



Considerations for Building a Better ONLINE INVESTOR CENTER

Every organization needs an online investor center. It's the central investor relations headquarters for all of your company's news and information and can help start your conversation with investors, analysts and media. So, how do you make the most of this important communications platform?

In this Business Wire guidance report, Vice President of Web Communications Services Ibrey Woodall reviews ten important considerations – from how to manage your content to what you should choose for your investor center's URL – for building a better online investor center.

Considerations for Building a Better Online Investor Center

Every public company is in need of an investor center to communicate with investors, analysts and the media. Whether you're updating an investor center for your organization or creating a new one, there are provisions to consider that will help you begin the project successfully.

Activity

Evaluate the amount of components you may post to your investor center, along with how frequently you may post them. Will you post one, two or more press releases to your investor center on a monthly basis? Will you post a related photograph, audio or video file along with each press release? Will you automatically integrate all your press releases that are distributed through a newswire service?

If your company has a long history and you have hundreds of press releases, decide whether or not you should transfer each one into the new investor center. Some releases could be 20 years old and no longer relevant. One plan would be to transfer at least two years of press releases, along with the releases that announce specific milestones, such as the launch of a new product, the replacement of a CEO or the acquisition of a company.

Branding and Design

Think seriously about the design and URL you select for your investor center. Don't waste valuable branding opportunities. Reflect your organization's corporate site in the look and feel of your investor center. This will provide a quick and visual affirmation that it is the official investor center.

The design of an investor center is a balance between interest and utility.

Be sure to use your organization's domain in your investor center URL. Conventional URLs have included investor.companyname.com, investorcenter.companyname.com and ir.companyname.com.

This type of URL is easier to remember than a long stretch of letters, numbers and symbols. It also fits better on your business card and in your email signature.

Also, the design of an investor center is a balance between interest and utility. It is not a place for extensive Adobe Flash animations or interactive graphics. The layout should be clean and easy for investors and analysts to get in, get what they need and get out. Most content should be accessible within one to two clicks, with limited scrolling.

Another branding opportunity presents itself with the use of the "From" line for all email alerts. Do not use an individual staff member's name. Use investor@companyname.com, investorcenter@companyname.com, irinfo@companyname.com or something similar.

Navigation

Pay close attention to the organizational plan behind your navigation structure. If you don't, your investor center will irritate more than assist, no matter how good the graphics look.

Primary navigation should include standard features such as Corporate Governance, Stock Chart, Financials, Filings, Press Releases and more. How the subnavigation is handled is just as significant. The content within the main navigation

should be categorized by subject matter. For example, press releases should be organized by topic (e.g., financial results), products, services or brands. This structure makes it much easier to get the desired information quickly.

Decide whether or not you are going to use social media to expand the reach of your financial news. If so, add a Social Media navigation tab to your primary navigation. This will allow investors and analysts to find and follow your company's announcements via official Tweets and Facebook postings.

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Research

Perform due diligence by researching and analyzing all your choices. Decide whether your investor center will be hosted and maintained internally, or if you will use an external vendor.

Learn the actual costs of maintaining hardware required to host an investor center, as well as the cost of software development. Review the current salary ranges for technical professionals, and how many will be necessary to monitor the system on a 24/7 basis.

Be aware of the hidden costs involved in using free software for your investor center. Investigate at what point charges begin to accrue.

Remember, the communicator's job is to focus on content, not code. If you decide that building an investor center on your own is not for your internal team, start the vendor comparison process. See which one works best for your needs. Is the vendor established? Does the vendor have enough resources? Does the vendor offer the necessary features and functionality? Can the vendor integrate press releases you've distributed via a newswire service? Does the vendor include hosting and training in the cost?

Also research your financial content provider. Confirm that they will be able to offer a variety of intuitive stock charts and investment calculators.

