



# Considerations for Building a **BETTER ONLINE NEWSROOM**

Every organization needs an online newsroom. It's the central communications headquarters for all of your company's news and information and can help start your conversation with media, bloggers, consumers and influencers. 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 newsroom's URL – for building a better online newsroom.

## How to Build a Better Online Newsroom

Every organization that relies on communication needs an online newsroom. Whether you're creating a new online newsroom for your organization or updating an existing one, there are provisions to consider that will help you begin the project successfully.

### Activity

Evaluate the number of components you may post to your online newsroom, along with how frequently you may post them. Will you post one, two or more press releases to your online newsroom 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 wire 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 online newsroom. 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.

The amount and frequency of posting press components may affect the cost of your online newsroom.

### Branding and Design

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

**The design of an online newsroom is a balance between interest and utility.**

Be sure to use your organization's domain in your online newsroom URL. Conventional URLs have included news.companyname.com, newsroom.companyname.com, media.companyname.com and press.companyname.com; however, the online newsroom is no longer solely for the media or press. It provides news and information to all interested parties, including journalists, bloggers, consumers,

evangelists and key influencers. Because of this social evolution, today's online newsroom URLs are most adequately represented with news.companyname.com, newsroom.companyname.com or newscenter.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 online newsroom 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 journalists to get in, get what they need and get out. Most content should be accessible within one to two clicks, with limited scrolling.



### GloMoSoMe!

GloMoSoMe means **Global-Mobile-Social-Measurable** and it's the most complete platform of patented technologies coupled with human expertise perfectly designed to serve the 21st-century PR professional.

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 [news@companyname.com](mailto:news@companyname.com), [newsroom@companyname.com](mailto:newsroom@companyname.com), [newsinfo@companyname.com](mailto:newsinfo@companyname.com) or something similar.

## Navigation

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

Primary navigation should include standard features such as Press Releases, Photographs, Multimedia, Press Kits 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 products, services or brands. This structure makes it much easier to get the desired information quickly.

## Research

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

**Be aware of the hidden costs involved in using free software for your online newsroom.**

Learn the actual costs of maintaining hardware required to host an online newsroom, 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 24 hours a day.

Be aware of the hidden costs involved in using free software for your online newsroom. 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 online newsroom 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 adequate resources? Does the vendor offer the necessary features and functionality? Can the vendor integrate press releases you’ve distributed via a wire service? Does the vendor include hosting and training in the cost?

Examine, analyze and take advantage of any consultation offered by the vendor.

## Security

Create a strategy for an internal workflow process. You may want to place authorization rights on certain team members so that they have access to edit only a particular section of the online newsroom. You may also want to limit permissions for the newly hired interns charged with initial input of content. Make sure they don’t have the ability to activate the dark site crisis communications module within your online newsroom.

Decide which sections within your online newsroom should be password protected, if any. Some communicators believe the entire online newsroom should be open, while others decide to close the newsroom to those who do not



register. The more visitors you have register, the more your tracking reports will reveal. It is imperative that you have the ability to open or close a specific section of the newsroom 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 need 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 online newsroom. 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 online newsroom.**

The master administrator should learn to use current online newsroom 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 online newsroom.

## Time Frame

Plan the launch of your online newsroom 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 online newsroom. 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 online newsroom URL, not your vendor's URL. This will help you capture site traffic for knowledge and analysis.

Although it can be difficult to persuade your internal IT department to create a main NEWS navigation on the corporate site, it is well worth the fight. Do not bury the navigation link to your online newsroom under the ABOUT US section. This makes it difficult to find, reduces potential traffic and adds to the number of clicks that journalists have to wade through to access your news and information.

Begin by asking for the statistics on traffic to the current news-related page of your corporate site. Use this to establish a baseline for growth.



Update your online newsroom often, and list all the keywords that will help optimize your entire online newsroom. 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 online newsroom.

## Training

The actual process of inputting content into an online newsroom is fairly easy to learn.

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 online newsroom? Will there be an additional cost?

The actual process of inputting content into an online newsroom 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 online newsroom.

## Conclusion

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

- Think about how frequently you will post components to your online newsroom.
- 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 press components (e.g., documents, images, audio and video files).
- Appoint a member of your staff as the master administrator of your online newsroom.
- Work backwards from the desired launch date when creating the development schedule.
- Use your company's domain name in your online newsroom URL (e.g., news.companyname.com).
- Realize that virtual training should be sufficient when using a content management system.

## A Message from Business Wire

**Business Wire NewsHQ** is a dynamic online newsroom featuring self-service content management tools, built-in search engine optimization, social media engagement features and advanced measurement analytics. NewsHQ integrates with your organization's website and provides automatic, simultaneous posting of Business Wire-issued press releases and multimedia. Manage and share all your news, multimedia, social network links and more from one central news headquarters, starting your conversations with media, bloggers, consumers and influencers. For more information about Business Wire NewsHQ, contact our experts at +1.888.381.9473 or email [HQ@businesswire.com](mailto:HQ@businesswire.com).



Reported by: Ibrey Woodall  
Vice President, Web Communications  
Business Wire  
A Berkshire Hathaway Company  
7890 Peters Road, Suite G-102  
Plantation, FL 33324  
Tel: 954.474.8833  
Fax: 954.474.5068  
Email: [ibrey.woodall@businesswire.com](mailto:ibrey.woodall@businesswire.com)