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How To #HOW627:

## [How to Create and Distribute a Social Media Release](#)

**SUMMARY:** Social media releases aren't meant to replace traditional press releases. But they can make your effort to disseminate news to journalists, bloggers and anyone else much easier. PR pro Todd Defren and his team at SHIFT Communications created the first template for an SMR. Includes four tips on how to create a social media release, three ways to distribute one and lots of useful links.

### **Contact Information**

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### **Background**

Defren is a Founder and Principal in SHIFT Communications LLC, a full-service PR firm with offices in Boston and San Francisco. Before SHIFT, he worked at Sterling Hager as an account manager and then as managing director of the San Francisco office for 10 years before buying out the firm with two partners and creating the new company.

Defren specializes in social media strategies and is credited with creating the first template for social media releases and online newsrooms. He has a bachelor's degree in literature from Bard College, Annandale, NY.

### **What is an SMR?**

A social media release is a Web 2.0 format for the traditional press release (see creative samples). Social media releases are also known as social media press releases, new media releases and hReleases. This format especially appeals to bloggers, but it's not intended solely for them. It works just as well for journalists and consumers.

The SMR includes:

- o Headline
- o Subhead
- o Bulleted or narrative core of news content
- o Pre-approved quotes from corporate execs, analysts, customers, partners, etc.
- o Links that matter (to blog posts, white papers, material that adds context to the news you are releasing)
- o Photo of product or headshot, etc.
- o Graphic of logo, graphs, etc.
- o MP3 file or Podcast link to sound bites from stakeholders

- o Streaming video of CEO's view of the news, product demo, etc.
- o RSS feed to your corporate news releases, blog or online newsroom content
- o Permalink to your online newsroom
- o Place for readers to leave comments
- o Place to trackback or link to blog posts that link to the news release
- o Tags
- o "Share This" bookmark widget
- o "Sphere It" link
- o Contact information

The idea for the social media release template came to Defren in 2006 after reading a blog post by Tom Foremski of Silicon Valley Watcher titled, 'Die! Press Release! Die! Die! Die! Defren says this inspired him to challenge his SHIFT team to create a fresh approach to the traditional press release format that PR folks and journalists have complained about for years.

What they came up with was "a way to Webify the content of the release," Defren says. "The social media release is a way to turn the press release into a blog post with all the functionality that you would expect from a blog post."

SMRs are different from traditional press releases because of the multimedia content, embedded links and ability to rip content electronically for whatever purpose. Perhaps you are a reporter writing a blog post for your news organization and you need a headshot immediately. With the SMR, that headshot is readily accessible.

### **How to Create an SMR: 4 Tips**

Defren suggests using a free service, such as PRXBuilder.com, to create your social media release. It can take you step-by-step through an automated process. You just enter content and links into a form and it creates the SMR.

->Tip #1. Follow the template

If you don't want to create an SMR using the free service, you can generate it on your website or on an online newsroom. Just follow the template -- embed the links, photos, graphics, widgets, etc.

The SMR template is exactly what it sounds like -- a template. You can pick and choose what you want to leave in or take out. You could create a separate tab for SMRs or incorporate them into the existing Web page.

->Tip #2. Emulate successful SMRs

Besides the examples on Defren's blog (see useful links), you can find great SMRs on Marketwire, PR Newswire, Business Wire or PRWeb.

->Tip #3. Power your online newsroom with a blogging engine

If your online newsroom is powered by a blogging engine, your visitors will be able to leave comments. In turn, you will be able to moderate those comments and trackbacks. This capability could also improve your company's SEO.

"This is an ideal case, but if your online newsroom is basically run on a blog engine, like WordPress, all of these social media elements can be added to every news release," Defren says. "[It] can exist only in

your online newsroom. That's where it counts.”

->Tip #4. Embrace controversy

Posting press releases as blogs on an online newsroom powered by a blog engine is a fairly radical idea for the PR industry. Therefore, SMRs often stir up controversy.

“Some people really want to control the comments or not allow comments or control what else is displayed alongside that news release,” Defren says. “If there's a negative blog post [or comment], it takes a special kind of guts to be willing and able to put that alongside your news release.”

But Defren says this kind of openness to criticism is exactly what will make or break companies in the long term. He makes the case that companies are fooling themselves if they think they can hide from Google. People who really want to know more are still going to find the negative blog post that you were trying to hide, and that will taint the company's image in the public eye.

### **How to Distribute an SMR: 3 Options**

-> Option #1. Send pitches to journalists and bloggers with a link to the SMR

This is the best option when pitching to your email list of journalists and news organizations, Defren says. It avoids the complications inherent in sending an html version of the SMR. He suggests writing a pitch and including a link to the SMR in the body of the email.

-> Option #2. Use one of the major newswire services

“Pretty much every single one of the major newswires can now support most of these components of social media releases,” Defren says.

In fact, the free service that builds the SMR for you has a partnership with one of the major newswires. Together, they offer dissemination for a relatively inexpensive fee. (See useful links)

-> Option #3. Use both.

Building the SMR on your website, providing a link to it in email pitches and using a newswire to disseminate it could be combined if you have the time and money to do so.

### **Useful links related to this article**

Creative Samples of a Social Media Release:

<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/cs/smr/study.html>

Tom Foremski's blog post “Die! Press Release! Die! Die! Die!”:

[http://www.siliconvalleywatcher.com/mt/archives/2006/02/die\\_press\\_relea.php](http://www.siliconvalleywatcher.com/mt/archives/2006/02/die_press_relea.php)

Examples of SMRs on Marketwire:

“Eurekster Adds Video to Social Search Swicki With blinkx Partnership:”

<http://www.marketwire.com/mw/rel.jsp?id=776358>

“Cincom Smalltalk Wins Dynamic Language Shootout Competition:”

<http://www.marketwire.com/mw/release.do?id=817878&k=cinom>

More examples of SMRs via Defren's blog post "Social Media News Releases Gain Momentum:"

[http://www.pr-squared.com/2007/10/social\\_media\\_news\\_releases\\_gai.html](http://www.pr-squared.com/2007/10/social_media_news_releases_gai.html)

PRX Builder – helps you create an SMR and distribute it (optional) through a special deal with PR Newswire:

<http://www.prxbuilder.com/x2/>

Official home of the SMR:

<http://www.socialmediarelease.org/>

International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) is assuming a leadership role with the SMR. IABC will coordinate the effort to develop standards for the social media release:

<http://socialmediareleases.x.iabc.com/2008/03/01/iabc-sumes-social-media-release-leadership-role/>

New Media Release (hRelease):

<http://www.socialtext.net/hrelease/index.cgi>

SHIFT Communications:

<http://www.shiftcomm.com>

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