

# The Beautiful Plan

~ Publishing Strategies from Patron Saint Productions ~

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## The Apple Tree Theory

By Steve O'Keefe

*Good things happen when you give your fruit away.*

Every good book is like a ripe piece of fruit. As a publicist, it is my job to hold this fruit up in front of the hungry masses and say, "Look at this gorgeous specimen! Observe the radiant color. Inhale the intoxicating aroma. Would you like a taste?" I hand out samples and hope the audience finds it pleasing enough to buy some. I am like the snake in the Garden of Eden, offering a little knowledge and hoping someone will bite, find the fruit delicious, and share it with someone they love.

### Giving Away Excerpts

Publishers are frequently concerned that I want to give away the store. "If you give people the heart of the fruit for free," they ask, "why would they buy the whole apple?" I'm just beginning a promotion for a book that features a personality assessment. I haven't read the book yet, but I can already tell I want to give away the quiz. Personality tests make great giveaways — people love to find out what "type" they are. Many people will then want to learn how to alter their type. For that, they'll have to buy the book.

In fiction and films, we look for stories that grab you from the beginning and don't let you go. Journalists are schooled, "don't bury the lead." The same is true in marketing books. You've got to put your best food forward — don't hold back — and hope the audience responds well enough that you sell out the first printing. If you have the firm flesh of ripe fruit to

offer, don't give out samples of the mealy stuff.

I did a campaign for the *New York Times* bestselling book, *RealAge*, by Dr. Michael Roizen (HarperCollins), which was built around a health questionnaire. Naturally, I wanted to give away the test. But the author's team wanted people to take the test at the



RealAge web site, so they could establish a relationship with the reader and sell them not only the book but also other products. We compromised, and I was able to offer an abbreviated version of the test. People whose interests were piqued could go to the web site for the full-featured version.

I salivated at the possibility of installing that test at WebMD, the Mayo Clinic site, and iVillage's Health Center, but my client was afraid about loss of copyright and lost web traffic. In choosing between pulling a hundred thousand visitors to the RealAge site, or putting the quiz in front of *ten million* seekers at high-traffic web sites, the RealAge team

avored the former (even though I explained that giving the quiz to high-traffic sites would increase — not decrease — traffic to their site). The funny conclusion to this story is that first, the version of the test on their site didn't work and the site crashed repeatedly from the traffic, resulting in a hundred thousand disappointed prospects. Second, a year later they ended up putting the quiz on MyFamily.com in exchange for promotional presence.

Publishers have, in my mind, an exaggerated fear of damaging their copyrights. Fear-based marketing is never any good. Consumers can smell fear as well as dogs — even online. You should give your fruit away and hope for the best. If I could, I'd give whole books away, and worry about the loss of copyright not one bit.

### Giving Away Books

Thankfully, one of my mentors, Seth Godin, provided adequate proof of concept for the Apple Tree Theory, and I have less trouble convincing publishers of its merit. He gave away the full text of *Unleashing the Idea Virus* in PDF format, with a notice abdicating copyright, thereby making the hardcover version a bestseller, and auctioning paperback rights for more money than even Seth could have imagined. Good things happen when you give your fruit away.

Many publishers are paranoid about the Napsterization of their intellectual property. But Seth relishes the idea of millions of people sharing his files, because he knows that hundreds of thousands will buy his books, magazines will put his bald head on

*(Continued on Page 2.)*

(*Apple Tree*, continued from page 1.)

their covers, TV talk show hosts will stalk him, and readers will flock to his speaking engagements. Afraid of Napsterization? Bring it on, baby! It's one of the best things that could happen to a book.

Almost all writers understand that the farther their articles spread, the more money they will ultimately make — even if no one pays a cent for reprint rights. That's why it always surprises me to hear authors whining about copyright infringement — it's the sincerest form of flattery. Lately, Marcia Yudkin's online discussion group *I-Content* (adventive.com) has been buzzing with authors complaining about unauthorized duplication of their works.

I've found articles of mine all over the net where they shouldn't be; rather than suing, I should be sending thank you notes. The more sites that use my stuff, the more visible I become. Once, I found someone who duplicated the entire resources section of my web site — years in the making — and stripped off my masthead, copyright notice, and even my name from the content, parading it as his own. My response? So what.

I think it's unethical not to credit the creators of content, but it's not worth getting upset about. I believe this plagiarist did more good for me than himself. People know my stuff when they see it, and his duplication helps build interest in my ideas. He stole from my past which, frankly, has no market value, and helped me build a market for my future.

