EBOOK

OPTIMIZING YOUR NEWSROOM FOR INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

PRESSPAGE

Optimizing your Newsroom for International Audiences

With the rise of social media, the changes in the traditional media landscape, the rapid succession of web-technology, and PR's pressure to deliver more measurable contributions to bottom line company results, public- and media relations are in a time of continuous change.

For organizations doing business internationally, the added complexity of a globalizing economy and the need to communicate with different audiences in different geographical locations, time zones, and languages makes it a challenge of serious proportions.

This ebook is introduces to the basics for running a newsroom for international audiences. The 4 chapters reflect the impact of technology and the growing influence of social media on modern PR and media relations strategies.

In talking to our clients, we have selected four interesting topics:

Part 1 - Searching for El Dorado
Part 2 - Showcase your global media contacts
Part 3 - When it comes to content… Go local!
Part 4 - 'Mobilizing' your newsroom

"The newsroom is arguably the most tangible corporate PR asset a brand possess. It is the ultimate platform to inform multiple audiences in an effective and efficient manner and capture data on PR's contribution to corporate goals."

Bart Verhulst, Co-founder and Chief Strategist at PressPage

PART 1: SEARCHING FOR EL DORADO

Making your newsroom findable and accessible for international audiences

As the world's economy globalizes and commercial success of businesses becomes ever more intertwined with other markets, the communication departments of many organizations need to cope with new sets of audiences. In this part we dive into the reason PR pros should not hide their news.

Fifteen years ago, reporters probably found your corporate pressroom by typing in your company's URL and looking for an "about us" or "contact" page. Today, they are more likely to arrive via a Google search or a snippet and link from a social channel. They might have run across your organization by means of a tweet, a relevant hashtag or a trending story on Facebook or LinkedIn.

Going global

The language barrier is the most obvious initial challenge for communication professionals when dealing with new geographical markets. Even though you can get quite far with English, cultural subtleties, tone of voice and local do's and don'ts need to be taken into consideration. It is therefore key to ensure you have the right content translation processes in place.

Additionally, it must be acknowledged that addressing a market in its own language and with localized content can be much appreciated by local audiences, as it demonstrates commitment. Some important local communiqués are not worth placing on the global corporate newsroom, but do need a formal home for audiences from a specific market.

'Search' is another key issue for the need to localize newsrooms. A search engine will look for the language code in a page for it to be indexed on keywords. If you place German press release in a page that is set up for English, Google and other search engines will be confused to say the least (see the short video on meta geo tags on the right).

Therefore, setting up your newsroom infrastructure to accommodate the languages of key geographical markets is a critical first step.

"The modern online newsroom is a very effective strategic tool for communicators to distribute news articles that include infographics, images, and videos, allowing them to attract bloggers, journalists and customers in new markets."

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Build and they will come...

Wrong! Your newsroom needs to be easily accessible, searchable and shareable. However, to make sure it is accessible, searchable and its content shareable, it needs to be found first.

Many companies still hide their newsroom in the 'About Us' drop down menus and refrain from showcasing their latest news articles on their homepages. In essence, hiding what they have to say and making the newsroom an El Dorado (the mythical Colombian city of gold that is yet to be found) of some sort.

It is best to place an easy to find button on your homepage that links to your newsroom. Avoid the word 'Press' or 'Pressroom.' The media landscape has changed so dramatically that most brands are now also writing for other audiences -think clients, partners, staff, influencers- and the word 'Press' would discourage them from clicking on it.

