

## **The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly!**

One of the best ways to promote your business is with media/press/news releases. Here are three examples of online news releases from the *Internet News Bureau*, along with my comments about them.

### **The Good**

Frankly, most news releases are, well, boring. But occasionally I see a great one like the following from *The Shoe Guy*. Not only is this release interesting, it presents a story of just how easy it can be to take a traditional offline business and convert it to a viable online business.

Also, its format is an example of my world-famous "State the pain, show the gain" strategy. When working with clients I use this and other proprietary tactics to create "trash-proof" media releases.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Shoe Repair Comes to the Customer's Front Door

August 19 (INB) -- Hole in your shoe? Worn soles? Torn stitches? The leather needs a good polish, perhaps? Check out ShoeGuy.com. Quality repairs and enhancements for men's and ladies' footwear are now available online.

Customers simply fill out an online form with their repair request and promptly receive ShoeGuy's signature "rocketpack" in the mail. The offending shoe, along with its partner, is packed into the "rocketpack" with the repair form and shipped back to

ShoeGuy. Shoes are restored and returned within a week in a nice strong "rocketbox".

For fifteen years, ShoeGuy's pursuit has been "to be the best shoe repair and shoe care product business in the Universe." The full line of products includes polish, laces, glue, and solvents. Services for ladies' and men's shoes include sole, insole and heel replacements, as well as the age old shoe-shine. A Special Services category offers enhancements to shoes for purposes as varied as dancing, fishing, race car driving, and motor cross.

The ShoeGuy web site mirrors the company's accomplishments. Their claim is to have "merged Old World craft with modern high tech abilities and management." In the same vein, the site has been created with graphics reminiscent of old time ads, while offering the most up to date services available within the industry. Playful product descriptions and shoe news tidbits create a fun atmosphere for buying the necessities of shoe wear.

Old World craft available online at [shoeguy.com](http://shoeguy.com)

## **The Bad**

It's unfortunate that the next release isn't better written; because I think the service it offers could be useful.

Notice the headline. Most email readers only show a limited number of characters in the subject line. In this case, the viewable subject was "New Consumer/Business Internet Se..." Not very compelling. Contrast this with The ShoeGuy's subject: "Shoe Repair Comes to the Customer," and I think you'll see how important it is to write a concise, interest-generating headline. (When I create a media campaign for a client, I'll often write DOZENS of headlines before deciding on the one to use. I'll also usually write slightly different headlines for different media.)

Notice the lead-in. It contains a couple of benefits, but they're hard to find, aren't they? I can't understand why most news releases begin, "X company today announced..." or something

equally unexciting. Openings like this just get in the way of the message, which is (or should be):

"Now you don't have to guess where the closest and best-equipped storage facility is. A new service called Storage Locator helps you find the storage facility that's most convenient to your home or business with a few mouse clicks."

Notice that I used three "you-statements" compared to none in the original paragraph. This is part of my proprietary "Customer Focus Ratio" formula that you should use in all your marketing communications.

As an exercise, you might want to rewrite this release and see how many times you can replace wasted customer focus opportunities with "you-statements." (Hint: "user" = wasted opportunity.)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Consumer/Business Internet Service Lists Self-storage Facilities by Proximity to Home or Office

DALLAS, TX—August 17 (INB) -- Storage Locator today announced a free new Internet service that helps individuals and businesses find the closest self-storage facilities anywhere in the United States. The site, accessible at [storagelocator.com](http://storagelocator.com), lists facilities within a given area according to their distance from the potential user.

The user can access a large database of over 34,000 sites nationwide by merely entering a ZIP code or street/city/state

address. The service immediately searches and returns the names, addresses, and phone numbers of self-storage facilities ranked by their distance, in 1-mile increments, from the entered ZIP code or city center. If desired, the user can limit the number of facilities shown, and can stipulate the maximum distance to search.

"It's a great way for individuals and businesses to find out what services are available in any given area," says Joe Feagin, self-storage site owner and one of the founders of the new service. "Studies show that people don't want to travel far from their home or office to get to a self-storage site. If they look in the yellow pages, they see too many places, all lumped together. Storage Locator selects just the places they're most interested in."

Another use of the finder service is for people or businesses moving from one city to another. "Often," says Feagin, "people need to store things temporarily when they move. With Storage Locator, they just put in the name of the city and state and have an immediate listing of all the facilities. They can then narrow their search as they wish."

The basic site listings are free, ensuring users that the listings are as complete as possible.

