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marketing & PR  
BY WILLY GISSEN



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# CLIENT WEBSITES SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION OF ONLINE PR

According to some social media professionals, company websites will soon become obsolete. Marketing will occur instead on multiple integrated platforms, loosely connected with reciprocal links. You can already create a special Twitter section on your LinkedIn home page and use programs such as Hootsuite and Tweetdeck to post on multiple social media sites simultaneously.

Today, however, the company website remains paramount and plays an essential role in client branding, publicity and visibility. As such, PR professionals must learn the art of website development as an essential tool of their trade.

To complement technical aspects of website development, public relations consultants should ensure certain structures are included in their clients' sites. The most important, an online media room, should contain a landing page with categories for news coverage, press releases, bylined articles, newsletters and other content. Another essential structure, an internal blog, can be created by down-

loading special software at Wordpress.org.

For website copy, keep the writing simple and direct and always try to maximize the visitor's experience before worrying about SEO. Also, arrange the layout of the text according to the "golden triangle." People don't read web pages like a press release; they scan the text starting at the upper left, and moving across the top of the page before glancing down and to the right.

Content management systems (CMS) provide the easiest solution to add new web pages to your client's site. They handle all the coding and technical elements and let you create new pages by adding text in a form and then clicking to publish it.

However, CMS systems may make it difficult to access navigation bars or other essential elements in your client's site such as meta tags. Using Adobe's Dreamweaver program instead lets you view each web page in a split window, with the full coding in the top half and the actual page view in the bottom. Making changes in either section automatically modifies the other.

FTP (file transfer protocol) programs can be used in tandem with Dreamweaver

to easily upload and download files. Ipswitch's WS\_FTP Home provides an easy-to-use template with files in your hard drive in one window and those on your website in another. You just highlight a file and click one of the two arrows in the divider to move it back and forth.

Other programs also provide useful tools for website maintenance. Paint.net helps you crop images and change their size, and unlike Photoshop, it's free. Xenu lets you find and fix any broken links on your client's website, essential to maximize the visitor's experience and improve SEO.

Some of these skills may extend beyond the purview of traditional public relations, but cross-disciplinary knowledge is essential for today's PR professional and easily acquired with a little persistence. The ability to manipulate your client's website will provide a whole new set of skills to complement your current capabilities.

*Willy Gissen is the founder of Cut-It-Out Communications Inc. ([www.cioediting.com](http://www.cioediting.com)), a public relations agency in Hartsdale. Reach him at [wgissen@cutitoutcommunications.com](mailto:wgissen@cutitoutcommunications.com).*