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How to Optimize Your Press Releases for Search (and Why You Should)

by **B.L. Ochman**

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Learning to write press releases that can be easily found by search engines can exponentially increase the size of the audience that sees your release.

After all, don't we write releases because we want them to be seen by the largest possible audience?

Finding the Right Keywords

When you optimize your press releases for search engines, you need to find a maximum of three keywords or phrases that people are most likely to use to find information on the topic. If you don't use the keyword term enough times in the release, it will not be found by search engines. If you use it too many times, the search engines will regard that as "stuffing," and you can actually be penalized—by not being listed.

What's the right number of times to repeat the keywords? Probably about 2% of your content should be keywords. So if your press release is 300 words, six words can be keywords. Therefore, you can repeat your keyword or phrase up to three

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times.

Some experts recommend writing the release with two different leads and sending it out twice, a week apart. You also should post it on your site's Press Room, where it can be seen by search engine spiders as they troll the Web.

So you might send it out on BusinessWire or PRNewswire first, and then send it again, with a new lead, a week later via [PR Web](#).

The major newswires have distribution arrangements that feed releases into Google News, Yahoo News, Inktomi and many other search engines' news areas. PR Web's basic distribution is free, but the company claims that with a contribution of \$20 or more you will receive enhanced search engine placement.

Wordtracker

[Wordtracker](#) subscription service (starting at \$7 per day) is an extremely useful tool; it helps you pick the correct keywords and phrases to make sure that you reach your correct demographic audience.

Target the wrong keywords, and you could end up with great search engine rankings for keywords that nobody is seeking. The [Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool](#) is free, but it doesn't provide all the bells and whistles of Wordtracker, which is also more accurate.

How it works: you type in words and phrases, and Wordtracker shows you how often they have been entered into the most popular search engines recently. The software then suggests other words and phrases that may be more popular than the ones you have thought of using. The words and phrases that Wordtracker suggests are related to those you search for but may be more popular terms.

Tips for Creating Search-Engine-Friendly Releases

Here are some tips to help you make your press releases search engine friendly. They are followed an example of a drab original release and a search engine optimized version.

1. Use the most popular keyword phrase in the headline, which carries the most weight with search engines.
2. Repeat the phrase at least three times in a 300-word

and more..

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release—the longest you should make a release that's search-engine optimized .

3. Send your release out once on PR Newswire or a similar service. A second time, a week later, after you rewrite the lead paragraph, send out the release on PR Web.
4. Include a link to your site, but make sure to include the *http://* part.
5. If your release is more than a few paragraphs long, include a subhead with a keyword phrase. It makes the release easier to read, and search engines give more weight to bolded text.
6. Resist the tendency to shorten familiar terms. For example, if you are writing about Chicago, you might tend to make the second mention "the City." However, people looking in search engines will type in "Chicago." Repeating it as a keyword phrase will help your release be found, while "the City" won't.
7. Post your release on your site, on its own page, in addition to sending it out over wire services and other distribution methods.

Example: Original Release

Here's a shortened version of an 800-word release. The release actually is enormously interesting and could be quite newsworthy. But it is guaranteed to be ignored because of its dry, academic style.

UC SAN DIEGO SCIENTISTS DEVELOP NOVEL WAY TO SCREEN MOLECULES USING CONVENTIONAL CDS AND COMPACT DISK PLAYERS

LA JOLLA, Calif., Aug. 18 (AScribe Newswire)—Chemists at the University of California, San Diego have developed a novel method of detecting molecules with a conventional compact disk player that provides scientists with an inexpensive way to screen for molecular interactions and a potentially cheaper alternative to medical diagnostic tests.

*A paper detailing their development will appear this week in an advance on-line edition of the journal *Organic and Biomolecular Chemistry* (<http://xlink.rsc.org/?DOI=b306391G>) and in the printed journal's September 21st issue.*

"Our immediate goal is to use this new technology to solve basic scientific questions in the laboratory," says Michael Burkart, an assistant professor of chemistry and biochemistry at UCSD and a coauthor of the paper. "But our eventual hope is that there will be many other applications. Our intention is

to make this new development as widely available as possible and to see where others take the technology."

"The CD is by far the most common media format in our society on which to store and read information," says La Clair. "It's portable, you can drop it on the floor and it doesn't break. It's easy to mass produce. And it's inexpensive."

Their technique takes advantage of the tendency for anything adhering to the CD surface to interfere with a laser's ability to read digital data burned onto the CD.

"We developed a method to identify biological interactions using traditional compact disk technology," explains La Clair, who provided the patent rights to the method to UCSD.

"Using inkjet printing to attach molecules to the surface of a CD, we identified proteins adhering to these molecules by their interaction with the laser light when read by a CD player...."

And Now: The Rewrite

Here is how I changed the release to give it a better chance of getting higher search engine placement. Keywords are underlined:

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA MEDICAL RESEARCHERS FIND NOVEL WAY TO DEVELOP CHEAPER MEDICAL BIOINFORMATICS SCREENING

WHAT: *Move over 50 Cent. Ordinary CDs and compact disc players may soon be used by University of California medical research biotechnologists to detect molecules that provide scientists with an inexpensive and potentially cheaper diagnostic alternative to expensive medical bioinformatics screening.*

WHO: *University of California medical researchers in San Diego have developed a novel way to screen for molecular interactions using nothing more than a conventional compact disc player—the most ubiquitous laser device on the planet. Compared to the \$100,000 price tag for a fluorescent protein chip reader, a medical bioinformatics screening tool, a CD player costs as little as \$25.*

WHY: *The researchers envision a medical bioinformatics screening breakthrough that will create many other potential applications for this technology outside the laboratory, particularly in the development of inexpensive medical tests, now beyond the means of many people around the world, especially in developing countries.*

HOW: *"In theory, anyone who has a computer with a CD drive could do diagnostic tests involving molecular modeling in their own home," says James La Clair, a visiting scholar.*

Biotechnology Breakthrough

Here's how it works: *The chemists enhanced the chemical activity of the plastic on the CD's readable surface. They then added specific molecules to the CD's readable surface and developed a way to play the enhanced CD that allows the laser to detect a small error in the digital code. Specific molecules on the CD surface can be used to tell the researchers what molecules have attached to their target protein and, thus, whether or not that protein is present in the sample. This information will simplify the development of new medical bioinformatics screening.*

"James has even done this using CDs with music, like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony," says Burkart. "And you can actually hear the errors. How many people on this planet can actually hear a molecule attached to another molecule?" asks La Clair.

Compared to the \$100,000 price tag for a fluorescent protein chip reader, he points out, a CD player costs as little as \$25, and it may produce equally valuable bioinformatics screening results. More information (<http://discode.ucsd.edu/>).

(end)

Please note: The link provided by the company leads to a Web page that is dominated by an image and has no text. Images are invisible to search engines.

The bottom line: you can learn to search engine optimize your press releases, but your client needs the help of a search engine optimization specialist to make sure that its Web site is properly designed for top search-engine ranking.

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