

# How to survive the digital PR revolution

Richard Milton is a freelance journalist who lectures at The PR Training Centre in London



**Net result: to survive in the brave new digital world you need to get up to speed through training**

Anyone in PR who thinks that digital PR means posting press releases online needs to do a quick reality check. Research just published by the European Interactive Advertising Association contains the news that 49 per cent of UK shoppers switch brands after searching online for product information.

We all know about the advent of online and digital PR, social media and blogging. You only have to look at the success of bloggers such as Perez Hilton to see the results of the PR internet revolution. The question is; how exactly do you make these technologies work as part of your PR strategy? How do you plug into them?

As ever, the devil is in the detail. PR people still write and distribute press releases and feature

articles. But while in the past they had only to write lively interesting copy, now they have to write using special “keyword vocabularies” that are specific to their business, or their client’s business, so that the all-important search engines will recognise the relevance of the news or feature story, as well as human editors.

Indeed, the search engines (and that really means Google, which

handles more than 80 per cent of all searches) have, almost unnoticed, become one of the major determining factors in how much media coverage organisations get.

Most PR people have had the chastening experience of putting a lot of effort into making a submission to an important target publication’s special supplement and finding, on the day, that there is no quote, no picture of the CEO

and no reference to recent important company events. In many cases, your name or the client’s name isn’t even mentioned at all.

It’s tempting to shrug and say “you win some and you lose some” but the underlying reason for the failure to get coverage may be much more serious than just the fickle finger of fate. Any journalist setting out to write a serious business piece today will begin by

searching the subject matter keywords. If the organisation’s website is in the top 10, well and good. But if it’s way down on page three or four, then it isn’t going to register on the journalist’s radar.

PR people that fail to address their search engine ranking, or their client’s ranking, are both handicapping themselves in getting media coverage and neglecting one of the most powerful PR tools at their disposal. Yet how to use the web for online and digital PR by optimising keyword strategies designed to trigger the search engines is still a mystery to many.

Most people are aware of the impact that blogging has had at the consumer level, but how many realise its impact in business publishing? How many agencies would even know how to identify most influential bloggers, let alone have a strategy for interacting with those that have the most authority? Knowing how to find your way through the “social noise” to find those bloggers with the highest authority should be a basic tool in the PR officer’s toolkit.

How do you survive in this brave new digital world? Getting up to speed through training is a sensible first step for any PRO (and, incidentally, the otherwise

duff months of July and August are a good time to think about such extramural activities).

So, how do you find the right training partners? A good starting point is to ask how well do the trainers rank with Google? If their site is on the first page against search terms such as ‘digital pr training’ or ‘pr training courses’, then they practise what they preach and know what they are talking about. In our experience, the key issue here is practical rather than merely academic experience.

The bottom line then is to look for training partners who understand your pain, because they have already gone through it themselves.

The PR Training Centre ([www.theprtrainingcentre.com](http://www.theprtrainingcentre.com)), based in London, offers one-day public workshops and in-house courses in PR skills, advanced PR skills, digital PR skills and web marketing skills. To learn more contact The PR Training Centre on 020-7808 0123, or e-mail [contact@theprtrainingcentre.com](mailto:contact@theprtrainingcentre.com).

**Test your PR IQ at [www.theprtrainingcentre.com/pr\\_training\\_tools.html](http://www.theprtrainingcentre.com/pr_training_tools.html)  
The next digital PR workshop is on Friday 11 July.**