

WIRED LIFE

TEACHING THE PRESS RELEASE A NEW TRICK

WHO KNOWS BETTER than a marketer that the medium is the message? A midsize Boston PR agency, **SHIFT Communications**, has developed a press release made especially for the Internet. The impetus for this invention: Web 2.0, that second-generation wave of Net services that let people create content and exchange information online. To encourage PR folks to use these Web tools to get the attention of journalists and bloggers, SHIFT has developed a model for a “social media press release.” The **Microsoft**

Word-based format, a free download, mixes elements from traditional releases (pre-approved quotes, for instance) with technology-rich features. Press releases created from the template can incorporate company logos, video, and links to blog posts and traditional media coverage on



the product being flogged. With a click, a PR exec can also send the finished press release to the popular consumer-generated news site **DIGG**. And

a reporter or blogger getting the release can click through to a dedicated Web page that collects mentions of the product in question. “This gives journalists everything in one place,” says Todd Defren, who developed the format at **SHIFT**.

About 3,500 copies of the template have been downloaded since May 23, Defren says, and at least one company, media analyst **Cymfony**, has used the template to plug its e-book about today’s media landscape. Journalists, he adds, “will catch on to it, and the more they see it, the more they’ll like it.” (Advice from a former *Financial Times* journalist, Tom Foremski, inspired some of the format.) PR heavyweight **Edelman** plans to unveil its Web 2.0 press release, with similar features, this summer.

—Elizabeth Woyke