

Let's Get Visual: Multimedia and the News Release

In this paper, Business Wire looks at the key questions communications professionals must ask when understanding the importance of multimedia in today's news content.

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A well written news release is the first stepping stone to coverage and increased visibility. Journalists and media professionals want the facts of the story and delivering on their request is always a communications professional's first priority. Although content remains the core foundation of company communications, the demands presented by news creators and consumers have been steadily evolving.

With Flickr's launch in 2004, YouTube in 2005 and Facebook integrating photo uploading capabilities later that year, it's now been more than 14 years since the mass market arrival of the online multimedia era. During the last decade, a clear pattern emerged: multimedia dominates digital communication. This trend is not surprising when

you take into consideration that people start learning [visually](#) and [aurally](#) while still in the infant stage, before learning to read. After all, multimedia engages numerous senses, defining situations and relaying messages quickly and effectively. Science has shown people are more likely to interact with multimedia (images, videos, audio) because it grabs their attention. It's for these reasons news consumers are more attracted to content [featuring multimedia](#).

Multimedia has become standard throughout the digital world, with technology quickly developing, and more content shared than ever before it is no surprise journalists and media professionals are expected to speak in the language of their audiences. The language of visuals is reflected in the news we consume, and must be reflected in the news we create.

There's a Science to a News Release

There's a science behind information retention and why certain news releases resonate better than others. Research has shown memories are not created equally. According to Dr. Stephen Kosslyn, former Chair of the Department of Psychology at Harvard University, and Robert Lane, a consultant specializing in visually interactive communication theory, text is a symbol-based method of communication.

*One minute of
video is worth 1.8
million words.*

Plain text, compared to images, requires more time to decipher the message before creating a memory. How much more time? We process images [60,000](#) times faster than text. This time gap can be detrimental in an age of [ever shortening attention spans](#). When text is coupled with an image, the increased visual stimuli pique the viewer's curiosity. When the brain has less work to do, the reader will not only be more interested in the message, they will retain more as well, resulting in an increased chance of your news release having the desired impact.

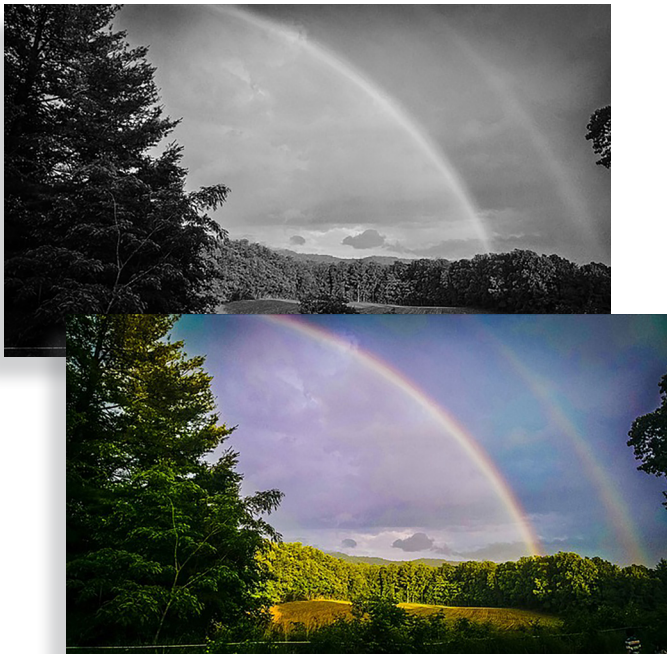
a quadrilateral
with four right
angles

(The concept of a "square" is conveyed by the image and understood by the reader, well before the text is ever read)

Understanding Multimedia Types

Color vs. Black and White – Images are more stimulating than plain text, but not all images are created equally.

Color images have a stronger effect on the viewer than black and white images. The striking vibrancy of color triggers a reaction in people resulting in longer multimedia viewing time. Color advertisements have been shown to [retain 42% more attention](#) when compared to their grayscale equivalent. If the goal of a news release is garnering attention, then the best practice is grabbing the reader with a vibrant, full-color image.