### Steal This Book — Please

I was involved in publishing Bob Black's breakout title, *The Abolition of Work* (Loompanics). Black included an anti-copyright notice giving up all claims to the content. The book sold well for Loompanics and, indeed, other publishers printed editions and sold them too — without paying royalties to the author. The book made Bob Black's name ubiquitous among the international counterculture. His work spread over the planet in electronic and print formats because it wasn't slowed down by copyright.

Black can cash in on that brand recognition any time he chooses. I believe Loompanics sold more copies of the book *because* it lacked copyright protection than they would have with a conventional copyright.

While working for the same publisher, I would, from time to time, receive copies of unauthorized foreign language editions of our books. My response? Touché! These pirates were proving markets for us, building future clientele by exploiting dormant rights we had no intention of ever using. Their piracy helped make markets where we had none before. So before you call the attorneys and start spending huge sums to defend your copyrights, you might consider instead cashing in on a market opportunity to which someone has opened your eyes to.

No company in human history has benefited more from copyright infringement than Microsoft. The two-faced giant deliberately produces software designed for theft by leaving out simple protections that would make their intellectual property difficult to duplicate. Microsoft knows that the more people who use the software, the more copies they will sell. They pay lip service to copyright (as do I), and they support infrequent high-profile prosecutions to make honest people think twice before pirating, but their revenues and share price have benefited enormously from tacit cooperation with thieves. You could find worse models to pattern your publishing strategy after.

### Copyright — An Opposing View

And now, for one last turn in my twisted view of copyright. "To publish" means to "make public," and in a deeper, moral sense, once you put an idea out there, you no longer own it. In the United States, you can't copyright an idea — only the *expression* of an idea, and even that legal nuance is presumptuous.

I have a friend who always complains about other authors stealing his ideas. I remind him that, legally,

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that's impossible. Ideas are not property and cannot be stolen. People are entitled to read his books, learn from them, then express his ideas in their own terms, and profit from that expression. He should quit grouching and start marketing, since these authors are showing him that there's a larger audience for his ideas than he has successfully tapped.

My advice has started to sink in. My friend changed his stance from not wanting to give away anything online for fear of copyright infringement, to giving away everything. As a result, he's building a bigger audience for his future works.

To me, copyright belongs to those who know how to market it. If you, as a publisher, are not doing a good enough job of reaching those who want what you have, you deserve to see those works taken over by people who know how to find the audience you can't. The digital age is just speeding-up the process and helping us recognize the importance of packaging and distribution. As publishers, you aren't creating these works — you're taking an author's vision, packaging it in different formats, and distributing it to markets. Which brings me back to the apple tree.

To me, a publishing house is like an apple tree. It produces these wonderful books — the fruit of the tree — enticing the audience with a lovely jacket to pick the fruit, taste it, take it home, share it, tell others where they found it. These books contain ideas — seeds which are spread far and wide by those who walk off with the apples. Writers eat these apples, and the ideas they consume combine with seeds of thought gathered from a multitude of sources. These ideas are digested, ultimately deposited as manuscripts at the base of the publishing tree, where they are absorbed by publishers, merged with pulp, encased in a colorful jacket, and offered to the public in yet another season. So it goes.

The lessons of the apple tree are that, as publishers, we need to work harder to find ways to give our fruits away, confident we will be rewarded with the raw materials we need — money and manuscripts — to produce another season of splendid fruit.

# Digital Copyright

By John B. McHugh

## Is Copyright Obsolete?

Yes, according to Rob Landley in his *Motley Fool* piece, "Intellectual Property is an Oxymoron" (fool.com). "Copyright as it now stands has outlived its original purpose, and it is no longer beneficial to society as a whole. New business models must emerge, are already emerging, to replace the old." One reads this sort of naïve drivel in all the e-business media.

Nicholas Negroponte of MIT states unequivocally in his book, *Being Digital* (1996, Vintage), "Copyright law is totally out-of-date. It is a Gutenberg artifact. Since it is a reactive process, it will probably have to break down completely before it is corrected." The trend among "techies" is that all content should be free because the Internet has changed everything.

Copyright is one little detail that gets in the way of all content being free as espoused by the techies and much of the brand spanking dot.com community that have emerged over the last few years. Think about it for a moment: Wouldn't you like free product to sell if you were a new business as most of these dot.coms are?

