

TMT Client Case Study

Arthritis Foundation:

Online Pressroom Analysis and Recommendations

Arthritis Foundation

Online Pressroom Analysis and Recommendations

Introduction

Repeated studies by various public relations agencies, media and Web usability experts all reach the same conclusion: due to increasing reliance on the World Wide Web as a source of story leads and information, a well-constructed online pressroom as part of an organization's overall Web presence can be a powerful asset for attracting and retaining media attention. Similarly, email is now seen as a tool which is as essential to the job of reporting as the telephone, pen and paper.

Given that media relations is based largely on establishing relationships with reporters and editors, an online pressroom that they find useful — in combination with smart use of email — can be a major boon to the process.

There are a number of proven techniques, which if utilized properly, could aid the Arthritis Foundation in providing improved service to the reporters who cover it now and increase the likelihood of new reporters visiting and revisiting the site.

The Challenge

Create an online pressroom that:

- 1) Promotes stories/issues/messages of strategic importance to the Arthritis Foundation.

- 2) Provides reporters and editors of all types with relevant, timely materials that enhance their stories thus encouraging repeat visits.
- 3) Complements and cross-markets other portions of the Arthritis Foundation's Web site and the Foundation's products/services.

Objectives

- 1) Create pressroom pages within established budgets and timelines.
- 2) Create pages/content that are easy to maintain.
- 3) Provide resources geared to specialized needs of different reporters' beats and media outlet segments (sports media, health media, etc.)
- 4) Create a high-visibility announcement strategy to reach reporters/editors when the pressroom launches.
- 5) Incorporate messages into Arthritis Foundation media relations activities on an ongoing basis that encourage reporters/editors to visit and use the varied resources in the pressroom.
- 6) Incorporate media relations needs of chapters (when possible).

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Assumptions

- 1) The Arthritis Foundation has a Web team that will handle implementation of all recommendations.
- 2) The Arthritis Foundation has a content management system that will be used for timely posting and deletion of materials
- 3) The Arthritis Foundation will handle integration of the online pressroom and its contents into any existing search functionality.

Recommendations

- 1) Provide all basic elements needed for any arthritis story: graphics, fact sheets, etc.
- 2) Create standard information packages around different diseases/issues (e.g., an RA package of graphics, fact sheets, story ideas, etc.; an OA package; a fibro package)
- 3) Post profiles of patients available for interviews without names or contact information. The profiles would list disease, age, location, and other relevant facts. These could be listed with a code number or other identification system that the reporter would reference when contacting the PR staff to arrange an interview. (A variant: if there are volunteers who would allow contact information to be listed, reporters could make direct contact.)
- 4) Downloadable video and audio clips on select topics (for example, quotes from Dr. Klippel on the issue of access to medications).
- 5) Position papers/statements on drugs, issues, etc.
- 6) An "ideas area" for TV and radio reporters/producers where the Foundation suggests creative ways to present topics (e.g., TV and the Arthritis Quiz: Have a doctor administer the quiz on air to one of the show anchors).
- 7) Sign up functionality for email newsletters containing story tips, news alerts, press releases, etc. There could also be an email alert service when news is added to the site.
- 8) Post a full list of all PR staff with multiple contact methods (phone, fax, mobile/pager). Include after-hours contact information whenever possible.
- 9) Post a list of key executives with basic biographical facts (name, age, title, experience)
- 10) A prominent box with the Foundations full address, telephone and fax numbers, Web URL, and other relevant contact information (it's amazing how many companies do not put this in the pressroom).
- 11) Summaries of annual financial reports with links to full financial reports.

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- 12) Downloadable logos, images, graphics, photographs, etc., in multiple formats and file sizes.
- 13) Forms for reporters to order videos, photographs, graphics packages and other materials.
- 14) Instructions on exchanging links with the Arthritis Foundation, as well as procedures for placing AF materials on your site.
- 15) Downloadable press releases. These should include current and archived releases, with a quick summary of one or two sentences for each release and a link to the full release itself. New releases should be posted at the same time the PR staff is distributing them. The archived releases should be organized clearly and be searchable.
- 16) A more technical section where scientific research and other documents oriented toward healthcare professionals could be presented in summary and/or in full.
- 17) An easy-to-use/easy-to-print calendar of health trade shows, scientific conferences related to arthritis and Arthritis Foundation chapter events.
- 18) Provide links to external arthritis information sources such as the ACR, the CDC and NIAMS.

A Few Caveats

There are a few "do's and don'ts" to keep in mind as the online pressroom is designed and implemented:

- 1) Flashy animations and graphics must be avoided since they are both unnecessary and can take up bandwidth.
- 2) Since the Web is international in nature, take the needs of foreign journalists into account even though they may not be direct targets. For example, provide materials in other languages (if possible), assume connections are at low bandwidth, provide contacts at members of Arthritis and Rheumatism International (ARI), etc.
- 3) Incorporate a variety of feedback mechanisms: pop-up satisfaction surveys, email forms, email links or places to leave comments. Use the feedback to refine the offerings in the pressroom as well as another way in which to begin or enhance relationships with reporters/editors.
- 4) Having a great pressroom will be a waste if reporters can't find it. Tout the press area on the homepage with a special box or other graphic device (for example, create a box labeled "Fast Feedback" with Foundation reactions to new drug releases, topics in that day's news, etc. It could be as simple as one quote from Tino Mantella that is then linked to the pressroom and deeper information.). Promote the

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pressroom in many locations around the entire site and in materials distributed by the PR staff.

Implementation

The steps to implementing these recommendations are:

- 1) The Interactive Communication team determines which are feasible for the Foundation to use.
- 2) Break them into manageable chunks for phased implementation.
- 3) Determine timelines and people responsible.

Evaluation

There are a variety of methods that can be incorporated for evaluating the success of the online pressroom. The results of these evaluation methods can also be used to revise and revamp the pressroom's offerings:

- 1) Pop-up satisfaction surveys and feedback forms
- 2) Track the number of media that sign up for email services
- 3) Track the number of downloads

4) Track the number of stories resulting from materials in the pressroom (when possible)

5) Design an ROI model that assigns dollar values to the number of impressions generated, each contact with a reporter, etc.

There may be other methods we want to explore and incorporate should you decide to move forward on the project.

Examples of Good Online Pressrooms

- ◆ <http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/default.asp>
- ◆ <http://www.bankofamerica.com/newsroom/>
- ◆ http://www.ositis.com/english/home/Pressroom/hm_presskit_en.asp
- ◆ <http://www.divineinterventures.com/pr/pr.asp>