


MarCom 2.2

12 minutes into the future

Remarks of Shaun O'L. Higgins

Spokane MarCom Workshop

Spokane, Washington

February 1, 2008



Today's Presentation

- PR at *The Spokesman-Review*
 - Evolution and development of Spokesman-Review, New Media Ventures and related websites
 - The Mantis: A Cautionary Tale for PR Pros
 - “Old” PR vs. “New PR”
 - Tips and Tools for the “New PR”
 - Q & A
-



PR at The Spokesman-Review

- Prior to 1980s: No formal PR function
 - 1980s: Established “Marketing Services & Corporate Communications” Department” and PR policy. Later added Community Affairs functions and formalized its outreach policies. Handled all Cowles PR. Reactive.
 - 1990s: Major newspaper industry outreach efforts.
 - 2000s: Split off Cowles Company, & RPS functions, from newspaper PR. (Needed focus and no conflicts).
 - Throughout: small operation (1-3 people); media company handling PR with competing media; “overlapping stewardships”.
-



Evolution of Spokesman-Review Digital Operations

- **1982**: S-R is one of three newspapers to launch the first digital editions in history. “S-R Electronic Editions” is a dialup, modem-based system, offered free of charge to users, most of whom accessed on second-generation PCs (64K, 1200 bps). Menu-driven.
 - **1983**: EE offers about 1200 regularly updates stories per day. Special focus on general news, science/tech developments, classified advertising. 1600 regular users.
-



Evolution of Spokesman-Review Digital Operations

- June 1984: Revenue mandate requires S-R to charge for EE. Original rate: \$19.95 per month. Users drop from 1600 to 160!
- July 1986: Subscription price has been lowered to \$5 per month, but with no increase in usage. Staff is cut and system is put on “life support” for nearly six years.



Evolution of Spokesman-Review Digital Operations

- 1992: System migrates to state-of-the-art Galaticom digital bulletin-board software. EE is rebranded as MINERVA, with increased emphasis on sci/tech features and science-education content for young people (“Dr. Know”). Site is primarily used by kids 9-15 and by folks looking for early information on classified-ad offers.
 - 1993: New Media Ventures, Inc. formed. All digital development transferred to NMV.
-



Evolution of Spokesman-Review Digital Operations

- 1994-1995: After investigating possible affiliations with AOL and Prodigy, we opt not to join a closed system and develop our own website. MINERVA is rebranded first, as *VirtuallyNorthwest*, and shortly thereafter as *spokane.net*.
 - 1996: Journal of Business, an NMV subsidiary, launches *spokanejournal.com*.
 - 1997: *spokesmanreview.com* registered as an internet domain
-



Evolution of Cowles Company Digital Operations

- 1998: *KHQ.com* launched.
 - 2001: *Spokesmanreview.com* splits with *spokane.net* and is transferred back to newspaper division. *Spokesmanreview.com* will be a comprehensive, newspaper-centric site; *spokane.net* will continue as a community portal.
 - 2002: *Spokesmanreview.com* requires user registration. Evolves to a system allowing free access to print subscribers, small monthly charge for others.
-



Other current (or soon to launch) S-R/NMV sites/subsites

Awayfinderonline.com

BizfinderNW.com

GoGolfNW.com

Moviesforbusiness.com

Spokane7.com

Spokesmanautos.com

Spokesmanhomes.com

Spokesmanjobs.com

*...along with mobile, e-alerts,
digital facsimile, RSS—the works!*



Spokesmanreview.com Site Usage

1,129,217 Visits

3,736,203 Page views

3.31 Pages/Visit

03:16 Minutes Avg. Time on Site

Traffic Sources

Search Engines 454,251 (40.23%)

Referring Sites 373,826 (33.10%)

Direct Traffic 299,051 (26.48%)

Other 2,089 (0.18%)

Absolute Unique Visitors 547,331



The Mantis

A mantis, strolling down a country road, spies in the distance an approaching cloud of dust. As it nears him, he sees in the cloud's midst a large box mounted on wheels and drawn by four large, four-footed beasts. And in the box, he sees a fifth creature that seems to be flogging the beasts with a tentacle. While the mantis observes these things, the box and beasts bear down on him so quickly that the mantis decides he is under attack. Frightened and alert, the mantis does what he has always done when threatened: He rises on his hind legs and furiously waves his forelegs in an attempt to frighten off his attacker.

The mantis' dying thought, as he lies crushed beneath the wheels of the chariot, is one of puzzlement.

Why, he wonders, have his legs failed him in this instance when they have always served him so well in the past?



Lessons From the Mantis

1. He observed and studied too long before he took action.
2. When he did act, he took the wrong action.
3. He took the wrong action because he applied the lessons of old realities to a new and different reality.
4. He misread the situation, interpreting the chariot's approach as an attack and chose to confront it. (He could have seen its approach as a benign phenomenon and moved from its path--or he could have viewed its coming as an opportunity and jumped aboard and enjoyed the ride).
5. He applied the wrong tools in the wrong way.

