

Corporate execs are getting the Web PR clue

 By [Sally Falkow](#)

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Nearly half of senior executives surveyed recognise that reaching audiences only through traditional mass media is no longer effective. "[The Changing Face of Marketing and Communications in Today's Creativity Economy](#)", by Weber Shandwick and KRC Research, reveals that top corporate executives are finally getting the clue - half (49%) realise that using traditional media is no longer enough and 76% of senior executives are experimenting with "alternative" media (read Web PR).

"We're in the early days of a totally new media era," says Billee Howard, executive VP and MD in the Global Strategic Media Group at Weber Shandwick. "Those companies that do not combine the new media paradigm with the best of traditional media will most certainly do so at their peril."

Consumers are tuning out traditional messages and alternative communication methods are the key to reaching your audience now. Companies are turning to social networking as a way of communicating with customers: nearly seven out of 10 (69%) executives use this strategy today, says this survey (a figure that's on par with company use of traditional magazine advertising - 68%.)

Yet many a company newsroom online has no social media elements incorporated into their press releases - no Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, links to share the content or tagging. These Web PR tools boost your search ranking, reach new audiences and attract more qualified traffic to your newsroom. See this [case study](#).

WebPR is no longer something to talk about for the future. The future is here and every corporate communication executive and PR agency needs to be skilled in online PR strategies. Building and maintaining a reputation is a basic PR strategy - but now it has to be done online.

One of the most effective WebPR tools that can help a business build content and establish a reputation is RSS. Adding RSS feeds to your [web content](#) gives you the opportunity to distribute your news across the Internet, where it can be seen by new audiences and related websites.

With the release of Internet Explorer 7 the adoption rate of RSS has skyrocketed in America and Europe. The most recent figures show RSS use to be at 28% of all web users in the US. With the rapid growth and deployment of broadband in South Africa, Web 2.0 tools will soon be the norm here too.

Most PR and marketing people are not technically trained - they are not web designers or programmers. So Web PR can seem somewhat daunting. But the Web 2.0 tools now available can overcome this hurdle. Distributing your news content on

the Internet offers new marketing and PR opportunities. There are many untapped opportunities in online news distribution and Web PR.

More than a year ago Forrester Research urged companies to RSS enable their press releases. A recent survey from Jupiter Research shows that 30% of the companies in the US that are currently implementing RSS are doing so because of customer demand. Web PR might be a new idea to SA businesses, but the tide is turning - don't be caught unawares.

ABOUT SALLY FALKOW

Sally Falkow is a principal at Expansion Plus, an Internet PR agency based in Los Angeles California and the co-developer of PRESSfeed, an online PR tool for PR and marketing professionals. She will be in South Africa in February 2007 speaking at WebPR+, a conference that will explore the ins and outs of WebPR and Online Reputation Management - both being vital components of any Web2.0 campaign. For more information visit the WebPR+ site, www.quirk.biz/webpr-conference/ or contact Santi van Zyl on +27 (0)21 462 7353.

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