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Digital Strategies for Building Awareness for your Corporate and Product Brand

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Traditional PR Tactics have rules and expectations that are usually followed to the letter. For news announcements, PR firms generally recommended picking a date around launches, milestones and/or conferences, issue the news at 8:30 a.m. on a Monday, or aftermarket if there is negative news, and then monitor print publications for resulting stories. If the article was negative, then the PR firm would call that reporter and request a correction (if possible). In today's Web 2.0 reality, these rules and expectations no longer apply, and press releases are no longer handled as "one size fits all."

With online publications, subscriber newsletters, blogs, podcasts, YouTube, Google alerts, RSS feeds, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn (to name just a few), "push" technologies now send out information on your brand to you, and other interested parties, in real-time from multiple sources. To many companies, this fact can be an overwhelming reality especially for public companies that are trying to get their arms around a multitude of sources discussing their brand. In addition to the expected sources such as media, analysts and thought leaders, companies now have to contend with bloggers, ex-employees and individual investors that may have an axe to grind. Ignoring a scathing blog post or a viral video could negatively impact shareholder opinion and stock price, and should be taken very seriously. On the flip side, with a wealth of new media outlets to pursue, this can be considered a new renaissance for public relations.

Print publications have fallen on tough times. Veteran reporters who do not possess multi-media skill sets have been let go. Reporters that have embraced blogging and podcasting, and yet still manage to stay on top of their print responsibilities, are proving their worth as a revenue generator who can positively impact their publication's bottom lines. So what is a blog? A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. Blogs have the ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format and when all these combined factors are viewed as a whole, this is called the blogosphere. Having buzz in the "blogosphere" is a double edged sword, since positive and negative stories tend to persist in the generation of the Internet [long tail](#).

Ready to Take the Plunge: Now What?

Companies should partner with their PR agencies to view thought leadership as multi-faceted campaigns. If you are going to announce news around general health issues, think about all possible media channels. With regard to newswires, you can also consider crafting messages specific to broadcast, print and online media outlets, draft and secure a related byline in an industry trade and/or conduct a Webinar around the topic at hand. Some possible Digital Media to consider are enhanced wire services such as *PR Newswire's MultiVu*, *Marketwire's SEO Visibility* and *BusinessWire's EON* options. In addition to the wires, think about how your news may be leveraged for social media sites like *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Flickr*, *Twitter*, and *LinkedIn*. LaVoie Group has recently launched Interleukin Genetics' Heart Health Test via social media tactics. Since this was a home-based genetic test that shows a person's risk for an early heart attack, there was a clear message to the consumer and made it a prime target for deploying digital media strategies. For the press release, LaVoie Group used *PR Newswire's MultiVu* service that included not only distribution of the announcement, but also a picture of the genetic test and hosted a corporate video. We also used the video footage as b-roll for a *New England Cable News* story, which we later posted on YouTube to create additional buzz.

Quick Links

Click the links below to view:

[Updated version of our Life Sciences Industry Events Planning Calendar](#)

[LaVoie Group's Website](#)

[New Case Study Public Relations/Digital Strategies: Publicly Traded Genetics-focused Personalized Health Company](#)



Upcoming Industry Conferences

JMP Securities

Oct. 6-7, New York, NY
Attending
LaVoie Group
Clients:
EyeGate Pharma
Vertex Pharmaceuticals

BIO InvestorForum

Oct. 29-31, San Francisco, CA
Attending
LaVoie Group
Clients:
Agile Therapeutics
EyeGate Pharma

Rodman & Renshaw

Nov. 10-12, New York, NY
Attending
LaVoie Group
Clients:
Agile Therapeutics
EyeGate Pharma
Interleukin Genetics
Neotropix

When pitching a blogger, you can also view the opportunity as a foot in the door. Reporters are mandated to blog multiple times a day and are always looking for content. They are also very sensitive to user feedback. If a negative story receives significant backlash for readers, then the blogger can issue a correction in real time, or if a story receives a lot of positive feedback, the reporter may consider turning the story into a longer post or even better, submit the story for their print publication. The *Wall Street Journal* is a prime example of that blog-to-print story cycle. Also, other reporters trawl well known bloggers looking for story ideas and will link back to the story on their own blog, which increases your company's SEO and page rankings.

To Blog or Not to Blog?