Visual vs. Audio – A news release aims for mental stimulation resulting in increased information retention, and multimedia does a fantastic job of gaining interest where it might not have existed before.

The visual sense, however, is only one of several senses used to receive and comprehend a message; auditory is another.

*30% of all
people are
auditory
learners*



According to [North Michigan University's Academic & Career Advisement Center](#), approximately 30% of people are auditory learners. By incorporating video with audio into your news release, you not only reach a broader audience but reinforce the message for the entire target market.

To maximize a news release's potential return on investment (ROI) it's important to understand how people learn and consume information. Effectiveness lies in reaching the audience in an enticing manner; not some arduous process. People aren't necessarily conscious of how they best consume information but studies consistently show the impact of multimedia. Including multimedia in news releases allows effortless consumption of your narrative, enhancing overall brand and news engagement.

Today's Multimedia Environment

What has the public made abundantly clear regarding today's media landscape? Approximately [3.25 billion hours of videos](#) are watched on YouTube each month and [1.8 billion photos](#) are uploaded online every day.

Multimedia is no longer an exceptional form of communication, it's the standard and expected form. Smart communications professionals understand that news releases are not exempt from the public's demand for multimedia to define a narrative.

Imagine a televised newscast without accompanying video, or a newspaper or magazine with no photos or graphics. Multimedia quickly became the dominant feature of those mediums, and continues the same pattern today.

*News releases with multimedia are **3X** more impactful than plain-text releases*

In the realm of mobile technology, the advent of media friendly [smart phones](#) made flip phones obsolete. Smart phones, tablets and phablets make it possible for people



to create, consume and share multimedia anywhere and anytime, driving the popularity of the mobile platform and, simultaneously, a demand for more multimedia.

Innovations in tech now focus on maximizing and streamlining access to multimedia. You can now send and receive multimedia across your house, car, wrist and even with a snap of your spectacles.

Today's news consumers have a culture of multimedia entitlement and are expecting multimedia to be present in their news releases. Research from Business Wire shows news releases with multimedia are 3x more impactful than plain text news.

Creating a Point of Reference in a Sea of Social Channels

Within the last ten years, the social platform revolution has led to an explosion of new channels for news discovery. How can a news release engage efficiently across multiple social channels? Multimedia, easy-to-remember and recognize, is the solution.

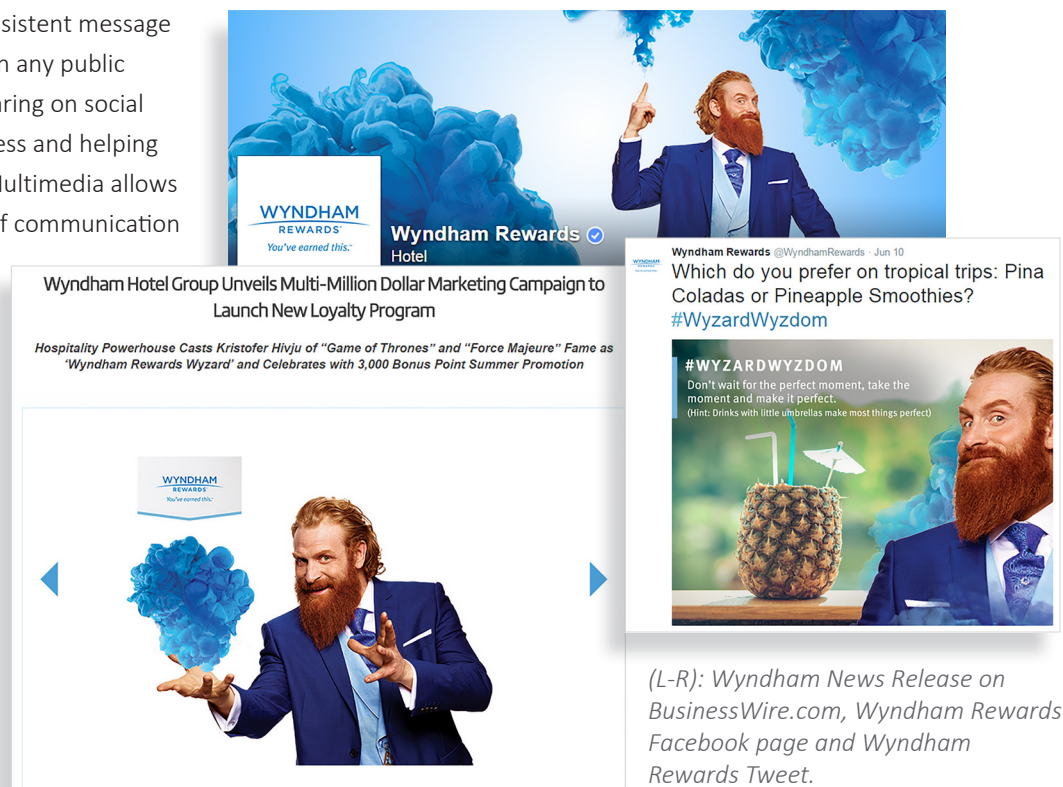
People use social channels as aspirational platforms. They tweet, share, and comment on news releases based on their own interests, opinions and tastes as well as the public persona they would like to create.