## Are Publishers an Endangered Species?

Here's what publishing expert/copyright scholar Landley says: "Publishers have become useless middlemen rendered obsolete by digital technology. The laws of supply and demand are driving their profit margins to zero and their efforts to fight back highlight how few people need them?" Really? Are you and your publishing organization "useless middlemen?"

A consistent anti-copyright bias pervades most of the e-business media, which of course favors the techies and dot.coms in the question of copyright. My hunch is that this bias is self-serving given the fact that many dot.coms want *free access* to content. Rest easy, as copyright law (and

trademark law) as we know it will be around for a long time.

## Can Copyright Law Keep Up?

Copyright law will gradually change and evolve to meet the need of all stakeholders. Paul Goldstein in his fine book, *Copyright's Highway: The Law and Lore of Copyright from Gutenberg to the Celestial Jukebox* (Hill & Wang, 1994) states: "As the pace of technological change quickens, Congress seems less and less able to adjust copyright laws to the changes. In the two centuries since it passed the first American copyright act it has been playing catch-up with new technologies — first photographs, then phonograph records, motion pictures, radio, broadcast television, and cable television — usually about 20 years behind the new technologies."

There are new laws to address changes in technology, for example, we now have the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). The DMCA, according to a February 22, 2000 *New York Times* article, "makes it illegal to crack encryption technologies, the digital wrappers that protect intellectual property on the Internet and formats like DVD. It also outlaws the manufacture and sale of devices used to crack those defenses." Despite challenges to the protection for encryption technology, the bottom line is that copyright is the bedrock of protection for intellectual property produced by publishers and always will be. You can count on that.

## Will Publishers be "Napsterized?"

Napster is the music file sharing service that allowed individuals to share, without permission or compensation to copyright owners, copyrighted music. "Napsterized" is synonymous with being "ripped off." Courts have held that Napster is guilty of copyright infringement on grounds of contributory or vicarious liability,

or both. I suspect we will see the same pattern in the print publishing world.

Sanford G. Thatcher, Director of Penn State University Press, said it best in the *PSP Bulletin* (Spring, 2001), "It should be clear now why I find it so threatening to legitimate publishing. Napster is nothing other than a parasite, surviving by attaching itself to another body and feeding off of its lifeblood (intellectual property) while contributing nothing of its own to sustaining that body's existence."

## How Can Your Organization Protect Itself?

What should you do to avoid being ripped off by a Napster-type parasite? Use the services of a Digital Rights Management (DRM) firm. DRM will allow users to access your content from a secure server and ensure that you are paid when customers use your company's content. The DRM firm will follow your permission fees and policies.

According to an informative article in the June 26, 2000 *Industry Standard*, "Permission policies are client-side software tools that let site producers tweak the status of all kinds of files, including HTML pages, to be read-only, able to freely copy, or any status in between." Some DRM firms you may want to check out include:

- Savantech (savantech.com)
- Copyright Clearance Center (copyright.com)
- DigitalOwl (digitalowl.com)

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John McHugh is the author of the *McHugh Publishing Management Series*—48 practical publications on all aspects of publications management. A 30-year veteran of the publishing business, McHugh provides management consulting services, custom in-house training seminars, and is fully qualified to serve your organization as an interim publishing executive. You can reach him at 414-351-3056, e-mail [j.b.mchugh@att.net](mailto:j.b.mchugh@att.net) or ([johnbmchugh.com](http://johnbmchugh.com)).



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PUBLISHING PORTAL

# BookZonePro is a Great Place to Grow

BookZone is probably the premier provider of web solutions for book publishers. The company recently gathered all their educational resources into a new portal called BookZonePro (bookzonepro.com). Under the skillful direction of Amy Phillips, BookZonePro stays current and relevant, with a host of free services publishers would be foolish not to make use of. The site offers content in 17 different categories — much more than we can cover in this short review. But we'll try to highlight some of the main features, and compare them to what we've found elsewhere on the web.

## Newsire

Visitors to BookZonePro are greeted with a scrolling newswire tailored to the interests of publishers. Click on any of the headlines and you'll get a summary paragraph or two with a link to the full story. Unlike other automated news services (such as Moreover), BookZonePro's newswire feels hand picked — and it is. Editor Amy Phillips consults the usual sources, but also gathers content from some unconventional outlets.