Feed your news

A great way of making your news more accessible is by feeding news snippets to the homepage of your website. The homepage, at many times a quite static page, will be automatically updated with each release you publish. Furthermore, ensure that your newsroom can be found through search engines. For this it is imperative that you use the correct language codes for each newsroom and refrain from mixing different languages in one newsroom; this will confuse searches and can even lead to exclusion from search results.
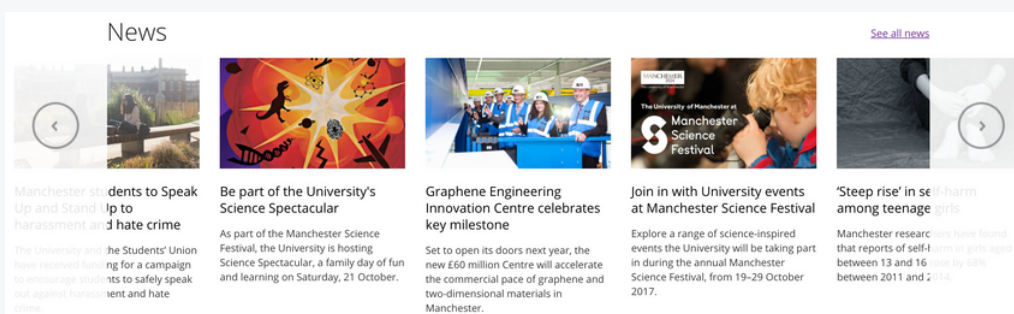
Example of showing your news articles on your homepage (Source: University of Manchester)

Socialize your news

By making your news socially shareable and directly pushing your content to selected social media handles, you are providing backlinks to your news articles, and thus your newsroom.

But it is not only this direct distribution to your timelines and feeds and the echoing of influencers that matters, setting up a Facebook newsroom can be a tremendous asset. The Facebook newsroom promotes your content in a significant manner by mirroring your corporate news and PR contacts.

The Shepherd Center's Facebook Newsroom
(Source: ttps://www.facebook.com/shepherdcenter/app/432237830148468/).

PART 2: SHOWCASING YOUR GLOBAL MEDIA CONTACTS

Getting personal will set you apart from the crowd

As journalists continue to use the web to do parts of their research, they have come to expect certain features from a company's online newsroom. For example, it should present a clear and concise idea of what the company does, how it started, and where it is based. It should prominently display the latest news and events, as well as state the various ways a visitor can contact a person or department within the company.

Providing reachable contacts

Believe it or not, reporters seeking contact names and phone numbers often can't find them on websites (or even in press releases). The traditional pressroom tends to just feature the name, e- mail address and phone number of just one or two contact persons a journalist can reach for questions or comments on a story.

By contrast, Velux offers an easy to find list of spokespersons on topics and by geographical market. The contacts page also includes some simple FAQ's that already might answer the most common questions.

Velux showcases its main PR contacts and list of global media contacts.
Source: http://press.velux.com/media-relations-contacts

It is vital that your newsroom allows you to feature online business cards of all your contacts. These cards should feature the contact's picture, job description, telephone numbers, email addresses, and Twitter and LinkedIn profiles.

The link to social media profiles of individual media contacts has become increasingly important as it helps journalists and influencers follow the spokesperson as a relevant source of news. In recent studies, 75 percent of journalists describe social media as "completely" or "to a large extent" necessary to promote and distribute content.*

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Besides providing these contact cards, it would even be more helpful to clearly state what subjects, questions, or business areas that particular contact could help with – saving time for journalists and other influencers looking for the right source to get the needed information from, and increasing your brand's chances of earned media conversion.

However, providing contact details of your comms team does mean they need to be accessible. You probably know best of all if reporters can really connect with you? Meaning that besides the fact your contact details are clearly mentioned on the release page, think about your availability: is your daily schedule filled with meetings, your mobile phone on mute and your direct line places callers straight into your overflowing voicemail? If this is the case, then maybe you should indeed not put your contact details on display, but at the same time you might need to question your priorites concerning earned media.

In this day and age of bot-phones and web-based artificial intelligence, your stories might just get better footing because reporters and bloggers can actually talk to a person while on the story.

PART 3: WHEN IT COMES TO CONTENT... GO LOCAL!

Why your global newsroom should localize content as much as possible

Doing business on an international level is no longer solely in the domain of the multinational corporations. In essence, any organization with a website has access to global markets. But the idea of adapting your newsroom to a multilingual destination may still seem both expensive and daunting. It is therefore worth understanding the many potential benefits that await by doing so.