Multimedia creates a consistent message and is easier to recall than any public commentary when appearing on social channels, raising awareness and helping to build brand identity. Multimedia allows for the homogenization of communication channels.

News consumers recognize a multimedia asset when they see it on Facebook from when they saw it in a news article, or a blog post.

Multiple appearances by the same asset reinforce brand identification in the audience's mind. By including a picture or video asset with your release, you bridge social and mobile channels allowing for a singular point of reference.

According to several Pew Research studies, [45% of US adults get some form of their news from Facebook](#) with [two-thirds of Americans overall consuming](#) their news digitally. News consumption is at an all-time high and a picture says a thousand words in a language everyone understands.



(L-R): Wyndham News Release on BusinessWire.com, Wyndham Rewards Facebook page and Wyndham Rewards Tweet.

Multimedia is the Ultimate Rosetta Stone

Twenty years ago, it would have been nearly impossible to reach markets around the globe simultaneously and effectively unless you were a global news organization, yet as we now know, multimedia can bridge language and cultural gaps.

When creating instructions on how to boil water, would text-only relay the idea more accurately than images and video? This is the question you must ask when envisioning a target audience – how can I best express an idea to the broadest, universal audience? Rather than simply issuing a text-only news release, consider creating narratives with multimedia assets, allowing the audience to consume the information via the medium they prefer best.

How to Boil Water

Boiling means bringing water to 212 degrees Fahrenheit for cooking. But you don't need a thermometer to boil water. The process to boil water (or any other kind of liquid) is simple, and you need to follow only a few steps:

1 Put some water in a pan or pot.

Don't fill it to the top, or the water will splash out of the pan when it boils!



[Enlarge](#)

2 Place the pan on your stovetop and turn the burner to the highest setting.

Your stovetop probably has a "Hi" or "Max" setting.



[Enlarge](#)

3 Let the water come to a full rolling boil (when the bubbles are rapidly breaking the surface).

Covering the pot speeds the process by trapping surface heat.



[Enlarge](#)

How To Boil Water:

Boiling water is very easy to do, but it's not always clear how to do it. Here are some tips for cooking rice and [pasta](#).

Choose a pot that's large enough to hold the water and has a lid that fits.

You might be tempted to use water that's been sitting in your pipe, but this water has been sitting in your pipe for a long time. If you're going to drink it or cook with it, you need to use fresh water.

Don't fill the pot all the way up. Keep it about halfway full. Boiling water will increase the volume, and those bubbles do their thing. Without the extra space, the rice or pasta will boil over.

Place the pot on the stove and turn the burner to the highest setting. Put a lid on the pot, but leave it slightly ajar.

Check for steam escaping from under the lid. If you see steam, the water is doing what you want it to do.

Look at the water. If large bubbles are rising to the surface, the water is boiling. Small bubbles that stay at the bottom of the pot are just air. They don't necessarily indicate that boiling is imminent.