## Articles

Articles are offered in three main sections of the site. "ProSpectives" is a column where editor Amy Phillips comments on publishing news of the week. Amy is a terrific writer, and with her position as editor of BookZonePro, she has her finger on the pulse of the publishing community. "ProFiles" contains Q&A sessions with publishing luminaries. While it's interesting to see how different people answer the same questions, the interviews would be more useful if the questions were tailored to each guest.

The "Info & Insights" section contains contributed articles from publishing experts such as Dan Poynter, Pat Bell, Eugene Schwarz, Joe Vitale, etc. It's divided into four topical sections (The Business of Publishing, Marketing, Legal Issues, and

Writing), then into subsections for newbies and pros — but this division seems meaningless since most articles appear in both subsections. One real defect with the articles library is the lack of annotations on listings. Author names and publication dates would be extremely helpful in deciding which articles to peruse, and would give the authors a little more branding for their contributions to the site.

## Database of Book Reviewers

This is, hands down, the most valuable content on BookZonePro. Book reviewers are sorted into about 30 different subject categories, and you can also search geographically by state. The results of any search include full contact information — with e-mail addresses and phone numbers— along with descriptions of the subjects each reviewer covers. Access to the database is absolutely free. Anyone doing any sort of book promotion should make a stop at BookZonePro to consult this list. There aren't thousands of entries, but there are more than enough to make it worth the visit.

## Events Calendar

BookZonePro claims to have "The world's most comprehensive publishing events calendar" and we would not dispute this. But the usefulness of this calendar is diminished because it is clogged with author signings. That information belongs at "Authors on the Highway," not in a publishing portal, where it makes it harder to find the many great listings geared toward publishers.

## Trade Directories

The "Services and Suppliers" section has a very nice "Yellow Pages" of services for publishers, with deep content in most categories. The classified ads section, on the other hand, is skimpy and less useful. And the "Business Links" section is the

mother of all bookmark lists. It has everything from rental cars to office supplies. The list is admirable, but it doesn't seem to really belong at a publishing portal. "Web Resources" is another enormous bookmark list, and these are all devoted to the trade. It seems like BookZonePro could consolidate these databases into one large trade directory, with highlighted entries and/or premium positioning for paying advertisers and BookZone members.

## Job Bank

BookZonePro has both job postings and resumes. Perhaps reflecting the current state of the industry, there were about 20 job postings and several hundred resumes. Oddly enough, there is an elaborate advanced search mechanism to help you drill through those 20 jobs, but no search feature to help thin the number of resumes to those that match your needs.

## Miscellaneous

We're not sure why BookZonePro offers a crossword puzzle and a poll, although given the popularity of on-line games, these are probably the highest traffic sections of the site. The glossary is a nice touch but seems unnecessary. And the BZ Forum discussion groups are like discussion threads everywhere — lightly used and not worth following.

## Conclusion

BookZonePro suffers from its own success. There is simply so much content on the site it is intimidating, and the overlap between some of the sections is confusing. The site is an awe-inspiring collection of publisher resources. The reviewer database is the number one reason to visit, and the articles would be if they were described better. BookZonePro needs to streamline and start dating and rating — that is, freshness dating the content and providing some sort of Top 5 list so people can quickly separate the best from the rest.



# Rachel's Vineyard Blooms

Leslie Graves is the newsletter editor for Rachel's Vineyard, a therapeutic support group for post aborted women (rachelvineyard.org). Leslie attended Steve O'Keefe's "Introduction to Internet Publicity" Chat Series last spring (sessions will be resuming this fall), and she began applying the techniques from Steve's book, *Complete Guide to Internet Publicity* to her work for Rachel's Vineyard.

When Rachel's Vineyard recently published a new book co-written by founder Theresa Burke called *Forbidden Grief: The Unspoken Pain of Abortion*, Leslie knew exactly how to promote it online. She put together a chat tour for Burke, and is using the tour as a basis for e-mail news releases to get attention for the book.

Leslie was in New Orleans in July to speak at a leadership training retreat for the nonprofit foundation. She invited Steve O'Keefe to join her for dinner, where they talked about the online marketing campaign for Rachel's Vineyard and *Forbidden Grief*, among other things. Here is a summary of that conversation.

## The Newsletter

Your book has been my bible for online promotion. I follow it very closely. I started with the newsletter. The organization had several thousand contact names, and they weren't really doing anything with them. So, rather than do an opt-in, I did an opt-out. I contacted everyone to let them know we would be producing a newsletter and if they didn't want to receive it, they should let me know.