When it comes to finding opportunities in changing times, we are all in the position of the mantis—and we will prosper or die according to the accuracy of our observations, the timing of our actions and the flexibility of our responses.



“Old” PR

Companies had to have big news before press releases issued

That news was communicate to journos by press releases

- Coverage was filtered through the media
- Only journos actually saw press releases
- Press releases required quotes from third parties (customers & analysts)
 - Press releases were written in “news” style and third-person
 - Audience got your message only if media did a story
 - Bad metrics: Log books and clip books
- PR and marketing were separate areas with separate goals, strategies, and metrics.

None of this is true anymore!

Thanks to David Meerman Scott, author [The New Rules of Marketing & PR](#)
For some of the insights (and most of the items) on this list. Great book!



PR Today: The Basics

- Wag the Long Tail
 - Deal with Disintermediation (Be media!)
 - Be there just in time at the right time
 - Master the art of search
 - Spin with care; be real
 - Blog or die
 - Everything (including PR) is Marketing;
Marketing is everything (including PR)
-



We MUST get it right!

As public relations and communications specialists we serve a noble cause:
representing clients,
sometimes acting as defense counsel,
sometimes as prosecutors,
in what is arguably the ultimate court—
the court of public opinion.

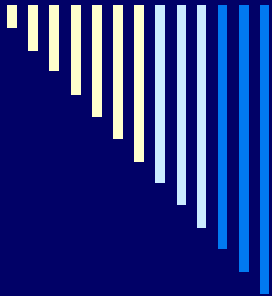


Your Digital Toolkit

Job 1: Your Web Site

KEY ISSUES

- ❑ Just what ARE you trying to do with your site?
 - ❑ Who manages your site? You, IT, or I Don't Know?
 - ❑ Form vs. content (Is your site an empty suit; or, is it Clark Kent?)
 - ❑ Your site is your press: You are the Editor/Publisher!
 - ❑ To blog or not to blog is NOT the question. Who blogs and about what are the questions!
 - ❑ Do you really want feedback? Then make it easy.
-



Job 2:

Master the Art of Search

You want searchers to find you and find you quickly, at the top of the heap.

Tip 1: Go, Daddy, but don't forget to Google!

Check your brand, you may need to rename.
You may be your own best example:

In my case, "Shaun O'L. Higgins" produces lots of hits, all about ME!

But...



Search Optimization Continued

“Shaun Higgins” produces thousands more hits because you have to wade through hits for a Cincinnati radio jock, Australian track and rugby player, ex-NBA star (whose name is frequently misspelled), etc.

That odd middle initial (stands for O’Leary, BTW) is not only a brand, not only unique to me as an author...but guarantees that people find me quickly if they want to book me as a speaker or consultant, or find all my books.



SEO Tips Continued

So how does that play out in business?

Your team brainstorms the name of new product or service. You check *GoDaddy.com* (or whomever) for available URLs. All are available. You take a vote or kick it to the boss for a subjective decision. “Shaun Higgins” wins!

Bad call!

You also should have run “Shaun Higgins” and the other variants on Google and other search engines. You would have found too many competitors and gone back to the drawing board.

You need a name that stands out in search!



SEO TIP 2:

Use the right words and repeat them (Datelines have a use)

moviesforbusiness.com--We named it to capitalize on search!

Type in “movies” or “business” alone and you get a gazillion hits! We don’ t show up until about gazillion minus one!

BUT, search for “movies” and “business” and/or “leadership” and/or “training” and we usually show up No. 3 and most often twice in the Top 10 (along with several other sites that link to us).

Type in the names of our books: *Movies for Business* and *Movies for Leaders* and you are led to our site, AND to amazon.com pages and nmv.com pages featuring us.

Key search terms are listed (sometimes more than once) in the site’ s basic search criteria, but these words are also inserted into each article that appears on the site.

Good “search” gets us customers who want



Job 4: KEYS TO E-MAIL

Get permission, of course, but then get READ.

FIX THE MESSAGE LINE !

NOT

Re: Museum Newsletter, Friday, Feb 1, 2008

or

Re: SFNBlog Posts for March 2007

BUT

Museum Newsletter: Manet here; new art curator named

and

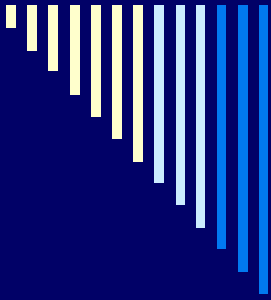
SFNBlogPosts: Silver Pen winner jailed for fraud



Job 4: Listening (What are they saying about you?)

Three ways to find out daily—or sooner!

- Google your company and its clients
 - Check out *technorati.com* (for blog posts)
(Technorati yesterday reported about total 7,200 posts about *The Spokesman-Review*, including one posted **11** minutes before my search!
 - Have real feedback on your website and ask for it often.
-



Thank you!

shaunh@spokesman.com
