



Econsultancy Innovation Awards 2010

In February 2009, Econsultancy's Michelle Goodall asked some questions in her blog post, "[SEO PR: What is it and why should you care?](#)" One was, "How do I benchmark and measure SEO PR success?"

SEO-PR, the pioneer and leading authority in the field, has created an innovative approach to answering this question which holds out the promise of being a smarter, better, way of doing things in Online PR. For Rutgers, SEO-PR established a benchmark using an unoptimized press release and traditional media relations and then compared the results generated by an optimized press release and blogger/social media outreach.

Innovation in Online PR

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, launched a new Mini-MBA: Digital Marketing Executive Certificate Program in April 2010. The first program was held July 19 through July 23, 2010, on the Livingston Campus in Piscataway. Offered by the Rutgers Center for Management Development (CMD), the executive education program was limited to 30 students.

Each student enrolling in the program received an Apple iPad. A YouTube video entitled, "[New Digital Marketing Course at Rutgers University says 'Goodbye Chalkboard and Hello iPad,'](#)" which was made during the program, explains the iPads were not intended to be shiny new toys offered as gifts just for participating. Rather, they were an integral part of the 10-course program, customized with Apple's help to provide a new dimension to executive education in a field that is defined by technology.

"The Digital Marketing Mini-MBA is a perfect course to pilot since it is designed for marketers who have an interest in learning and exploring the latest digital technologies, and for technical managers seeking to expand their role in marketing," said Eric Greenberg, a CMD faculty member and coordinator of the digital marketing mini-MBA.

The 30-hour program was taught by both Rutgers faculty and leading practitioners from around the world. For example, Greg Jarboe, the president and co-founder of SEO-PR, taught both the Online PR course and the Social Media Marketing course.

Greenberg wanted participants to learn about the latest research and best practices in the industry through case studies, interactive sessions and class exercises. Jarboe proposed creating a new case study just for his course.

Rutgers would establish a benchmark using an unoptimized press release and traditional media relations. Then, SEO-PR would compare the results generated by an optimized press release and blogger/social media outreach. Greenberg approved the idea.

On April 20, 2010, the local newspaper, [The Star-Ledger](#), ran a story about the program, which was shared 18 times to Facebook. According to Compete, NJ.com, the newspaper's online site, gets 2.4 million unique visitors a month.

The same day, the unoptimized press release was posted on the Rutgers website. Its unoptimized headline read, "[Rutgers to Put iPad to the Test in New Digital Marketing Program.](#)"

Five days later, a post about the program appeared in the [Search Engine Watch blog](#), which generated 225 tweets. According to Compete, Search Engine Watch gets 562,000 unique visitors a month.

The next day, an optimized press release was distributed via Business Wire. Its longer optimized headline read, "[Apple iPad Tablet to be Tested in New Rutgers Mini-MBA Digital Marketing Executive Education Courses.](#)" The longer headline included additional search terms, including *Apple iPad, Apple iPad tablet, mini-MBA, Rutgers mini-MBA, executive education, and executive education courses.*

Both releases included links to a landing page on the Rutgers website with more information about the [Digital Marketing course using the iPad](#). According to Business Wire's NewsTrak Access Report, the optimized press release received 22,027 headlines impressions, 819 release views, and 35 link clicks.

The news story and unoptimized news release generated a modest spike in page views on April 20 and 21. The blog post and optimized press release generated a spike in page views on April 25 and 26 that was 116.9% larger.

The blog post and optimized press release also generated the first registration for the program. This was verified in July, when Jarboe asked the 30 students in the Online PR course how they had found out about it.

The \$4,995 registration generated by the Online PR campaign also gave Rutgers a 3.0 return on its marketing investment of \$1,665. Nielsen Analytic Consulting has found through conducting numerous studies worldwide that the average short-term return on marketing investment (sales return within three months of media execution) is 1.1.

This focus on measuring the return on marketing investment was also appreciated by students. One who landed a job while he was still in the program, provided Rutgers with a video testimonial entitled, "[Great ROI for Rutgers Digital Marketing Class.](#)" Another who had been dabbling in social media provided Rutgers with a video testimonial entitled, "[Social Media Class - Social Media Analytics Measures ROI - Rutgers Digital Marketing.](#)"

Links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onOhsws8j6U>

http://www.nj.com/business/index.ssf/2010/04/rutgers_and_apple_team_up_to_o.html

<http://news.rutgers.edu/medrel/news-releases/2010/04/rutgers-to-put-ipad-20100420>

<http://blog.searchenginewatch.com/100425-090045>

<http://eon.businesswire.com/news/eon/20100426005492/en/Apple-iPad-Tablet/digital-marketing/executive-education>

<http://cmd.rutgers.edu/mini-mba-digital-marketing.html>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUfVw2A80rk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTrIqv5VeXI>