

Event Survey Reveals Limited Use of New Media In Equipment Leasing Industry

An August survey of leading executives in the equipment leasing and finance industry reveals that few are incorporating “new media” tools in marketing communications. At the Lessors.com conference in Atlanta, Susan Carol, president of Susan Carol Associates Public Relations, found that the majority of attendees do, however, take advantage of webinars, and almost all said their corporate key messages are used consistently.

The survey was conducted during a session titled, “Harnessing the Brave New World of New Media.” Some 23 executives who attended the session were presented with four questions concerning how they reach influencers and use such Internet tools as podcasting, intranets, and blogs to promote their brand and protect corporate reputation.

Only two attendees reported having downloaded podcasts (Internet broadcasts), but more than half had distributed information internally through company intranets. Surprisingly, only half of the attendees reported they engage customers on their web sites. Most of the attendees surveyed are emailing newsletters, and most said they engage customers at industry events or in arranged customer sales meetings by phone.

Carol cited a *Harvard Business Review* article published in February about the need for companies to pay more attention to managing corporate reputation in this age of *You Tube* and the social phenomenon known as “citizen journalism.” In this new age of citizen journalism, Carol noted, “anyone can become a media company, and any company—of any size—can become the subject of a crisis in communications.” The article recommends that companies identify someone to be responsible for managing the company’s most important asset—its corporate reputation. She said this has always been a major role of public relations counselors, but such specialists are often found under marketing where they are issuing reactive press releases, rather than proactively managing potential risks to their corporate brand.

Carol also recommended the book, *New Influencers*, written by Paul Gillian, the former editor of *Computer World*. It reports that bloggers are not only capturing the attention of traditional media but are often replacing traditional sources of news and becoming a force to harness or manage.

Carol noted two leasing industry blogs **and pointed out that blogs can drive traffic to web sites and provide insight on customer interests. She said adding an online news room, RSS Feeds, can build traffic as well. Linking all marketing and promotions to specific URLs enables one key form of PR measurement.

**Google the two blogs: LeasingNotes.com and TheLeasingBlog.

She noted that print advertising is down (more than 8 percent from last year) and that digital advertising is often preferred because it allows one to measure results and to adjust, update, and produce content less expensively.

Carol also spoke about the power of success stories and the cost-effectiveness of repurposing such material for various media and communications channels.

Other speakers at the Aug. 22-23 event included executives representing The Alta Group, E-Original, the ELFA Foundation, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, LLP, and the Monitor, among others. For more information, go to www.lessors.com.