Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Warren Kirby and I’m from Wieck, which was known until recently as Wieck Australasia but is now simply Wieck. As you may know, Wieck is a global organisation with offices in Sydney, London and Dallas, and we build online newsrooms for the PR industry. But my reason for being here today is not so much to talk about online newsrooms as to report the findings of our major survey, *PR Perceptions vs Media Realities*.

This is the second year we have done the survey, and the findings are significant not just for the things that have changed, but for the consistency of the core relationship between the media and PR.

The survey delivers both good news and bad news, but the good news far outweighs the bad. Whatever the media might criticise about PR, consider this comment from the producer of a national morning show:

*I work with lots of very efficient, pleasant, helpful PR people, and without them I would not fill my program!*

And this, from the editor of a weekly print publication:

*PR people who can find what I want when I want it are the ones on my speed dial.*

Not bad, eh! And I’ll bet you are thinking right now of the media contacts with whom you have built exactly this kind of relationship.

Our findings reveal clear opportunities for PR professionals to achieve your objectives by tailoring content and its distribution to the needs of the media. There is no doubt that PR can thrive in today’s media environment by combining traditional skills with new technologies to do the job effectively and efficiently.

A quick word about our methodology. Our second survey was conducted online in the same way as last year’s, and we obtained responses from 354 media people and 181 PR professionals. We sought each group’s responses on the same set of topics, and for each of the 30-plus questions we invited general comments in addition to specific responses.

To give you an idea of who those 354 media people were, 99 per cent were Australian, and many published in multiple outlets – on average, they each worked in two different media channels.

Here’s a quick rundown, so you know how our sample relates to the people you may be targeting:

* 60 per cent worked for newspapers;
* 34 per cent worked in radio;
* 21 per cent in magazines;
* 18 per cent in television; and
* 64 per cent in other media, including news agencies, social media, billboards and mobile device publishing.

Unfortunately, our survey confirmed it’s tougher than ever getting the PR message out to all the various media with all their different needs and preferences. The good news is that the media responses confirm there are ways to keep most of them happy most of the time.

Just to reinforce the diversity of our respondents, here’s a quick rundown of their individual roles:

* 69 per cent of them were journalists;
* 35 per cent of them were editors;
* 21 per cent of them were producers;
* and, again reflecting their diversity, 5 per cent were photographers, 3 per cent were professional bloggers, 2 per cent personal bloggers and 1 per cent video editors.

I should add that we did make some slight changes based on what we learned last year, mainly by adding a couple of questions about social media usage and multimedia requirements, but in general the survey gave us a basis for observing what may have changed over the past 12 months.

So what did the media tell us they want from the PR profession?

What they said falls into three main areas, where they were more than willing to tell us what they like and what they don’t. Those areas are relevance, style and method of delivery.

First, they want you to only send them material that’s relevant to their audience, their location and their medium. The scary thing here was the number who said they would delete emails without even reading them, based on the sender or the subject line. With most media reporting that they receive at least 100 emails daily, they are becoming increasingly tough gatekeepers when they don’t believe the material is relevant to them.

As one respondent put it:

*If I receive too much stuff that doesn't apply to my readership, I'll eventually cease opening the e-mails [from that sender] and relegate them to junk.*

Second on the list of media wants – which are really more like demands – is that releases should be written just the way they write their own stories, including a sharp head which is also the subject line. Although many journalists still won’t run a release as is, almost a third of our respondents want releases they can copy straight into their publications with minimal change. For the same reasons, about two-thirds of respondents want releases in a text or word processing format, and definitely not as a PDF or an image, so they are easy to cut and paste.

Fortunately, professional PR people have the skills to ensure this is not a problem, but this comment by one of our media respondents shows just how tough they can be:

*I hate releases that don't have all the basic Who, What, Where and When information, which means I am forced on deadline to call PRs to check what should be in a release – ditto spelling and grammatical errors.*

The third big media request is to use what they consider to be the best method of delivery, especially for the bigger files involved in sending images, video and audio. The catch here is the massive diversity in what different media people consider to be the best methods. For every one that wants the release in the body of an email, with a single jpeg image attached, there’s another who wants the release in an attached Word document with a link to a downloadable image. And for every one that wants just the one medium-res pic, there’s another that wants a selection of pics and a broadcast quality video file, plus online access to archival and reference material.

Getting the delivery method right is becoming a bigger and tougher challenge with each passing year, as print journalists become online video bloggers and broadcast journos work across radio, TV and online channels.

With that in mind, let’s break down the question of distribution technology into three areas – words, pictures and other multi-media content like video and audio – all of which are delivered digitally.

The challenge with **Digital Delivery** is that there are so many options – and you could be forgiven for thinking each of our 354 media contacts chose a different option. With so many responses, many of them contradictory, there is no silver bullet. One thing is clear though: it’s not simply a matter of having the best tools for the job – the media want you to use exactly the right tool for their purpose … and they get to choose what they deem to be the right tool.

