so, follow the steps below:

1. Decide what the main subject areas are in your release.
2. Think of other ways to say those same ideas and make a list.
3. Using an online tool (see options in the sidebar), look up each word or phrase on your list.
4. Keep track of how often each term is searched for. Organize your list from most-searched-for to least-searched-for.
5. Choose the keywords that are both descriptive of your content and most popular according to the keyword research tools.

Why do I need to use a tool to tell me which words to use?

The way people search for information online is not always intuitive. For instance, “applying for food stamps,” “food stamp application,” and “apply for food stamps” are three phrases with almost identical meanings. In any traditional press release, you might use all three interchangeably.

However, keyword data from an online tool will tell you that “apply for food stamps” is used almost three times more often than “applying for food stamps.”

Query: food stamps	
Results 1 - 100 of 5964	Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Search Term	Total
food stamps	6225
apply for food stamps	612
florida food stamps	514
food stamps application	248
texas food stamps	238
applying for food stamps	223
food stamps florida	211
indiana food stamps	204
texas department of human services food stamps	193
apply for food stamps online	180
emergency food stamps	145
how to apply for food stamps	144
food stamps eligibility	125
application for food stamps	122
alabama food stamps	116
michigan food stamps	88
ebt food stamps	83
access florida food stamps	80
louisiana food stamps	78
how to get food stamps	75
california food stamps	74

The numbers in the “Total” column represent how often the term was searched for from a 10-percent sample of search engines over the last 12 months. Use the numbers to choose one term over another, but do not get hung up on the numbers themselves.



Online Resources

Free Online Keyword Research Tools

Keyword Discovery

<http://keyworddiscovery.com/search.html>

Google Keyword Tool

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

Word Tracker

<http://www.wordtracker.com/>

Hyperlinks

What is a hyperlink?

A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that you can click on to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all Web pages, and let you click from page to page. Text hyperlinks are often blue and underlined, but don't have to be. Hyperlinks are often called just "links."

EXAMPLE

[Clicking here will take you to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service](http://www.fns.usda.gov) home page is an example of a hyperlink. Clicking on the red text, or "hypertext," will take you to a destination URL, in this case <http://www.fns.usda.gov>.

Why should I include hyperlinks in my online press release?

It is critical to include hyperlinks in your online release. Not doing so is a huge missed opportunity. Hyperlinks are important because they:

- Lead readers of your release to your Web site; and
- Count as objective votes for your Web site in the eyes of search engines.

Leading readers of your release to your Web site is important if you want to increase traffic to your site, where they can gather more information and ideally become repeat visitors, as they learn to view your site as an authority.

The second point is equally important to accomplishing the goals of an optimized release. As your press release is picked up by other Web sites, the release will include the hyperlinks you've inserted. Search engines look at these hyperlinks very favorably, and having many hyperlinks pointing to your site helps your site rank higher in search engines.

Choosing a Service

There are many services that will distribute your release online at various price levels. These companies also have customer service representatives who can help you determine which service is right for you and answer any questions you might have. Here are some additional factors you should consider when choosing a service to use.

Things To Consider

1. **BILINGUAL OR LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH** Not all vendors offer the same services. Some have very sophisticated translation and targeting options, while others have no distribution for languages other than English, although they will post the release on their site. Make sure to ask questions before selecting your service if other languages are a consideration.
2. **USE OF IMAGES, VIDEO, OR LOGOS** Most optimized release vendors let you include images and logos. Most will also let you include video—some simply require that the video is hosted on YouTube.com, while others need the actual video file to be uploaded. If a video is important, check to see which vendors include video in their fees.
3. **MEASUREMENTS** There are different levels of metrics and reporting after your release has been distributed. To learn more about ways you can supplement metrics that your release service provides, see the [Measurement](#) section of this tutorial.
4. **EXTRA FEATURES** Many services provide the option to attach downloadable files, “tags,” and “social bookmarks.” Tags and social bookmarks are Web 2.0 methods to flag what your release is about and make it easy to find and share.

What are the main differences between using a traditional wire service and an online optimized release service?

Where the release is distributed is one big difference—an online release should be more targeted to online news portals, online news search engines, and social media tools. This means that it is targeting the online news consumer and, in many cases, can reach the end user without ever being “picked up” (i.e., sought out by the media) in the traditional sense.

Depending on the service you use, the actual uploading and submission of the release may be different or similar to the experience you are used to from traditional wire services.

Optimized releases are also displayed alongside news stories in many news search engines—allowing you to control the headline, summary, and often the image associated with the search engine result. This control is crucial as more and more people find their news online. Search engine results pages are an increasingly significant opportunity to grab consumers.