"The free listing is basic to the idea," Feagin says. "It gives people the assurance that they are getting all the facilities that may be available. But, just as key, the storage facilities have the option of paying a small fee and increasing their visibility with a bold listing and a link to their own existing web page, or to one I design for them at a nominal cost. I also provide a clickable map showing their exact location. This gives the consumer the advantage of being able to find out more about specific sites before contacting them, and it benefits the storage facility by engaging the customer when he or she is ready to buy. It also gives the storage facility owner a professional-looking, high-quality site on the Web at a low cost."

Storage Locator is headquartered at 5050 Quorum Dr., Suite 700, Dallas, TX 75240. The company provides web-site development and hosting for businesses operating on the Internet, as well as the self-storage Internet listing service. More

information on the company's services is available at 1-800-236-7362. The company's Web address is: storagelocator.com

**...and The Ugly!**

Can you figure out what these people do? I sure can't!

Subject: "CyberTeams Announces New Functionality" (**Who cares?**)

Lead-in: One, 33-word sentence full of nonsense!

Bottom line: The ineffectiveness of this release speaks for itself.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CyberTeams Announces New Functionality, Server Licensing and Better Customer Interaction for WebSite Director Lite

MT. AIRY, MD—August 19 (INB) -- CyberTeams(R), Inc. today announced the release of the first step towards integrating WebSite Director lite with a new administrative system aimed at Internet Service Providers and corporations deploying large numbers of web servers. This latest version of CyberTeams' freeware product includes improved support for Microsoft Internet Explorer v4.x browsers, a new interactive help system, and tutorials designed to maximize initial productivity following installation.

To take advantage of this new functionality, users will have to register for a license to use WebSite Director lite v1.2b. The license is free for organizations that have 10 or fewer individuals using the system. Organizations with teams of more than 10 people will be charged a nominal fee for additional seats.

"Licensing WebSite Director lite allows me to properly identify users of our free product and provide the same high quality support to all of our customers, whether they are paying for our

products or not." said Rhoda Bryant, Director of Support and Customer Communications at CyberTeams, Inc.

WebSite Director lite is ideal for those environments that do not require a sophisticated workflow process. Its ease of use and robust functionality significantly reduces the amount of time spent updating a web site. And, because no client software is needed, WebSite Director lite can easily be accessed from anywhere in the world with just a web browser and access to the Internet or corporate intranets.

According to Randall Severy, President and CEO of CyberTeams, Inc., "A consistent support infrastructure for all of our customers is very important. Additionally, licensing WebSite Director lite is the first step to integrating our 'single approval' web server content management system with a new commercial product I will be releasing for beta testing by Internet Service Providers later this month."

Companies can review information about WebSite Director lite electronically at: [cyberteams.com/products/wsdlite](http://cyberteams.com/products/wsdlite)

About CyberTeams: Headquartered in the Washington, DC area, CyberTeams develops workflow-based web content management and team collaboration tools, for use on the World Wide Web and corporate intranets. You can contact CyberTeams for more information through its web site, [cyberteams.com](http://cyberteams.com), via email to [info@cyberteams.com](mailto:info@cyberteams.com), or by phone at (304) 728-9854.

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## You should hire Nick Nichols because he knows:

1. **Exactly who should get the media release** at a particular medium. If you approach the wrong person your release will usually be trashed.
2. **The preferred media release format to use with each contact person**. Use the wrong format and your media release may never be seen.
3. **The story deadlines for each medium**. You need to know this or your release may arrive too late for coverage.
4. **The difference between an informational release and a story idea release**, and why the approach you use for each MUST be different if you want coverage.
5. **Exactly how much information to put in a media release, what to intentionally leave out, and why**. Many releases are trashed because they are either too long or too short. There's no one size that fits all.
6. **How to create a compelling, interesting, must-read-more headline**. You have 5-10 seconds to get the reader's attention. A poor headline will kill your chances of getting coverage.
7. **How to divide different story angles for the same item**. Different media have different needs and you must know what they are and how to serve them.
8. **How and when to follow up on a media release**. Follow up the wrong way at the wrong time and you will dramatically reduce your chances of getting coverage.
9. **How to guarantee your contact information is published or mentioned with any media coverage**. The secret to insuring your contact details will be publicized and how to get potential customers, clients, patients or members to take immediate action.
10. **How to use the "preemptive publicity" strategy to guarantee your release gets read**. This one secret ALONE is worth the cost of hiring me!

**CALL 702-227-5877 NOW and let me help you get some free publicity for your business!**