

On July 8, 2009, the eMarketing Special Interest Group hosted a chat on Press Optimization with Justin Seibert, founder of Direct Online Marketing, on the eM-SIG Social Network, [www.emsigcommunity.com](http://www.emsigcommunity.com). The purpose of the chat session was to provide business professionals the opportunity to have their specific press optimization questions addressed by an industry expert.

## **TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS OPTIMIZATION CHAT SESSION WITH JUSTIN SEIBERT**

### **Q. What exactly is press optimization?**

**A.** Press optimization is a specialized offshoot of search engine optimization that works to get you additional traffic- or achieve other means- from within the search engines. If you're already doing press releases, it makes sense to get the most out of them- including shaping what stories reporters write especially as the search engines move more toward a truly universal (e.g. videos, local results, pictures, blogs) search.

### **Q. What are the advantages of press optimization?**

**A.** There are many. For PR Firms/departments, the biggest is being able to influence reporters' stories BEFORE they happen. These days many reporters start their story idea generation process by Googling a topic. If you're not showing up in the search results, you don't have much of a chance to have your side of the story told. Especially if it's about your company or industry, you're at a disadvantage. Also consider an ecommerce site. Those are notoriously difficult to build free links for; by adding a few extra press releases or optimizing what you're already doing, you have a chance at relevant, fresh links with great anchor text. And as I alluded to earlier, the more different ways you can show up in the search results (press release, blogs, pictures, videos, maps, etc.), the better your chance of owning a term or breaking into it.

### **Q. Is there a certain way to write your press release so that the search engine will pick up on it?**

**A.** Absolutely. By following general SEO best practices as much as you can (you can't control page titles, etc.). For example, use quality keyword rich (but not spammy) text, especially with mentions at the top. Anchor text is especially important and one of the biggest benefits- those are the words that generally show up blue and underlined that link back to your site. So if you're a site that sells baseball gloves, it's a lot better to have the words "buy baseball gloves" linked to a particular page on your site than just the URL <http://mybaseballglovecompanyrocks.com>. Final though (besides the fact that the fake link I just put in isn't actually owned by some adult site) is that the most important aspect of this and all SEO efforts is keyword research. Choose the wrong ones and you're spinning wheels.

### **Q. What are the steps to achieve successful press optimization?**

**A.** 1. The most important- please make this the one thing you remember today if nothing else- keyword research. Don't go through the motions and assume that you know how people search for your products/services or how reporters will search for ideas.

2. Writing good, quality content (why should people care and actually post this anywhere) with

appropriate keyword density and take advantage of the hyperlink anchor text!

3. It's important to think about how you're going to distribute. There are plenty of good options at a variety of rates. Ones that allow you multiple hyperlinks can run anywhere from \$30 - \$800+ per release. There are ones we do for really major announcements and other distribution sources for ones where we're sort of making up news to help with links and exposure.

**Q. Through which Web sites/portals do you suggest we submit our releases? Are any of them better than others?**

**A.** That's the right question to ask. We keep experimenting. For big releases (and bigger dollars), we like Business Wire and PRWeb. Marketwire's supposed to be good too, although we haven't used them much. For smaller releases, pr.com (don't be cheap on the link buys) and officialwire.com. That last one is a bit of a crapshoot- we've had really great success with some things and barely any blips for others. Regardless, there ought to be something within your budget that's good. As long as they offer you the ability to control anchor text and get decent distribution. I've also seen some really creative PPC campaigns that have used press releases picked up on MarketWatch and sent people to the MarketWatch page that hosted the press release as though it were a news article.

**Q. In your experience, is there any industry or business type which benefits more from press optimization than others?**

**A.** No industry per se. Business types a little more so. Again, it's one of the few ways to get really quality white hat links for a primarily ecommerce company. It's also great for online reputation management and for companies that are big players in their industry, I'd say, generally as I'll want to think about this more in depth, it's potentially good for all the reasons listed here for big national/multi-national companies. For companies that work on a much smaller geographic basis, it's good for everything except influencing reporters' thoughts for future articles.

**Q. Can we distribute the press releases ourselves or do we need to pay a service to do it for us? If so, how do we know or find out where to distribute?**

**A.** You can always distribute yourself, but for the purpose of this discussion- to get online, search-related benefit, you'll want to do it with a service or company that does this type of work and can handle it for you. Try Googling "press optimization" and you should get a list. Otherwise, just look at the ones I mentioned above for some that are a little more or a little less expensive.

**Q. What sources do you recommend using for keyword research? Google Labs? Alexa? What else?**

**A.** If you're not a firm that has budget/resources specifically for SEO/PPC work and it doesn't make sense to do any subscription tools, I like all of the following:

1. Google Keywords Tool- <http://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

2. Google Alerts- this is actually a pretty weak monitoring tool, but it's free and allows you to see and allows you to see if the keywords you think are important are actually getting play in the search space.
3. Google Trends for recent searches to see how trends are changing...Google should be paying me for this.
4. You can try other places like keyword spy, although they're good for general ideas- they aren't all that accurate in practice for what competitors are actually doing.
5. A big one- look at competitors that rank well- what are they optimizing for?
6. Another big one and the most overlooked: pad and paper for brainstorming. Call up someone in your demographic who doesn't work for your company and ask what they would search for to find you. Also do a "view source" on their site and look at what their titles, meta description, meta keywords (not that important anymore, but people still use it- we do), and header tags (e.g. <h1>, <h2>).

**Q. As far as negative/exclusion terms, should they be used or not?**

**A.** Negative and exclusion terms- and I assume you're talking about paid search here- are extremely important when you use broad match. You should filter these out daily or at a minimum weekly.

**Final tidbit from Justin:**

I think the thing I'd really like people to leave today with is that they understand the value of keyword research in any search marketing related effort. You can't skimp here or think that everyone talks the same way you do. In almost every case I've seen, people talk and search almost completely differently than how people within an organization speak about their industry/products.

**Thanks to everyone who stopped by and for all the great questions! If you have any questions you didn't want to ask in a group setting, or because we ran out of time, please feel free to reach out to Amanda for my contact information. Thank you again!**