

ADCOMMUNICATIONS

PR and SEO:
working seamlessly
together



PR and SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) have gone hand in hand together for some years now, but their combined effectiveness is often overlooked. Both traditional PR and SEO have the same goal – achieving greater visibility for brands with their target audiences. With PR this is achieved through media coverage for the brand; with SEO it's through optimised rankings for the brand on key search engines. Recently, the noise surrounding the convergence of these two areas of marketing practice has increased: Why?

Let's start by looking at why a brand should be concerned with SEO and how it works with its PR campaigns.

According to Wikipedia, PR is 'the practice of managing the flow of information between a brand and the public', nowadays through a range of conventional and digital media channels. Compelling content is generated to achieve the greatest exposure possible with the right influencers, in order for this content to get published and ultimately increase awareness of the brand with customers and prospects.

SEO is 'the process of increasing the visibility of a website in a search engine's organic results'. It's all about making sure your website is ranked high up in search results on Google or any other search engine to attract attention. Search engines rely heavily on links, because they have traditionally operated by the logic that the more links a website has, the more value it provides to the searcher. On this basis well-linked sites have in the past ranked more highly, and in turn have attracted more visitors.

Google is the most commonly used search engine in the US, UK & Europe ([Experian Hitwise](#) states that '90% of UK web journeys start with a search on Google'), and concerns us the most. If Google changes the way in which it determines rankings, this should filter down and influence how an organisation approaches SEO. There are of course other search engines dominating in geographies like Russia and China which also need to be taken into account if you are active in these regions.

But, how does this information fit with your PR campaigns and why is it important? When you think about it, it becomes more obvious. It's all about exposure and ultimately sales. PR helps SEO directly by increasing online dialogue about a brand, and driving traffic to the brand's online presence/s. Indirectly, PR helps SEO generate inbound links from quality sources as well as gain credibility in the eyes of search engines.

Authentic and relevant link building - aimed at driving engagement, informing the searcher and building mutually beneficial relationships - should be a part of every public relations and SEO effort, with all links providing value to the reader.

Read on to find out how this works in practice.

The role of content

Good SEO is all about the richness and credibility of your online presence, both on your own and third party sites.

Any [content](#) that is generated and publicised on the web and that links back to your website will help increase your search engine ranking. This could come from a number of things, such as links from industry associations to your site, or links from news about your brand that is generated on magazine websites, blogs, etc.

It's also important to make sure that any online content generated from within your traditional PR programmes links back to your website in some form or other, and not just to the homepage but to the most relevant page of the site.

And don't make the mistake of focussing on text-based content alone. To maximise the opportunities, digital assets should be produced and placed online strategically (with link-backs of course). Using these, you can measure ROI through visits, views, online sales and social shares and encourage the amplification effect that will make what was once an 'offline' PR strategy an excellent link building machine and SEO campaign.

Some examples of effective content that can boost SEO would be:

- Articles
- Blogs
- Educational guides
- Newsletters/online bulletins
- In-house magazines
- News releases
- Infographics
- Microsites
- Images
- Video

News

An SEO-aware approach to news creation will also help to increase the impact of your PR activity. By using popular keywords throughout a press release, the published release will continue to bring search engine traffic. And the editorial links the press release generates bring direct click-throughs and lead to higher search engine rankings. With coordination, press releases can now enhance the effectiveness of company messaging, drive customers to your website and, ultimately, lead to an increase in sales and revenue.

To make news friendly to search engines, bear in mind the following:

- Optimised press releases rank higher in search results and have longer life spans on the web.
- Search engines look at the keywords used in a hyperlink to a website when they are ranking that website. If a hyperlink has keywords included and points to your website, then when a Google search for those keywords is performed, you are more likely to be found in the results. Make sure releases use targeted keywords when pointing back to your site to make sure you get an SEO boost.

- Embedding hyperlinks is another way to increase your ranking and drive traffic to your website. Linking your product's name in the release back to the Web page where your readers can go to learn more will lead visitors directly to your site where your data capture tools can pull them into your sales cycle.
- Adding visual and/or multimedia content in a news story ensures that this is indexed in image search engines and creates more visibility.