Security

Create a strategy for an internal workflow process. For example, you may want to place authorization rights with certain team members so that they have access to edit only a particular section of the investor center. Would it not be wise to limit permissions for the newly hired interns charged with initial input of content or to ensure they do not have the ability to activate the dark site crisis communications module within your investor center?

Contemplate which sections within your investor center should be password protected, if any. The more visitors you have register, the more your tracking reports will reveal. It is very important that you have the ability to open or close a specific section of the investor center very easily.

Review the security procedures of your hosting vendor. Do they limit the number of employees who have access to the server? And do they have multiple levels of security, along with a contingency plan?

Storage

Add up the file sizes of all your documents, images, audio and video files. You'll need to have an idea of how much data storage capacity you'll require to house all your components. Approximately 900,000 pages of text, 300 MP3 audio files (average 4MB file size), 400 digital pictures (average 3MB file size) and a lot more will fit within one gigabyte.

Team

Designate a member of your team as the master administrator for your investor center. The master administrator should be the main communications contact for your content management solution provider. Although no HTML coding is required to manage most CMS solutions, this team member should have a sound understanding and interest in the Internet, editing, publishing and social media.

Designate a member of your team as the master administrator for your investor center.

The master administrator should learn to use current investor center features effectively and be alert to any customization needs that would aid the organization's internal procedures. The master administrator will relay all training to new staff members and set authorization levels for the administrative console so that individual team members can manage specific areas within the investor center.

Time Frame

Plan the launch of your investor center accordingly. If you desire to launch on a specific date, work backwards from that date. Anticipate approximately four to six weeks for the actual development of your investor center. Also calculate additional time for the decision-by-committee conversation on site design, and for legal processing of the vendor contract.

Traffic

Use your organization's domain name in your investor center URL, not your vendor's URL. This will help you capture site traffic for knowledge and analysis. Place the Investor navigation link prominently on the corporate site. Do not bury the navigation link to your investor center. This makes it difficult to find, reduces potential traffic and adds to the number of clicks that the investor or analyst has to wade through to access your news and financial information.

Begin by asking for the statistics on traffic to the current investor center. Use this to establish a baseline for growth.

Update your investor center often, and list all the keywords that will help optimize your entire investor center. Also optimize individual content with keywords related to the subject matter. All these tactics will increase your chance of a higher ranking by search engines, which, in turn, will increase the traffic to your investor center.

Training

Determine your organization's training needs. How many are on your staff? Can you gather all of them together for training on the same day and time? Will your vendor separate training into two days? Do you need training on-site, or will virtual training suffice? Will your vendor train new staff members after you've launched your investor center? Will there be an additional cost?

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The actual process of inputting content into an investor center is fairly easy to learn. Make sure you are trained on the additional functions within the administration module, so you can get the most out of your investor center.

Conclusion

As you've learned, there are multiple factors to consider when building an investor relations center. Some of these key takeaways will help you begin your check-off list.

- Think about how frequently you will post components to your investor center.
- Match the branded design of your corporate site.
- Map out the navigation structure before any development begins.
- Employ a content management system, and look for hidden costs when comparing vendors.
- Decide whether to password-protect content or not.
- Know the total file size of all your current components (e.g., documents, images, audio and video files).
- Appoint a member of your staff as the master administrator of your investor center.
- Work backwards from the desired launch date when creating the development schedule.
- Use your company's domain name in your investor center URL (e.g., investor.companyname.com).
- Realize that virtual training should be sufficient when using a content management system.

A Message from Business Wire

Business Wires InvestorHQ is a dynamic online investor center, featuring self-service content management tools, built-in search engine optimization, social media engagement features and advanced measurement analytics. InvestorHQ integrates with your organization's website and provides automatic, simultaneous posting of Business Wire-issued press releases and multimedia. Manage and share all your investor relations communications from one central headquarters, starting your conversations with investors, analysts and media. For more information about Business Wire InvestorHQ, contact our experts at +1.888.381.9473 or email HQ@businesswire.com.

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