Only three or four people opted-out. And we've had no complaints from anyone on the list. I follow your guidelines for content and style explicitly. We keep it simple, clean, no HTML, and send it once a month. The response I've gotten from the newsletter is probably the most gratifying part of the work. People are very appreciative and kind in their replies.

## The Linkage Campaign

I was soliciting links for the site,

but after I got your book I changed my linkletter and I've gotten much better results. Now I introduce myself up front, and I include my phone number at the end of the letter. That always surprises people — putting your phone number in a link request. It lets them know it's not spam.

You would be amazed at the response it gets. You ask someone for a link, and you kind of expect no response, but many of these webmasters respond personally and immediately. They just aren't used to getting e-mail requests for links, and many of them are very receptive to it — even though we don't offer reciprocal links.

When I saw the tip in your excellent newsletter, *The Beautiful Plan*, about how to tell how many people link to your site, I immediately checked our address. We had 40 inbound links at that time. It's a lot of fun to watch that number increase every month. We are up to 228 inbound links to our site now. Thanks to the linkage work, Rachel's Vineyard is now on the first page of search results for "post-abortion counseling" at Google — and that's without any special search engine optimization work.

## The Chat Tour

When Theresa's book came out, I tried to put together a chat tour for her following the instructions in your book. It was really very difficult. Most of the chat facilities are no longer supported, or just don't work, or don't have a schedule or moderator or any structure. It was very disappointing.

However, I did manage to find three venues that will be hosting her chats. And these are all supported chat venues, with moderators and schedules and advance promotion. I think you're right that the real value in doing these tours is the promotion and not the attendance. We are getting many weeks' worth of publicity on all the sites.

## The Follow-Up

It's good that your book places so much emphasis on preparing reports and tracking your work, although I need to get better at this. I've made a lot of contacts, but I don't have them very well organized, and sometimes I forget why I have this person's name or e-mail address.

I can already see the value of building relationships with these sites. First, you ask for a link, then later you ask them to post news about a tour, or an excerpt from a book. This is just a great way to promote something — especially if there is no real access to the mass media because it's a story no one wants to talk about. Plenty of people do want and need this information, and they are looking for it online.

## Time To Book Fall Campaigns

Now is the time to book online marketing campaigns for your fall releases. Patron Saint Productions provides the following services, all designed to light a fire under a book during the month of publication. Ask about discounts for series promotions.

### New Book Launch

A comprehensive campaign including a media component (e-mail news releases), excerpt distribution, discussion group postings, and online bookstore displays. Lead Time: six weeks.

### Chat Tour or Online Seminar

All the services of the New Book Launch Campaign, plus a week-long author chat tour or online seminar. Lead Time: 10 weeks.

### Web Site Promotion

Includes directory registration, writing meta tags, linkage campaign, e-mail news releases, discussion group postings, and site-of-the-day submissions. Lead Time: six weeks.

Visit our web site for samples and rates.



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# Online Newsrooms

By Steve O'Keefe

Online newsrooms have been around for a few years now — long enough for PR professionals to learn hard lessons about how well they work. This article is a survey of online newsroom content and activities, starting with essential elements and leading up to advanced, sophisticated, and often expensive options.

Before you get all hyped up about building a fancy online newsroom on your web site, let's start with a few caveats. First of all, this is passive PR; online newsrooms don't drive coverage so much as support it. News releases lure media contacts and other important publics to your site (investors, analysts, customers, suppliers, employees, etc.). Your online newsroom will give these people the depth of information they seek about your company history, products, services, and activities. But the newsroom won't generate news coverage — it will only enrich it.

The second warning is to watch your budget. Certain online newsroom activities — such as live, streaming news conferences — will not generate enough return to make them worth the considerable investment. You might feel like you're pushing the envelope by building an online newsroom with all the bells and whistles, but it's still passive PR. If it doesn't produce the desired results, that envelope could be pushed back at you — with your pink slip enclosed.

With those cautions in mind, let's do a quick survey of what you must have in your online newsroom, what you'd like to have, and what you might add if you had an unlimited budget and great IT support.

## Newsroom Essentials

There is only one thing every online newsroom must have, and that is a way to contact someone for assistance or information. Most journalists coming to your site are already working on a story or have a story idea in mind.

All they really need is the e-mail address and/or phone number for someone who can help them gather documents, artwork, interviews, or other materials.