Corporate blogs can be a great channel to promote company messaging. These can be controlled and monitored closely. Blogs can provide necessary information or a rebuttal to negative attacks. Blogs are also good thought leadership opportunities; you can mirror the salient points of a byline feature, a presentation at a conference or provide additional information about a press release. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. If you have good content at your figure tips such as newsletters or byline articles, then you can certainly repurpose them for the blog and continue to keep the content fresh. You also do not need to post anything of great length. Sometimes a short pithy comment and a link to the referenced topic works best.

Choose someone at the company who has some cache, but preferably not the CEO. Some good choices are the Chief Scientist, VP of Clinical Research or Chief Medical Officer. If the blogger is well respected in the industry and well read, then you can use this blog as a resource for reporters that follow the space or for recruiting purposes, attracting other like-minded people in the industry. In addition to blogging, you should also consider joining in on the conversation. If you participate in discussions with bloggers and link back to their blog, then you will have more credibility with this audience.

Before undertaking a corporate blog, understand that it takes up time and resources. If your company can not spare the personnel or the man hours to devote to a blog, then it may not be the best course of action for your company at this time.

What to Avoid, Blogger Etiquette

Bloggers need transparency: if you are open and truthful, then they will certainly listen. If you are stretching the truth or not open about who you are, and who you are representing, then they can (and will) expose you. Lesson learned: a world renown PR firm conducted a Wal-Mart campaign around a married couple that was RVing across the country, stopping at Wal-Mart for supplies and allowed free overnight parking (hence the reason for the campaign) and then blogging about it. Problem was, there was no "real" couple. Instead, these posts were being drafted by the PR firm. This level of deceit was not appreciated by the blogging community, and the firm became a poster child for what not to do.

Don't expect that regular reporter rules apply: Bloggers are not bound by the same rules of a publication, and they reserve the right to post or NOT post your news on a whim. They may, or may not honor embargoes. If you send them swag or product, it may backfire, so use this tactic carefully. Lesson learned: Microsoft sent out free Vista "Ferrari 1000" laptops to bloggers for them to use at their disposal and preferably blog about it. Instead, bloggers were embarrassed and angry with such an extravagant gift, and therefore wrote about how the giveaway made them uncomfortable and not extol on the wonderful attributes of Vista as Microsoft had hoped.

And although you may be outreaching to a blog, public companies still need to follow regular disclosure rules. For more in-depth information about the rules for engaging with digital communications, the SEC recently put out guidance on the use of Web sites and blogs, "Commission Guidance On the Use of Company Websites." For pharmaceutical companies, you still need to adhere to the FDA's DDMAC [Unapproved Products] rule that ensure that drug information is truthful, balanced and accurately communicated. In order to stay compliant, you should always partner with your legal counsel, marketing team, PR/IR firm, and product marketing teams.

Conclusion

With push technologies such as *Google Alerts* and RSS feeds, managing your brand is both easier than ever, and more difficult to get ahead of in regards to real-time monitoring. Online media channels offer a wealth of new editorial outlets, but also open the door to the possibility of negative commentary on the company and executive team in several different places. Keeping in mind the "Long Tail," print articles can disappear over time, but online stories can live on for years (which is great for positive stories, but potentially damaging when a company is cast in a bad light, or has misinformation). Companies when possible should consider multi-channel campaigns in addition to traditional PR tactics, and evaluate when VNRs, podcasts, medialink, YouTube video, and Flickr make sense for your PR efforts. And lastly, join in! *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* are great for networking with reporters, and consider starting your own blog or *Twitter* page. Dip your toe in or cannon ball into the pool; but definitely keep your mind open to the possibility of exploring Digital Media.

LaVoie Group Adds Cancer Therapeutics Company, Neotropix®, To Its Life Science Agency Roster

Salem, MA, September 29, 2008 — LaVoie Group, a full-service provider of public relations, investor relations, corporate communications, and marketing strategy to life science clients, today announced that it has been selected as public relations agency of record by cancer therapeutics company, Neotropix®, Inc.

Donna L. LaVoie, President & CEO of LaVoie Group, commented, "We are delighted to represent Neotropix during an important stage in the company's clinical development. Neuroendocrine cancers are difficult to treat and Neotropix has developed an innovative treatment approach that warrants further clinical development and financing. We look forward to working with the Company to communicate its message to appropriate investors, media, pharmaceutical partners and physicians."