High Altitudes:

Water will boil at high altitudes, but it isn't as hot as boiling water at sea level. The lower the altitude, the higher the boiling point. Boiling occurs when the water is hot enough to have the air, so that it can form bubbles. At high altitudes, air pressure is lower than at sea level, so it's harder for the water to get so hot to get to boiling.

Because the temperature of the boiling water is lower at high elevations than at sea level, the speed that food cooks is not related to the altitude.

Adding a little salt to the water will cause the water to boil at a slightly higher temperature, which speeds up the cooking process, especially at high altitudes.

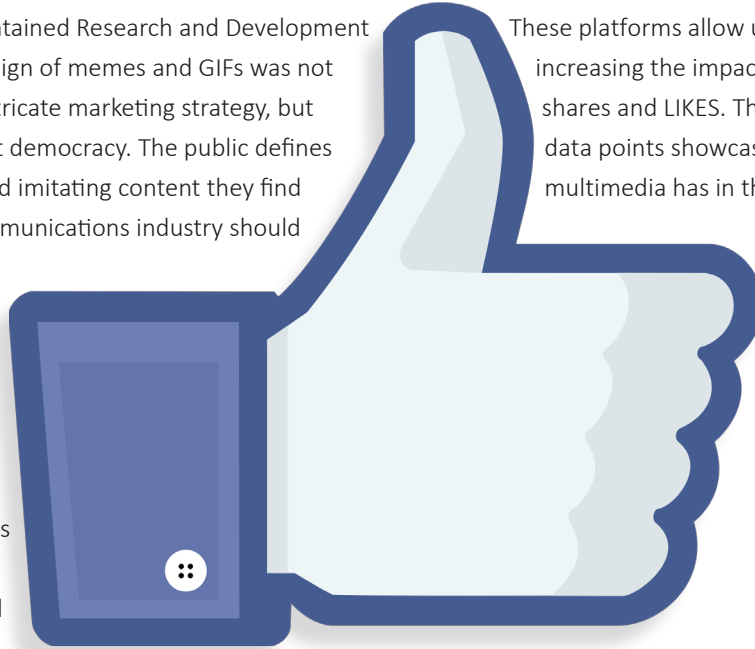


L-R: howcast.com, whatscookingamerica.net and dummies.com

For the People by the People

The web is a self-contained Research and Development department: the design of memes and GIFs was not the product of an intricate marketing strategy, but the result of internet democracy. The public defines trends by sharing and imitating content they find interesting. The communications industry should take note.

When tracking the rise of social media it becomes easy to identify the importance of multimedia in today's communication. Facebook posts used to be limited to text, but as the site became multimedia friendly, images and videos proliferated, increasing usage, sharing and engagement rates.



These platforms allow users to communicate with multimedia increasing the impact of their message, resulting in more shares and LIKES. Those shares and likes are specific data points showcasing the extent of reach that multimedia has in the social channel.

Even on Twitter, once known for their 140-character limit, [multimedia was embraced](#) and became standard practice. The success of platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and inbound traffic powerhouse Pinterest have shown that [visual fluency is here to stay](#).

Journalists Need Multimedia



Photo by Jürg Vollmer

According to Business Wire's [2016 survey](#) of more than 600 journalists and media professionals, photographs were selected as the most important press release supplement, followed by graphics and infographics. 83% of those participating in the survey cited photographs as their preferred media.

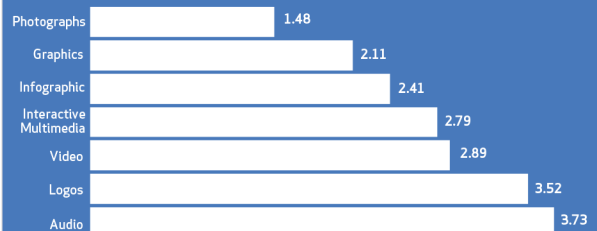
Most journalists receive several hundred emails a day. Steve Kovach, senior editor for SAI, the tech section of Business Insider, [conducted an experiment](#). He refused to check his email for seven days. The result was 1,511 unread emails.

When a journalist is scrolling through their inbox, [filtering through news releases](#), or searching for newsworthy content, fatigue can set in. A communication professional never wants their content to receive less than equal attention.