There are problems that come with providing contact information in the newsroom. Some sites have eliminated all contact info because it is abused by people who make customer service or employment inquiries through the newsroom. Other newsrooms require journalists to register for access to contact information. In my opinion, both of these are both poor strategies. Journalists on deadline do not want to apply for access or fumble to remember a password. Most organizations don't have adequate staff to handle access requests during non-standard business hours.

Here are my suggestions for handling contact information and access. First, provide a single page of contact info that includes staff names, e-mail addresses, and phone and fax numbers. The only contact information on news releases, archived news releases, and other content in the newsroom, should be *departmental* phone numbers and *generic* e-mail addresses, such as *news@company.com*. That way, current contact information will always be available to those who need it, and when your staff changes you only have to update the contact information page — not every news release on the site.

As far as the abuse of contact information goes, get used to it. The contact info for your PR staff should be public. Part of everyone's job description is to redirect e-mail and phone calls to the proper department. It is better to have PR staff sort this e-mail than to have PR inquiries sorted by customer service staff. You really don't want an inquiry from a *Wall Street Journal* reporter being filtered through customer service.

This brings me to the topic of things you don't need in online newsrooms. You don't need anything you can't maintain. If you have a small company, you have to think about whether it's really worth devoting much effort to an online newsroom. Perhaps all you need is contact information?

You don't need feedback threads or discussion areas at your site. Trust me, the press doesn't need a forum on your site, nor do you want to police one. You don't need chat facilities unless you provide them in combination with access-restricted online events. You don't need to update the site every day to keep it fresh. When you've got news to share, add it to the site, and make sure any calendars are current.

## Basic Content

Beyond contact information, the next level of newsroom depth is to have, well, *news*, plus enough background information to enrich a story. Here are my best bets for basic content.

- **Current News:** Headline news about the company. This news is usually prepared by the publicity department, and is featured not only in the newsroom, but at the home page of the web site. This might be your latest news release or teaser copy for your last three or four most important news releases.

- **News Release Archive:** An archive of news releases as far back as you care to go. If your archive contains more than 10 news releases, you'll want to make it searchable by keyword and date. That means you need to store the news releases in a database, and that will probably require some assistance from IT.

- **Corporate History:** A concise story of the company's history. This section of the newsroom can also include a



mission statement and/or a statement of core values.

- **Staff Profiles:** Bios of key staff, including management and the board of directors. Profiles should include photos. These profiles are often provided by Human Resources or Investor Relations.
- **Artwork:** Offering good artwork can greatly increase the size of a story and the amount of coverage you get. The media often come to your site looking for artwork to accompany a story that's already written and ready to go to press. Media contacts should be offered access to high-resolution artwork that is suitable for use in print publications and television broadcasts. The minimum standard for print and broadcast reproduction is 300 dpi. It's a good idea to use low-resolution (72 dpi) images to show the media what you have to offer, and include a link to high-res artwork that indicates the format the artwork is in, the resolution, and the file size (for example, 300 dpi TIFF 1.5MB). If you have a lot of artwork to offer, you'll want to database it, and that will require assistance from IT.
- **Advanced Content**  
Don't attempt to include ambitious content in your newsroom that you can't maintain. Most calendars I've seen in online newsrooms chronicle ancient history — not forthcoming events. Poorly maintained newsrooms create a worse impression than simply having no newsroom at all.
- **Press Kits:** For large companies with multiple products, services, subsidiaries, and/or brands, Online Press Kits are a real time saver for journalists. Instead of having all the newsroom content in large, searchable databases, content related to specific products or divisions is gathered together for the media into handy kits that contain all the news releases, product information, artwork, and contact information related to that product or division.
- **Calendar of Events:** This would include such things as news confer-

ences, shareholder meetings, public appearances, trade shows, and sponsored events. Any events that will be held at the web site should be promoted.

- **Community Activities:** Information about the organizations philanthropic activities. This information is often presented as a combination of news releases covering current events, and a newsletter archive chronicling the organization's efforts to improve the world.

### Cutting-Edge Content

At the high-end of online newsroom content, there are three offerings that are too complex to describe in detail here: Online News Conferences, Online Presentations, and your own News Wire. They all require a major commitment of resources, but for companies that can afford the price tag, staff time, and learning curve, they can provide substantial results. Let's take a quick look at these 21st Century products.

