

Time to sharpen your online skills

The bad news for print continues to pour in. New research from Pew indicates that many Americans do not consider having a local newspaper important. It is as if management knows this. McClatchy, the owner of the *Miami Herald* and other newspapers, just announced personnel cuts this week. The bottom line is that newspapers are hurting and many people don't care. Why? Because many people get their news online or from TV.

Recently, I read how a PR guy was lamenting the downfall of trade publications. I read this on his BLOG. He, like many PR folk, schooled in the "old" days, learned that to do media relations you reached out to print journalists. A nice, print piece in a trade magazine was truly a prize for the client. I also learned to do PR this way. And nothing was more exciting than seeing your client's name in the newspaper, especially on the front page. But the reality has shifted. More and more, the news is being reported on and broken online. Many people do not read the newspaper, and during the day, certainly do not watch TV. What these people do however, is access the Internet. Many offices allow unlimited Internet access, and certain folk, do their work ON the Internet. In any case, it is time for PR people, and advertising people, and in fact, all communications people, to accept this reality.

Instead of lamenting that blogs now are main sources of information, and that no one is reading trade publications, you must ADAPT to the new realities. Of course, newspapers are not quite dead yet, but teach yourself how to use the online world. Here are a few suggestions:

- 1) Are there **influential blogs** in your area of expertise? Find out and follow. Not every blog is created equal. The PR guy I mentioned before made the blanket statement that blogs are

unreliable. How wrong he is. Very few people would call The Huffington Post or Politico or the Daily Beast unreliable. Yes, they contain opinion, but it is LEADING opinion.

2) **Learn where your potential clients/customers/target audience goes to get their news AND entertainment.** After all, the Web is not just about information. Lots of people play games on the Internet, listen to music and find out about their hobbies.

3) Enhance your **web writing skills**. Writing for the web is not the same as writing for print. You have to be more concise. You have to be more choppy. People read differently online than in print.

4) **Explore multimedia.** People are more visual on the web. And the web allows for video/audio in addition to text.

In sum, stay ahead of the game. Nothing is to be gained from wringing our hands and lamenting the end of print. Instead, find new opportunities. I am sure in the late 1940s, PR people everywhere were concerned about the box in everyone's livingroom. By now, most PR agencies are experts at B-roll and media training. Right?