In essence, a localized newsroom will allow you to gain more traction in a new market - and thus provide more exposure for your product and services. Here are 5 simple tips to keep in mind when going local:

1. Serve them well

If your business is serious about a specific geographical market, it should make a statement by taking its potential audiences seriously. By localizing content - not only its language, but also thematically - an organization demonstrates understanding the market they are in, and show genuine intent in building market relations, including the media.

In the past, localizing content would have been a major competitive business advantage. These days however, not having it can be seen more as a 'disqualifier.' The basic rule here is simple: If you are not doing it, you can rest assured your competition is.

But how does that work with media relations? Not much different really. The attention span of Internet audiences is short, however, that of journalists on a deadline might even be shorter. Translation and interpretation of news releases is not only a tedious, but also a time-consuming act. Having reporters translate your message for local publication will decrease the chance of earned media conversion tremendously.
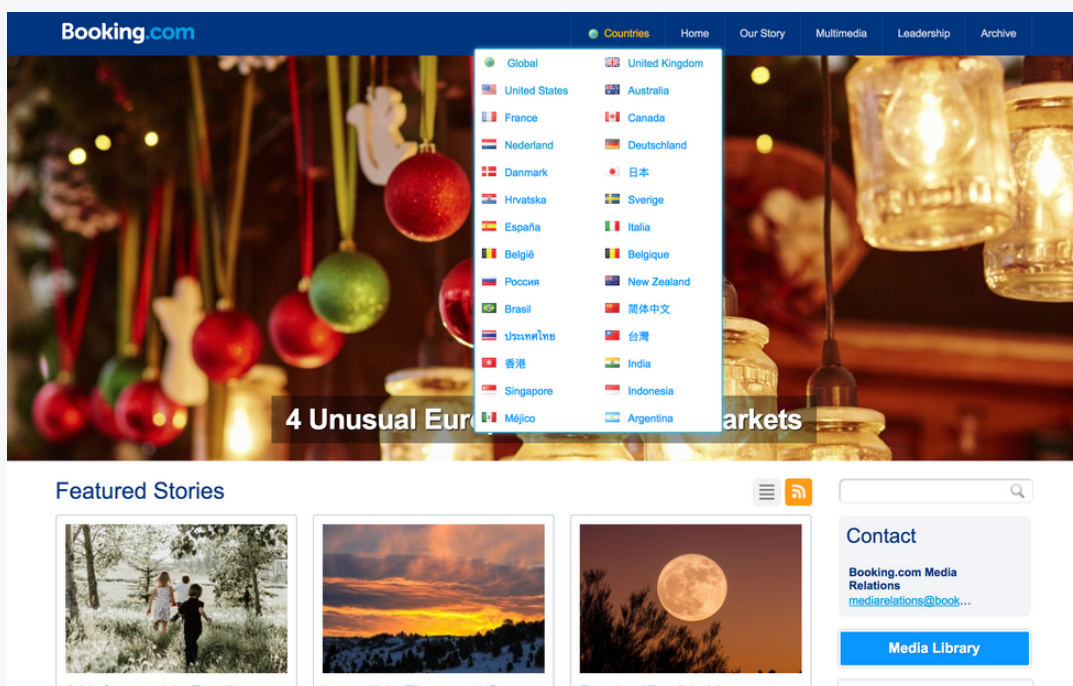
Example of Multiple languages in the Booking.com newsroom

(Source: https://news.booking.com/)

2. Improved search ranking

For those of you new to digital PR, SEO (search engine optimization) has been an important factor in making your news easy to find, easy to crawl, and easy to categorize. It is about helping your audiences find your content from among other sources.

When done well, localizing your newsroom will increase your search ranking for a specific language (or geographical market). According to the Similar Web Search Report, organic search equates close to 95% of all traffic.