- **Online News Conferences:** Live online news conferences can be just as expensive to produce as television programming. However, the resulting video stream is not suitable for broadcast on television or even print reproduction of stills. I recommend using streaming video only in crisis situations; otherwise, streaming audio with a still photo of the speaker communicates just as well and is far less expensive.
- **Online Presentations:** An online presentation is nothing more than a narrated PowerPoint slide show that is streamed over the Internet. These modules are inexpensive to create and communicate well if kept brief (five minutes or less). They're perfect for introducing new products or services, or taking stands on issues of the day. They can be easily edited, updated, and stored, accumulating into an impressive library over time.

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**News Wire or News Feed:** The back door to media coverage is to become a provider of *news* — not just news releases. Many companies have started to assemble news wires by summarizing the top stories in their field on a daily or weekly basis, and syndicating those summaries to the media and other interested parties. For an example of a great niche newswire, check out MP3newswire.net.

### Conclusion

Everyone agrees that the Internet has completely changed PR practices in just a few short years, but that's where the consensus ends and the arguments begin. For many years, there were no guidelines for using this new technology — just trial and error. Today, we can learn from the lessons of those who, like myself, have stumbled into a successful formula for integrating the Internet into public relations practices. For instruction, I recommend three recent books: Shel Holtz' *Public Relations on the Net* (Amacom Books, 1999), Don Middleberg's *Winning PR in the Wired World* (McGraw Hill, 2001), and my own *Complete Guide to Internet Publicity* (John Wiley & Sons, 2002). There is no need for you to repeat the mistakes made by others.

~ About ~

### Patron Saint Productions

Patron Saint Productions is a publishing consultancy specializing in online marketing strategy, campaigns, and training. It was founded by Steve O'Keefe, a 20-year book publishing veteran who has launched online marketing campaigns for more than 1,000 books and dozens of publishers.

#### Web Site:

<http://www.patronsaintpr.com>  
e-mail: [info@patronsaintpr.com](mailto:info@patronsaintpr.com)

#### Advisory Board:

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Kelly O'Keefe, Emergence Inc.

## ~ Online Marketing News ~

### Yahoo Groups

A few issues back, we gave a strong recommendation to Yahoo Groups as a free tool to use for book promotion. Unfortunately, we have to withdraw that endorsement.

Shortly after our review appeared, Yahoo changed its terms of service, angering millions of users who have Yahoo e-mail accounts. First, they instituted an e-mail forwarding charge of \$29.99/year. That's understandable — Yahoo needs to make money, and advertising isn't paying the freight.

Less understandable — some would say *unforgivable* — is that Yahoo reset the marketing preferences for all 2 million members. Overnight, users "consented" to receive "marketing communications" in 13 different categories, such as "special offers and shopping tips." Worse, Yahoo authorized sending these junk messages not only by e-mail, but also by snail mail, telephone, and fax.

You can change your marketing preferences by going to "My Account" and then "Edit your marketing preferences." Another alter-

native is to consent to junk messages, but change your mailing address and phone numbers to Yahoo's: 3420 Central Expressway, 2nd Floor, Santa Clara, CA 95051; Phone: 408-731-3300; Fax: 408-731-3301.

Yahoo Groups are supported by advertising, which has become increasingly raunchy. You used to be able to pay \$60/year for a no-advertising group, but Yahoo terminated that option. Also, the chat facilities at Yahoo groups have become unreliable; visitors are more likely to be locked out than let in to chat events.

### AOL Groups

America Online also offers free online discussion groups, and you don't have to be an AOL member to host one or participate. Features include threaded message boards, storage space for photos, and an events calendars. Chat facilities are also available, but only AOL members can access the chats. The groups are advertiser-supported, but the advertising is unobtrusive and innocuous com-

pared with Yahoo's spam. You'll find AOL groups at (<http://groups.aol.com>).

### MSN Groups

Microsoft also offers free group hosting at (<http://groups.msn.com>). You must become a ".NET Passport" member to start a group or participate in one. This is part of Microsoft's effort to draw everyone into Passport technology, which is more or less a universal account that keeps you from having to register at every web site you visit. MSN Groups offers free mailing lists, message boards, photo storage, and chat facilities. MSN Groups are advertiser-supported, but like AOL, MSN ads are small and not R rated. One caveat: MSN Groups don't work well unless you're using Microsoft software (what a surprise). Chat facilities work poorly without a recent version of Microsoft Explorer, and e-mail from MSN Groups is almost unreadable when viewed using non-Microsoft programs.

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