**From:** Wendy Minter [<mailto:wendy.minter@prnewswire.com>]   
**Sent:** Thursday, July 13, 2017 3:04 PM  
**To:** LC; Kyle Hilmoe  
**Cc:** Glenn Frates; Rahsaan McGlashan-Powell  
**Subject:** Follow-up for PRN regarding your account concerns

LC & Kyle,

I’m Wendy Minter – I manage the team that handles ASBL press releases. I have worked in the DC/MD office of PRN since 2008 – and this office has handled ASBL copy longer than I’ve been here.

Kyle – when you send in releases, my team calls you back and sets them up for distribution.

Clearly, the back and forth we’ve had since April about your concerns has led to significant confusion and now distrust. The best and most productive way to iron out this level of concern is to have a call and discuss. We are prepared to host a call to provide detailed, real-time answers to all of your questions. It would be an opportunity to clarify some incomplete information you received from us and resolve the confusion.

If you are both willing and able to have a discussion we can plan one for Tuesday or Wednesday of next week. Please let me know your availability.

After reviewing the various email exchanges about your concerns I’ve compiled a list of what needs to be addressed.

Here’s what I have at this point:

1.       Visibility reporting

2.       Drop-off in visibility / performance

3.       The specific date of the first ASBL press release PRN coded as AVO

4.       AVO concerns

5.       Multiple answers to questions / distrust of PRN

6.       The value of PRN products and services

7.       How ASBL’s PRN account is managed

For today, as promised, I do have some answers for you:

1.       **Visibility reporting: *it’s inaccurate, shows a drop in pick-up*   
From Kyle: “**Doesn’t appear ‘latest press release’ was looked at by any of the groups we paid for. I was also **only able to confirm five out of the first twenty eight media outlets on the exact match pickup list had our press release residing on their websites that the links lead to**.**”**  
**Response:** A review of the Visibility report for the releases from April 12th and June 15th showed clickable links to exact match postings that exceeded 5.  If you are trying to fact check those matches via a Google search, it won’t work well. Google doesn’t show duplicate results.   
Please note that Visibility Reports are a snap shot, nothing more, and should not be used to judge performance of pick up.  PR Newswire guarantees distribution to every media point and online web site, but we can’t guarantee pick up.  
  
We can provide more information about how to use the Visibility Reports to gauge performance if you have time to discuss.

2.       **Drop-off in visibility / performance: when Googling releases the search results don’t match the Visibility report**  
**Response:** Google does not provide headline lists of identical content and hasn’t done so for a few years. Their goal is to provide dynamic search results for users comprised of recent and relevant content from a variety of sources. So, in many cases, you will see your release in the news tab - where press releases are mainly housed now - with one or a couple of the top sources and other media results on the same topic. Google results are tailored to the searcher, based on their organic search terms, to show content that is getting a lot of activity, and that makes sense given their word use and search history.  
  
Most search engine users don't search for exact headlines. The only people who do this are press release writers and maybe journalists looking for a story they wrote. The only time a general user may do this is in the case of trying to find a story they already read, and even then it's likely a headline variation. So, Google doesn't work that way to provide a list of exact match headlines. Google wants to provide the most dynamic results for a searcher and to offer them a variety of content to select from. We sometimes have success using Bing or Yahoo! to search, but they also have similar algorithms in play that impact search results.  
  
PRN has content best practices that can help move content up in search – and if you’re interested we can share those best practices and even break down your recent releases and offer ASBL-specific suggestions.

3.       **The specific date of the first ASBL press release PRN coded as AVO:    
Response:** Our records for coding only go back to September of 2013. The oldest ASBL release I found with AVO coding was from September of 2013. The headline is:  *Obama's Plan to Close the Small Business Administration Makes No Sense, According to the American Small Business League*

4.       **AVO concerns**  
**From LC:** “If ASBL’s press releases have always been coded as AVO why weren’t we ever notified of this? **Your staff has acknowledged that AVO coding significantly reduces distribution.** ASBL has paid for full distribution of our press releases and many times we have paid to have additional groups added to our distribution and now we discover PRN has been coding our **release as AVO which reduces their visibility**. It would appear we have paid thousands of dollars over the years but unbeknownst to us **our press releases have been significantly suppressed as a result of PRN’s decision to code them as AVO.”  
  