Trust is important

In 2012, Google made some bold changes to the way in which it ranks websites and stories, resulting in a requirement for every content author to also have a solid web presence. Google is using its algorithms to 'vet' and rate each author for trustworthiness, which will now also affect the final ranking of the content (they are calling this 'Authorship'). (This is all part of an effort to encourage individuals to use its own Social platform as the new Authorship ranking will fit seamlessly into Google+).

In the past the challenge faced by search engines was that links could be manipulated, therefore low-quality content could be used to get high rankings. With the introduction of the 'Authorship' method, and other major Google updates known as 'Panda' and 'Penguin' which effectively help to minimise spamming and the use of low-quality content, Google is looking only for genuine, trustworthy content. Link-backs to your website from trusted sources like trade magazines and industry associations, and online conversations about your brand, are valued more highly than ever before. Subsequently, pages benefitting from these associations now rank much higher in search results than they may have done a year ago.

So, taking this into consideration, when generating content, the agency you work with should have a solid web presence itself, as well as a good understanding regarding the link-backs and inbound links that can be implemented in this content.

Be social

Integration across platforms is also key: generating activity across social media and the wider web - for instance on comment sections of online publications – helps to drive your brand presence. Focus on positive [social media](#) activity, engaging with your audience while providing valuable, sharable content that can build your online presence. If you go about it the right way you'll be able to improve your brand's reputation at the same time as increasing traffic to your site.

Social media plays an ever increasingly important role within an overall SEO strategy, and social media is a natural extension of your conventional PR activity. If you have a Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr (the list goes on) presence then the fact that your brand can be found on these platforms also helps to boost results in the search engine rankings.

When searching and reading something on the Web, most people will be asking themselves if what they have found is from a trustworthy source. As Google is now looking for genuine inbound links and conversations about a subject or brand, over time only the companies generating honest engagement with their customers (via social media and blogs, for example), will feature high up on Google search results. This will enable Google to ensure that only authoritative content reaches the top of search results instead of sites full of manipulated links. It's not just about content any more, but far more about the people behind the content. Rankings will depend on who you are and what you have to say.

This online dialogue via social media, as well as boosting your search engine ranking, also amplifies your messages, and social media platforms provide enough information on target markets to identify who the influential individuals are, what they like to share and what the sources are they tend to share the most.

Today, the ease with which online content can be shared or go 'viral', means that readers of the content have a real voice. It's crucial to listen to feedback and make sensible responses or changes to maintain a long term relationship between your brand and potential advocate.

Analyse

As well as boosting your ranking, links can also be tracked using Google Analytics, to help determine where your site visitors are going and how long they stay on a page. This all helps in the fine tuning of your marketing communications programmes over time and is useful feedback for your sales teams.

Summary

We've set out here to highlight that the ways in which Search and PR complement each other are more fundamental than content alone.

- PR coverage often includes links which influence rankings
- PR-driven content can stimulate social sharing and other important search engine signals
- With AuthorRank, PR content can influence search visibility by creating 'super' authors
- Search data can provide insights for building PR propositions, targeted campaigns and messaging

Combining conventional PR programmes with Search and Social Media can only have a positive impact on your marketing communications - from a small tactical project to an ongoing annual campaign.

How can AD Communications help?

As an agency team, we can deliver SEO optimised [news](#) and [content](#), and the coverage we can secure for you on influential media web sites, blogs and social platforms is fundamental to your SEO. We can work with you to create visual and interactive assets, and the content we create can be deployed across multiple platforms – third party sites, your own site and within social media communities – to drive inbound traffic, improve influence and increase engagement.

If you think your own web site needs attention to optimise it and improve its ranking, we work closely with a specialist [SEO agency](#) to advise clients on practical and affordable changes to implement to make a difference. Combined with SEO-savvy web [copywriting](#), this can make a marked difference to your organic search performance, and we can advise on 'paid' search too, if it's relevant to your business.

Together we keep on top of any major changes implemented by the search engines which affect how content is used and rated on the web. The joint expertise of both agencies helps

to bring the best of both the PR and SEO worlds to the B2B brands we work with. In addition, we can track results and provide reports on the ROI of our SEO PR campaigns.

To find out how to integrate these principles within your marketing strategy, contact Helen Tolino at htolino@adcomms.co.uk, or call her on + 44 (0) 1372 464470.

You can also visit our [web site](#) or connect with us on [Twitter](#), [Google +](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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