

How To Create An Electronic Press Kit

By Merilee Kern, Online Marketing Consultant

The advantages of an electronic press kit versus its "old school" hard-copy predecessor are many, including saving companies money on printing, photo reproduction and postage costs and generally expediting the process of garnering that elusive ink. Indeed, e-mailing a clearly branded press kit is fast, easy and convenient for all parties involved, and the digital documents can be easily shared among colleagues at each end of the spectrum. The interactive nature of a digitized press kit also allows public relations/marketing communications professionals to embed hotlinks within the content that links the media professional directly to desired pages of the company's Web site and/or other documentation offered online, which is an inherent, highly valuable benefit. Indeed, many of the world's largest companies and small dot coms, alike, now utilize electronic press kits rather than hard copy materials as standard operating procedure.

The following steps outline the basic tasks required to establish your own electronic press kit delivery system:

- 1) **First, it's important to determine what the contents of the kit will be.** A standard, offline press kit outline should suffice, and might look something like this:
 - general brochure - brand image
 - product/service-specific datasheet(s)
 - product/service-specific FAQs
 - media fact sheet
 - company backgrounder
 - management/staff biographies
 - praise sheet: industry awards, recognitions, customer/member testimonials
 - select press releases
 - case study
 - digital artwork (as applicable): logo, screen shots, product photos, head shots, etc.
- 2) **"Create" (or have someone create) an electronic letterhead template** using high-resolution (300 dpi) design elements, onto which all of the above-outlined content will be placed. Microsoft® Word and/or Adobe® Acrobat® are nice applications for this template creation. Offering electronic press kit materials in a format that appropriately represents your brand and company image through visually appealing design, prints well without pixelation and blurring, and that give the "suite" of materials a feel of continuity are all critical elements in making a professional impression with your electronic press kit.
- 3) **"Create" your materials** in terms of the requisite content copywriting, and ensure any references throughout the copy to Web site URLs and/or e-mail addresses are availed as active hotlinks that, once clicked, will either take the user directly to the referenced Web site, or will launch his/her e-mail client.

- 4) **Copy/paste the prepared content onto your previously designed electronic letterhead template**, saving a differing file name for each piece of collateral material such as “biographies”. Be sure you keep a “blank” copy of your electronic letterhead template available at all times, serving as the basis for all other, newly added kit materials. Also, be sure to check for proper formatting and, as goes without saying, spell check!
- 5) **“Lock” the document to maintain design and content integrity.** Once your individual press kit files have been created in your word processing editor or other desktop publishing software, it is recommend that you create un-editable versions of these kit materials. You can do so by converting your file to an Adobe Acrobat PDF file, which is a format that both maintains the visual integrity (design) of your file and renders it un-editable by those receiving it. PDF files are quite visually appealing, and the Adobe Acrobat reader software is becoming quite ubiquitous. Those who do not currently have it can download it for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>. Do, however, keep the editable versions of the PDF documents handy, since you'll surely have to update the information from time to time, and because some recipients may, for whatever reason, prefer to get the files in a non-PDF format.
- 6) **Zip it!** Assuming your e-press kit has multiple files, you might consider zipping all of them into one single file named "XYZ Company Press Kit". Not only will this compress the size of the files being transmitted making upload and download of the materials speedier, but it also allows the recipient to easily save the multiple documents into the desired location. Do note that this will require the recipient to have the requisite software to unzip your materials, so take your audience makeup into consideration. It's a safe assumption that tech editors will have such software, while small market lifestyles editors may not. If you would rather be safe than sorry, just attach and send the individual files to your single e-mail transmission.
- 7) **Upload it!** Once created, these materials can be sent via e-mail as needed/requested and/or can be availed for self-service download from a Web-based pressroom - or both, which is my recommended course of action. An online pressroom could circumvent the “e-mail attachment obstacle” by availing both HTML and PDF versions of the digitized kit materials, and can even go a step further in terms of capturing critical contact information from media personnel through an "add to media mailing list," "press contact request," or similar CGI data capture form.
- 8) **Send it!** When sending your press kit via e-mail, try to determine in advance if the recipient can view PDF files. If you're unsure, it may be safer to send the materials in a format he/she is highly likely to be able to view, such as Microsoft Word. Simply attach the individual press kit materials (or single zip file) to your e-mail that will also contain a personalized, relevant message addressed to the recipient. As the ultimate back up, availing the same materials through your Web site's online pressroom, and directing the recipient accordingly, can be a lifesaver.

It is also important that you don't send an e-mail attachment without first letting your target journalist know what the attachment is. If they don't know it's coming, many reporters will simply delete it to avoid catching a virus. One way to avoid that is to create a standard introduction to run in the message pane of your e-mails. Consider the following example:

Subject: XYZ Co. Press Kit, as requested

Dear [Name],

As per our conversation, please find attached XYZ Company's press kit materials for your review. These materials are provided as Adobe Acrobat PDF files. If you do not have the Acrobat Reader software required to view and print these materials, you can download the software online free of charge at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>. Also, if required, you can access each of these press kit files in our online Press Room located at <http://www.xyzcompany.com/pressroom>. Please advise if you prefer that I postal mail and/or fax this press kit to you, as it will be my pleasure.

If, after reviewing these materials, you have further questions and/or would like to interview an XYZ Company executive, please get back in touch with me and I will make the necessary arrangements.

I appreciate your interest in XYZ Company, and look forward to your forthcoming story. Thank you in advance.

Regards,

Signature Line(s)

#

Merilee Kern has been marketing high technology, B2B and B2C products and services over the Internet since 1994. Through Kern Communications, her eMarketing consultancy, Merilee helps companies succeed at doing business on the Internet through a wide array of custom-tailored online marketing initiatives. Merilee can be reached via e-mail at merileek@kerncomm.com or through her Web site at <http://www.kerncomm.com>.