Response:**  AVO does not “significantly reduce distribution” – I apologize for that message being relayed to you.  AVO has zero impact on distribution to traditional newsrooms; it has zero impact on distribution to trade publications.  It impacts one online network partner who distributes to 98 web sites.  Typical non-AVO content gets about a 200 web site Visibility Report snap shot.  For companies sending AVO-related content, simply deduct 98 from the average Visibility Report result.Depicting AVO as a negative was incorrect on our part. Some of ASBL’s top-performing releases went out with that code.  Multiple codes are used on releases: Geography, Industry, Subject. There are hundreds to choose from and they allow wire feeds and websites to parse news electronically. It’s not just AVO or nothing.And it is worth mentioning that after we learned of your concerns, PRN agreed to not use AVO going forward.

5.       **Multiple answers to questions / distrust of PRN    
From LC:** In [Glenn’s] email, you stated that ASBL’s press releases ‘would always receive this AVO code’; but an email from Anne Thomas on May 31, 2017 stated that only three of our press releases have been coded as AVO over the last six months.  On June 12, 2017 we received an email from Wendy Minter that stated ‘The oldest release I can pull up coding detail for is from September of 2013 and it had advocacy coding.’ An email from Tabresha Chubs on September 13th of 2016 states ‘Moving forward, we will continue to code your releases for small business as we have been doing.’  **What is the truth?** “ **Response:**  The truth is that if multiple people from ASBL continue to ask multiple people from PRN a slightly different version of the same question, they’re going to get a slightly different answer. This is why I strongly recommend having a call to discuss your concerns in detail.   
That said, I reviewed each statement you mentioned:

  **“You stated that ASBL’s press releases ‘would always receive this AVO code’”**   
**[Partially TRUE:** *Glenn meant that because ASBL is an advocacy organization, it would be common for releases to get the advocacy code. It was not always the case. It depended on if the release reported fact or opinion. Opinions are valid content, but not all websites want it.***]**

  **“…an email from Anne Thomas on May 31, 2017 stated that only three of our press releases have been coded as AVO over the last six months.”**   
**[TRUE:** not only is this true but specific details were provided**]**

  **On June 12, 2017 we received an email from Wendy Minter that stated “The oldest release I can pull up coding detail for is from September of 2013 and it had advocacy coding.”**   
**[TRUE:** not only is this true but specific details were provided**]**

  **An email from Tabresha Chubs on September 13th of 2016 states “Moving forward, we will continue to code your releases for small business as we have been doing.”**     
**[TRUE:** Small Business coding is not the same thing as Advocacy coding, it's a separate code entirely.**]**

**6.       The value of PRN products and services  
LC wrote: “**We are having trouble understanding how its performance was so bad considering we spent over $5,000.00 on expanded distribution.”   
 **Response:**  PR Newswire can not guarantee pick up, but rather guarantees distribution to every point on the product you purchased. The Visibility Report is only a snap shot, giving you a quick view of the release online – by no means is it a monitoring service that tracks actual pick up like Cision (and others) offer. Some of the distributions that were selected for the June 15th were targeted media lists that send the release to journalists directly. Those lists offer exposure, not pick-up. We can help you gauge performance better and would like the opportunity to discuss your content, Visibility Reporting and concerns early next week.

**7.       How the ASBL account is managed  
LC wrote:** For the last ten years, we just dealt with your office in San Francisco and it seems that now we are dealing with people all over the country. I’d like to understand why. **Response:**  Your account director is Rahsaan McGlashan-Powell. Per your request ASBL’s account director was re-assigned from Eleanor to someone located closer to you. As I mentioned above, I’m the manager who runs the team that handles ASBL’s releases as they come to PRN. My team is based in the Maryland / DC Area.  ASBL press releases have been handled by this team for many years – we specialize in public interest content from nonprofits, advocacy groups and government agencies.   
  
Over the past 10 years PR Newswire has greatly improved its distribution network, growing it consistently year over year. If you don’t feel you’re getting the ROI you need by using our distribution services, then walking away from PR Newswire might be the right call for you. That is certainly not our wish, but we don’t want you to continue to have concerns and frustrations regarding the services we’re providing**.**

Hopefully these answers shed light on your questions– but they will also most likely prompt more. We’d like to dive deeper and answer additional concerns on a call next week. Please let me know if you’re available Tuesday or Wednesday.

Best,

Wendy

**Wendy Minter (Beatty)**

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