For a news release to be successful it is important to grab a journalist's interest. Multimedia is a strong visual stimulant. Images and videos aid a news release in getting a second look from journalists because of their ease of understanding. The reader spends less time deciphering the content of the message and more time deciding on how it can be used in a story.

Multimedia is a vital part of any successful news release because it provides a complete news package and fulfills the needs of today's media professionals. Multimedia grabs a journalist's attention, a journalist who then turns around and shares the content with their readers. If a news release

The Most Important Release Supplement to Journalists



NOTE: Respondents were asked to rank release supplements in order of importance (1 being the most important and 7 the least). These are the average rankings of each supplement.

From the 2016 Business Wire Media Survey

includes compelling multimedia, a journalist is that much more likely to show interest and redistribute the information to a vast and interested audience.

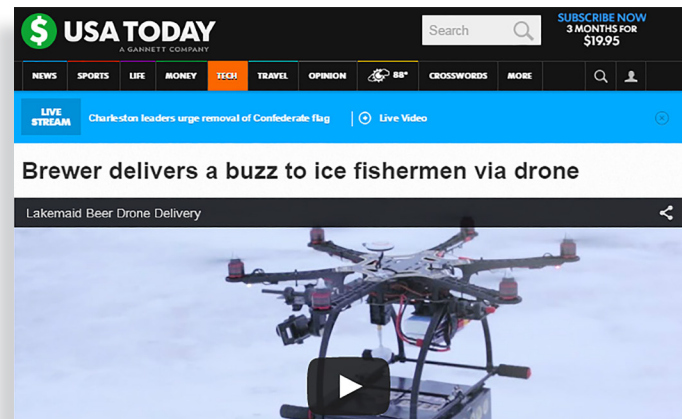
The Impact of Multimedia on News Release ROI

Measuring the visibility, reach, engagement and adoption of a news release is the best indicator of how the public is interacting with your company's message. According to [MDG Advertising](#), "content featuring compelling images averages 94 percent more total views than those without."

These statistics, the science, the trends, they all converge on one factor: Multimedia makes a clear and measurable difference! MDG Advertising also concludes when using local search, "60 percent of consumers are more inclined to select a business with images in its local listing."

For Lakemaid Beer, [a multimedia news release resulted in 621k views](#) and over \$5 million worth of editorial coverage. In order to spur sales of Frosty Winter Lager, one of the brand's seasonal beers, [Pocket Hercules](#), a Minnesota-based advertising and PR agency, issued a news release with a screen shot from a video detailing a drone delivering beer along with links leading directly to the video.

According to Stephen Dupont, director of public relations and branded content at Pocket Hercules, the result "was a firestorm of activity." By including images or other multimedia

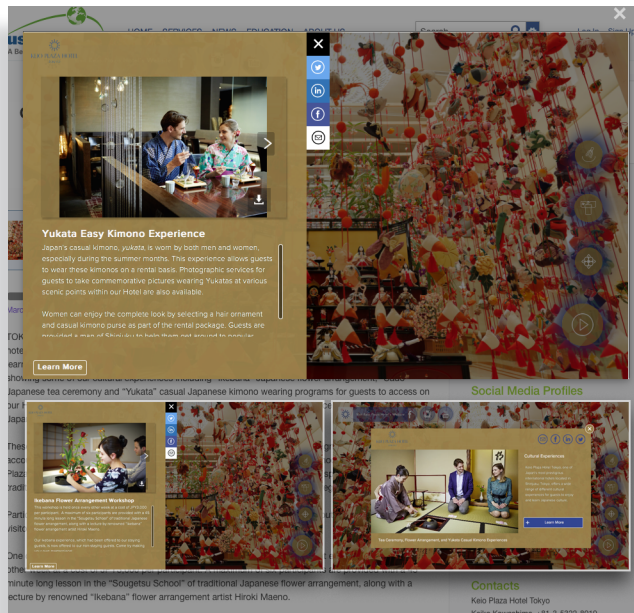


USAToday.com media coverage of Lakemaid Beer's drone delivery

assets with a news release, you are inviting your key constituents to spend more time and dedicate more attention to your release. This added time is an investment of interest into your brand and accomplishes visibility, adoption and engagement.

