



Press release distribution services; What they can and cannot do

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Press release distribution services have been part of every publicist's arsenal since time in memorial. They are used in publicity campaigns and to satisfy security and exchange commission disclosure rules.

For a fee, these services blast out releases to journalists in different categories and locations. Some offer translations and to track results.

While services like Business Wire and PR Newswire remain popular, many on the web now offer free service. There are so many services now that one prominent New York Times reporter recently devoted an entire column to bashing them as spam.

So, if distribution services are so efficient, economic and effective, why not just use them to get the news out?

The answer is many firms, particularly small ones, do to reach as much media as possible in the shortest amount of time for as little money as possible. Releases disseminated this way end up verbatim on news sites and blogs, increase search engine optimization and provide news postings on company web sites.

The bad news is distribution services are not much help in scoring major profiles or interviews with The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Crain's, CNBC or real estate trade media. For this you must rely on old-fashioned pitching, editorial contacts, and great writing and positioning.

So next time you need a press release, by all means use a distribution service, if you can, but also be sure to write and pitch your release yourself to the media or better yet use a professional.

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