

The End Of An Era

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All things change.

As of the date of this article (December, 2008) we are seeing change occur at a pace that is frankly almost incomprehensible. It goes without saying that the economy is in dire straits. The automobile industry, banking and many other industries (too numerous to mention here), are in terrible shape. The stock market (my old stomping grounds) reminds me of a really bad Three Stooges reel on auto-play with loop. There is a great deal of uncertainty regarding what is to come. Our old establishments are become statistics in our new environment.

Many large newspapers are standing on the precipice and are staring into the void, on the verge of folding. The big accounts are simply pulling out and classified revenues are in the toilet. The smaller papers will not be hit so hard, unless they are owned by the larger corporate entities, which is true in many cases. Magazines are likewise suffering these effects.

Television and radio revenues are on what seems to be a perpetual downward slide, as commercial skipping devices become the norm. We have advertised ad nauseum.

Some traditional book publishers are shaking in their proverbial shoes as the younger generation comes of age with their Kindles and electronic book reading devices of every size, shape and system. The process of delivering information is changing and it is changing at breakneck speed (though this has been coming for a very long time).

For those who once held the keys to the information kingdom, the writing is on the wall and they know it. It seems that the tree-huggers are winning. Cutting down trees and using gas to ship paper no longer makes much sense at all. All that is left is for Grandma to buy a computer and the whole world is good to go. Nor does it make sense to attempt to charge for information in a medium that is, above all things, a free information exchange. The very concept is difficult for the Ancient Ephors of Information to grasp.

Nonetheless, as bad as the news might appear to be for some, there is tremendous opportunity here for those who can think ahead just a bit and have the foresight to look into their crystal balls and divine what this new future looks like. I can tell you this: for those of us who market products and services for a living, getting a piece of news or a marketing message out to the public has now become far, far less difficult. There is no uncertainty in that fact.



In the old days (read 'last year and before'), the media release was the primary tool for getting that information out there. The steps were simple and were carved in stone: First, craft a proper release, following the generally acceptable format. Next, mail, email or fax that release to the proper person at the corporate office. Wait a bit and follow up perhaps, if allowed. Graciously beg, plead or otherwise grovel or even fall back on appealing to the common sense of the reporter or editor. This process, known as '*pitching*', is an art form much the same as selling. Only a few managed to master the skills necessary to be successful at this. And, if one were to be successful, that release would run in a single publication or outlet for a single day. The hope was that someone, somewhere might catch wind of the thing and take some form of action.

Then came the Internet. Now we could post that release to the Internet and bypass this archaic, top heavy system by taking that message directly to the public at large. Of course, even here, one still has to follow procedure to get it through the gatekeepers, but it is a bit more relaxed. This was, and still is, really great news for those who hope to get that message out there. The news is now even mo' better.

Enter The Multi-Media Release

Traditional media releases, whether created for traditional outlets or for the web, have always been dry, flat paragraphs of text. Oh yes, one could bold or perhaps italicize a phrase to denote emphasis. Nothing wrong with this, certainly. But this is, in a boring word or two, very boring. Print *is* somewhat of a boring medium, but for a while there it was all we had.

However it is now possible to create a release that incorporates picture, audio, video, links to websites and even social bookmarking buttons and tell a friend scripts. This morphs the old school 'press release' into an auditory, visual and potentially viral media experience.

Using text alone, it is simply not possible to tell one's story in the manner one might hope. Now, however, within the release itself, one can tell a story that is as unlike the traditional release as a book is different from a movie. (Yes, yes, I know and agree - books are great. However books cannot cause vertigo, scream in your ears, incorporate laugh tracks, make you duck inappropriately or cause you to nearly jump out of your chair and spill your drink. Movies can. Nuff said.)

Have you done a radio interview? Embed a portion in the release itself. Television? Package up the video and include it. Got some great shots? Put them within the page of the release. Do you wish to provide proof sources from other websites or perhaps your own? Put in a link that pops up that page.

The real value here (as I see it) is in the social bookmarking aspect of the thing. The buttons are right there, on the very page. Just a quick click. Used to be we would have to copy down that address, send an email to a friend that said 'Hey, check this out' and then provide the link. With sites such as Digg, delicious, Furl and others like them, now we can just hit a button and tell those with the same interests as ourselves to come and see. This has been the case for a very long time. Now we can do this within a press release. Tell-a-friend scripts can also be included. Hey, it is much easier to just punch a button than it is to copy a website address, change programs, write the email, paste the address and hit send. Cool, huh?



Will this style of release impact your bottom line sales? Only time will tell.

Should you give up your efforts in regards to traditional releases? Certainly not yet. The approach here should be to use both for a time. Eventually (very shortly, in my opinion) the new format will be the order of the day however.

What will Web 3.0 bring? I looked at the numbers. After weeks of in-depth research and many hours of number crunching, I can offer a studied and very well thought out prediction:

I dunno.

I can tell you this. No one listens to 8 tracks anymore, nor do they use a TRS-80. These products were cutting edge, once upon a time. When something better came along, some people held on as long as possible and then finally made the change. However, by the time they made that change, many others were already

two or three steps farther down the path to success. Though new methods are often feared for the change they bring, they nearly always make things better in some way. Change is often good.

In any case, you really need to consider getting with the times and simply make this new release format a part of your marketing toolkit, get familiar with it and begin to use it. Failure to do so may cause you to become a statistic. Nobody wants to be a statistic. All people want to be a real person.

The Multi-Media release allows you to put a face on your company and on your news. Always remember the first rule of successful marketing: ***People Only Do Business With People They Trust***. Period. That is bolded, italicized and capitalized for a reason; it is the primary key to your success and this is, after all, a text document and thus requires me to revert to such tactics.

Without trust, you are wasting your time, your ink and your electronic breath. When your potential customers can SEE you - HEAR you - you create a bond that no dry, old piece of yellow newsprint will ever manage to match. And when that message is presented TO your potential buyer BY a trusted friend, the effect is magnified by a factor of 10.

As I state elsewhere on this site, study after study demonstrates that If someone gets a referral to some product or service from one of their friends, they will pass by every other form of advertising offered them and knock themselves out to seek out and find what their friend has recommended. If that referral happens to be to one of your media releases, all the better.

To view a very simple example of this style of release visit
http://www.freepublicitygroup.com/pressrelease_web2.0.html

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