

Seven Traits of Highly Effective Press Releases

by Joseph Miller, Product Manager, EON: Enhanced Online News, Business Wire San Antonio
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What do “hit” press releases have in common? EON Product Manager Joseph Miller looked into this question as part of “SEO Tip Jar,” his series of blog posts on the art and science of press release optimization. For the post, he defined “hit” releases as those getting the most release reads (or page views). He took the top 10 releases on EON: Enhanced Online News through the first four months of 2010, looking at 40 releases in total.

For each release, Joseph counted the words in the body, the date and time of release, whether the release included a photo and so on for a total of seven main traits.

The “Average” Hit Release

Across the board, these releases were an average of **642 words**, with the longest being nearly 1500 words and the shortest being just over 250 words. The word counts were quite evenly distributed as well, and there didn’t seem to be any word count exceptionally more likely to hit than another. In total, **58% of releases were over 500 words**.

The most common day of the week to release was **Thursday**, which was the date of choice for 22.5% of releases. Tuesday and Wednesday were close behind with 20% of releases each and Monday and Friday were slightly less likely at 17.5%. Just one lonely hit was released on a Saturday and **no hit releases premiered on a Sunday**.

Moving on to the best time of day (rounding to the nearest hour), 10am and 12pm were tied for the most frequent, each with 12.5% of releases. Additionally, **40% of all the hits were released before noon**, 35% between noon and 3pm and 25% from 4pm onward. It looks like news consumers tend to be early risers, so get your release out during the workday if you can.

➤➤ Keep reading for the Seven Traits of Highly Effective Press Releases

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General Inquiries:

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Traits from Top to Bottom

1. **87% of releases included at least one link** in one form or another in the body of the release, with many of the top releases containing quite a few very descriptive links. If your company happens to be a holdout in the release linking game, I hope this may persuade you to start adding descriptive links to your press releases.
2. **73% of releases incorporated some special formatting** within the body of the release, whether it be bold, italics, underlining or an embedded image. In today's XHTML world, special formatting is an excellent way to emphasize key points of your releases, break your content into distinct sections and provide cues for 'skimmers' to gather meaning as they quickly scan content for relevant information.
3. **68% of releases had a subheadline.** The subhead seems to have an unclear role in press release SEO, since it's not really the headline and not really the body either. While the robots digesting releases may not pay it much mind, it's clear that the subhead offers valuable supplementary guidance to readers as they consider whether to continue on reading a release and possibly even share that release.
4. **58% of releases included the company name in the release headline** (Ex. Company X releases XYZ app). Of course, this also means that 42% didn't include the company name and still performed quite well with readers. There is very little real estate available within your headline and if it is more than 22 words you might not make it into Google News. With this in mind, consider the goal of the release and campaign when making your choice. If company branding is a chief concern, including the name is probably a good idea. However, if the focus is more product or service focused, for instance, maybe the company name should take a back seat.
5. **35% of releases included a photo or video**, with the vast majority of those including a photo only. It's safe to say that much fewer than 35% of all releases include multimedia, so it's clearly a good idea to include multimedia in order to help your releases stand out. Product photos, charts, infographics, company executives, high-resolution logos...the list of possibilities is nearly endless.
6. **23% of releases encouraged social sharing or engagement** within the body of the release, typically Facebook or Twitter. All EON releases already offer social sharing chicklets covering all major social networks, so it's not absolutely critical to give them additional emphasis within your release. However, if social engagement is a priority or your release is geared towards "sharability," why not give readers a bit more of a push?
7. **5% of releases, just two, had any special characters in the headline.** So perhaps adding special characters in headlines is not a good idea.