The attention your release receives from the aid of multimedia helps to facilitate continued interest in any following releases, establishing a pattern of building bridges with the public.

Driving Results with Interactive Media



Interactive Media release from Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo [SEE IT NOW](#)

Multimedia is important, but it is also evolving. As more and more consumers play and interact with images and videos, new multimedia creation programs are emerging. The biggest trend in multimedia for 2018 is the movement towards interactive experiences. Images with hyperspotted overlays allow consumers to not only view the image, but interact with it. Videos with hyperspots allow the user to find out more information before continuing their video learning.

While text-only news release engagement is limited to 20 to 30 seconds, news releases featuring interactive multimedia show an average engagement of 5 minutes – the highest rate of content engagement available today.

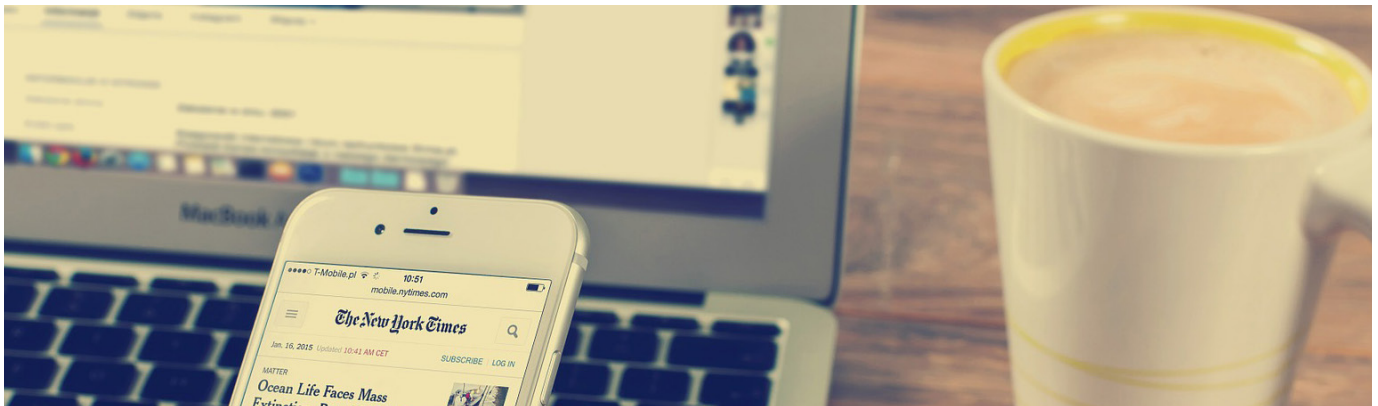
Business Wire [Interactive Media](#) Services transform an anchor image or video into an interactive discovery experience. Business Wire's StorySets engage users through discovery and facilitate kinesthetic learning. Learning through activity [starts at an early age](#) and for many continues through adulthood as the primary method for efficient information intake.

The video game industry, while commonly misconceived as youth oriented, is actually a great example of how an interactive platform can impact the adult consumer market. According to the [Entertainment Software Association](#), the average age of a gamer is 35 with 67% of U.S. households playing video games, a \$30.4 billion dollar industry. The gamification of multimedia assets is a revolutionary step in modernizing the news release by activating news consumers' curiosity and interest in exploration.

The Evolving State of Media

There was a time when the question existed of whether or not to include multimedia with a news release. That time has passed and there is no greater example of this changing of the guard than traversing the internet, checking your smartphone,

or turning on a television set. Multimedia is everywhere and when news consumers check, it should be in your news release as well. The new question is what will emerge next as the popular and defining form of communication.



Key Takeaways

- Scientific study shows multimedia has a stronger impact than plain-text.
- Technology is being designed to accommodate streamlined access to multimedia.
- Multimedia's popularity has been established by the democratic culture of online communities.
- Inclusion of multimedia with a news release has shown significant impact on company communication ROI.
- Interactive multimedia in news releases dramatically increases message adoption, drives significant inbound traffic and shortens your customer's sales journey.