Good news for Anglo Saxon companies extending their business and media relations efforts to non-English speaking countries: in languages other than English, there is significantly less competition in SEO keywords. This would allow your newsroom's localized content to contribute to bottom line web traffic a lot quicker.

3. Media and influencer lists

SEO and social are great ways to drive traffic to your website. However, in both cases, these require organic growth and thus a 'warmup period' before they become effective.

A good alternative is to also work with media and influencer lists. There are many global and local media and influencer database providers. In most cases they allow the user to select contacts by region, type of outlet and subject expertise. Besides these basic selection criteria, databases often also indicate the best - or preferred - way to get in touch with these contacts.

4. Establish credibility

Credibility is gained when newsroom visitors have a pleasant experience interacting with your brand's news. Not being able to understand your content will hamper that goal. Therefore, before spending time and resources on 'bells and whistles,' ensure you get the fundamentals right:

- Your newsroom should generally only include relevant news releases for the specific market it is targeting. All other news is effectively irrelevant and therefore distracting
- Clearly present your media contacts
- Ensure media kits, fact sheets and biographies are localized
- Use tags with keywords for search engine optimization
- Hire a professional translator to take care of translations. Not only for body copy, but also for photography, infographics and video captions
- Make sure images -whenever possible- are market specific

5. Make or buy

Do you ask IT to build your global newsrooms? Or can you get a superior off-the-shelf product that looks like you built it yourselves and features a seamless experience in each of your regional markets?

The good news is that a global newsroom rollout can be done at a fraction of the in-house costs and with technology and workflow far superior to what your IT team can build.

For more information, read 'Should you custom-build an online newsroom—or buy one off the shelf?'

PART 4:
'MOBILIZING'
YOUR NEWSROOM

An essential part for a smooth running global newsroom is optimizing it for mobile visitors

In 2016 it finally happened...mobile traffic overtook the desktop as the primary method used to access websites. Inevitably this also means that most of your newsroom's traffic will also come from mobile devices. This article presents essential tips on ensuring a solid modern digital comms strategy does not fall apart on mobile unfriendliness.

In part 1, 2, and 3 of this eBook we discussed the importance of ensuring your newsroom was accessible, providing approachable contacts, and ensuring you localize content as much as possible. This part dives into web technology; and the first essential part for a smooth running newsroom is optimizing it for mobile visitors.

The need for a mobile-friendly newsroom

As a communications professional, you are in constant competition to get any second of attention from your target audiences. This means catching them on-the-go during their commute home or as they flip through the phone during a brief moment on the couch. When you are lucky enough to actually get their click, a slow download or unreadable page will be a disaster for your news conversion rate.

With mobile traffic growing at an incredible pace (see comScore's Global Mobile Report 2017), having a mobile optimized newsroom in and of itself still sets you apart from almost half of your competitors. Many organizations still work with PDF based newsroom repositories, that besides not being mobile-friendly, also deliver poor SEO results. Even those that do have have HTML newsrooms often lack a responsive design resulting in a cumbersome (if not impossible) readability experience.

The solution for your newsroom is to follow a few simple rules as you plan for your mobile environment.

Google's example of the difference between a website that is not optimized for mobile and a website that is mobile optimized.

Main pointers for 'mobilizing' your newsroom

According to Google, there are three main points that are essential in ensuring your newsroom's responsiveness will be beneficial:

- First of all, and like any other webpage, blocking search engines from accessing your page files will not help your cause. The search bots need to be able to index web content, but also understand it is designed for mobile (see point 2).
- Clearly indicate in the page's code that it is designed for mobile. If Google is signalled that a page is mobile-friendly, it is able to index the page better for mobile searchers. Effectively increasing your SEO results.
- Ensure your page design works on a mobile device. This is not so much a technical requirement, but is more about the user experience. Think about pop-up ads that completely block a screen and essentially freeze navigation, unplayable videos, and touch elements that are too close together and ultimately frustrate the user you are trying engage.

All in all, a better mobile newsroom will immediately increase your chance to reach the influencers you need to spread your message and the journalists you want to report on your story and return for future updates.

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