



Best Integration of Search with Other Media

Overall approach and category relevance

On January 7, 2006, Jill Carroll became an international cause célèbre when she was kidnapped in Baghdad while reporting in Iraq for *The Christian Science Monitor*. She was freed on March 30, 2006.

On August 7, 2006, Robin Antonick, *The Christian Science Monitor*'s chief web officer, asked Greg Jarboe, SEO-PR's president and co-founder, to provide some "guidance." *The Monitor* was preparing to publish Jill's story about her 82 days of captivity in Iraq.

In an 11-part series, Jill would reveal how she survived, her thwarted escape plan, her highs and lows, and the details of her final release. The first part of the multimedia series was scheduled to appear on Sunday evening, August 13 – less than a week later.

The Monitor had already negotiated a broadcast deal with ABC News. Robin asked if there were other, measurable ways to help promote "Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story." Greg told him how to get publicity, build links and increase website traffic using an approach that integrated press release optimization, video, blogger outreach and media relations.

Innovation in methodology and execution

To get publicity for "Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story," Greg recommend distributing optimized press releases in Canada and the UK as well as the US. He also recommended adding a video clip to the releases, because 90% of journalists say visuals are important. The video clip was also posted on YouTube.

To build links to <http://www.csmonitor.com/specials/carroll>, Greg recommended focusing blog outreach efforts on Boing Boing and The Huffington Post. According to Technorati, these blogs have a lot of authority and both of them had written about Jill Carroll earlier in the year while she'd been held hostage.

To increase website traffic to "Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story," Greg recommended focusing media relations efforts on Yahoo News, MSNBC, CNN and AOL News. According to Nielsen/NetRatings, these are the top online current events and global news destinations.

Excellence in tactical execution

With less than a week to implement these recommendations, Robin asked Greg to supplement his small group, which included Hugo Smoter and Laura Forbes. Greg, who was speaking at Search Engine Strategies San Jose that week, brought in Nell Connors and Brendan Jarboe from SEO-PR to help.

Brendan used Technorati to identify the top blogs that had written about "Jill Carroll" or the "Christian Science Monitor" back in January through March. On Thursday, August 10, Hugo and Greg started sending emails to top bloggers on Brendan's list.

Also on Thursday, Greg and Hugo pitched "Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story" to the editors of Yahoo News and AOL News, while Laura pitched the package to CNN.com.

Greg optimized a press release for the search terms "Jill Carroll" and "Christian Science Monitor." Meanwhile, Hugo posted a video promoting the upcoming series on YouTube.

Nell attached the video to a Business Wire Smart News Release, which was distributed in the US and UK and via the CNW Group in Canada on Friday, August 11.

Achieving success goals

With a compelling story and a broadcast deal with ABC News, the editors of *The Christian Science Monitor* knew "Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story" would get a lot of website traffic. But, they were surprised by exactly how many visitors the integration of search with other media helped them generate.

While ABC News covered Jill's story on Sunday evening, August 13, so did Yahoo News, MSNBC, CNN, AOL News, The Huffington Post and Boing Boing. Within the first 24 hours, there were 247 news stories and 1,014 blog posts about "Jill Carroll." By Sept. 7, there were 1,710 stories and 4,685 posts.

Before the series ran, CSMonitor.com had 30,437 links from 10,107 blogs, according to Technorati. By Sept. 8, CSMonitor.com had 34,518 links from 10,870 blogs, an increase of 4,081 new links from a broader group of blogs.

Within the first 24 hours after series went live, more than 450,000 unique visitors flooded CSMonitor.com, seven times its daily average in July. And page views for the first day broke through the 1 million mark, a massive increase from the site's July average of 121,247 page views per day.

While almost 90% of these visitors come from the United States, Canadians and the British also showed strong interest in Jill's story.

While credit for the quality of the story belongs to Jill and the editors of the *Monitor*, Robin and Greg's combined team were given virtually all of the credit for getting publicity, building links and increasing website traffic.

Why?

From Aug. 13 to 28, CNN.com, Yahoo News, AOL News, The Huffington Post, Boing Boing and MSNBC generated almost 291 times more visitors to CSMonitor.com than ABC News.

"Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story" was a finalist in the 2008 SES Awards for the best integration of search with other media.