Measuring Your Success

Unlike traditional wire services, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. However, many online distribution services will provide the number of people who read or downloaded the release directly from their Web site.

Depending on your goal in distributing your release online, there are different steps you can take to measure how your release performed. Some suggestions are below.

GOAL

Distribute the content of your release to news outlets

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

As mentioned, unlike traditional wire services you may be familiar with, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. To measure how many online news outlets have picked up your release, try using a search engine to search for the title of your release a few days after it was sent. Two popular search engines that can be used for this include Google (www.google.com) and Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com).

In addition to searching for the title of your release, you can also search for your organization name, the name of the event or speaker you are promoting, and the central topic of your release to see if the content of the release was picked up by an outlet without the full body and title of the release.

GOAL

Distribute the content of your release to partners (in addition to news outlets)

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Using a similar process as described above, you can also see how many blogs pick up your release. The term “blog” is short for “weblog,” and is a Web site that displays in chronological order the postings by one or more individuals. Blogs can be written by journalists, but are often written by the general public. Some blogs are read by many people, while others are read by fewer people.

You can search for your release using one of the many blog search tools including:

- Google Blog Search <http://blogsearch.google.com/>
- Technorati <http://technorati.com/>
- IceRocket <http://www.icerocket.com/>

Technorati has a system called “Authority” to tell you how important and relevant they have determined different blogs to be. The higher a blog’s authority number, the more people are reading and linking to that particular blog.

GOAL

Increase traffic (Internet visitors) to your Web site

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

To determine whether an online release has increased traffic to your Web site, you will need access to the traffic logs of your Web site. The person or organization who administers your Web site should be able to grant you access to these or pull information for you. You can either look for an overall increase in the number of visitors to your site in the time following the distribution of your release, or you can try to dig a bit deeper.

Most Web traffic logs should be able to tell you “Referrers” or “Referrals” to your site. This is a way of finding out where visitors to your site are coming from. If you use ABC Press Releases to distribute your release, the URL of your release will begin with www.ABCPressReleases.com, or a similar standard domain name. This allows you to search for your “Referrers” or “Referrals,” which shows how many people came from that domain name, and how many clicked through from your release.

Similarly, if you know your release was picked up by www.BestNewsSource.com, you can search for that domain in your “Referrals” or “Referrers” to find out how many people came to your site from that location.

GOAL

Drive your audience to a particular location on the Internet (a specific page, for example)

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

You can use the same measurements as above, especially if overall traffic to your Web site has increased. If it has, and you included the specific URL you wanted people to visit, then it is likely that people were visiting that page. Most Web analytic programs will also provide you with statistics on the most popular pages on your site, which can also tell you how many people are visiting a particular page.

If the Web page you drove people to included a survey, registration for an event, or downloadable resources, you can also look for an increase in interaction with those features.

GOAL

Increase the online visibility and awareness of your organization, news, or event

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Search for your release on the major search engines, as well as the portion of their search engines specifically dedicated to news.

You can also search for the keyword or phrase you optimized for in your release. When you type a keyword or phrase into the news searches on the immediate day or so following the distribution of your release, your release should be returned high up on the page.

Think of this as basically a billboard for your organization – even if people don't click through to your release, they have seen your headline and in most cases your subhead or summary, and sometimes even an image or logo.

GOAL

Help increase the position of your Web page on search engine results pages

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

This one takes longer to achieve than the others, but issuing optimized online releases with hyperlinks to your Web site is one very important element of increasing the position of your Web site on the search engine results page.

To illustrate the importance of improving your Web site's position: 80 percent of Internet traffic begins at a search engine, according to Harris Interactive.

Getting your Web site to rank highly in search engines can take a very long time, but is worth the effort. For example, 70 percent of people will click on something on the first results page of a search engine – that is to say, on one of the first 10 results. The numbers drop significantly from there. Approximately 15 percent of people will click on the second page of results 11-20. Finally, people will click on results 21-30 on the third page only about 10 percent of the time.

<i>Search Engine Results</i>	<i>Clicks</i>
Page 1	70%
Page 2	15%
Page 3	10%
Page 4	5%

GOAL

Create a multimedia release that can live online and include video, photos, or downloadable resources

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

This is more straightforward than the others. Did you include video and images in your release or downloadable materials such as white papers or presentations? If so, you have created a multimedia release. With many online optimized release services, you can update the release over time to include new images or a video from an event. This means that you can send the release URL to any contacts you have and they will have instant access to not only the text of your release, but also any additional resources you want to provide to them.