First up, words! No matter what content you provide, words will always be part of it, and more often than not they will be the foundation of it.

When it comes to receiving media releases, 96 per cent of our media respondents chose email as their preferred delivery method, and only 1 per cent preferred to get a phone call. None of them wanted that first contact to be via Twitter or Facebook, even though many are very active on social media in other ways. More on this later.

Next in the hierarchy of **Digital Delivery** challenges are images, and here we start to confront the limitations of email. If we say a typical media release attachment might be anything from 70 to 700 kb (depending on your particular format), then the moment we send a 2 megabyte image, we’re sending anything from 3 to 30 times as big an email, and the media start complaining about clogged mailboxes and the fact that often they don’t want the images in the first place.

Over-using email is very easy to do – after all, it’s not like it costs anything to send one. But, while this approach may work well with media in some situations, it is infuriating for a news outlet that receives hundreds of emails per day. In this year’s survey several media people said they had started deleting emails that were poorly targeted or irrelevant to them, based on either the subject line or the sender. It’s not hard to imagine them being even tougher if the emails include huge multi-media or image files.

Fully 93 per cent of our media respondents said they used supplied images, and more than half use them daily. By way of comparison, more than half of PR respondents supply images all or most of the time.

Individual comments bring us back to the many and varied preferences for the method of delivering pictures. As I mentioned, for every media respondent who wants a single image emailed with the release, another wants a selection made available via a link, and yet another wants to choose from an online archive. As I’m sure your own experience confirms, the only way to keep most of the media happy most of the time is to offer several different options.

This brings us to the third and most demanding part of the **Digital Delivery** challenge – multimedia files. Sending words is pretty easy with email, and we have some very good options for sending pictures, but when it comes to those big video files, it’s a whole new world of pain – and by that I mean pain for both the media and the PR professions. If you’re sending a video file of, say, 30 megs, we’re now up to potentially 400 times the size of the release email, not to mention that some systems have a 25 meg limit on individual emails. Little wonder that media people tell us they do *not* want to receive videos by email.

Happily, our survey shows that supplied video has great potential for the PR industry. No less than 78 per cent of media outlets said they used supplied video content, and 41 per cent used it either daily or most days. Video has long since ceased to be the exclusive domain of television. After all, only 17 per cent of our respondents were from TV, so most of those who use supplied video are using it elsewhere. Such is the impact of so many newspapers and radio networks setting up online media channels, not to mention the explosion of media which live purely online.

This brings me to one of the few truly big contrasts between what the media and the PR people told us in our survey, because less than 5 per cent of PR respondents said they supply video content regularly. Granted, video is not appropriate for every media release, but the demand is there for quality supplied video content. In addition to illustrating a specific story, it helps TV stations build an archive of quality video of your organisation.

In passing, let’s spare a thought for audio files. Although not as popular as videos, our survey shows that almost a third of media use supplied audio most days. They cannot get the job done without it.

Oddly, 64 per cent of surveyed media say email is their preferred method for receiving multimedia files, whereas 29 per cent prefer direct downloads. I say oddly, because the hard numbers do not seem to gel with the numerous comments on the topic, which were mostly like this:

*We don't like sitting waiting for your 30Mb video to download [in massive email attachments] – just give us a link and if we want it we'll download it.*

Going by the many comments on this topic, the most popular option is an email with a link to a download.

And now, let take a quick walk through the social media park before we finish looking at what media really want in the world of **Digital Delivery**.

Around 88 per cent of media respondents maintain a blog or similar social media account as part of their job, and 80 per cent of PR people do too, but it’s not where the two professions exchange media material. Only 11 per cent of media want to receive PR material via this method and the number wanting multimedia files via social media is much lower – in fact, it is none.

Despite this, 54 per cent want easy access to your corporate social media channels via your company website or online newsroom, and 41 per cent want the ability to share your posts in their own feed.

So what are they doing on social? Most journalists use social media to promote themselves and for crowd sourcing to get breaking news – the very opposite of official channels. It is clear from the survey that PR people are on much the same social media engagement track as media, but it is not a channel for distributing media releases to journalists.

And now to the subject of online newsrooms. Now let me say this right away: Wieck is not the only supplier of online newsrooms, although we were certainly the first in Australia to include broadcast quality video, way back in 2006. Our experience, combined with our surveys, has given us valuable insights into this emerging area of PR delivery to the media.

A decade ago our technical team in Texas had to develop in-house technology for video delivery, but this has since been upgraded with newer, more mainstream technology. Mind you, if you’ve ever tried to set up video distribution through your own IT people, you’ll know it’s not as simple as buying some software.

A properly configured online newsroom can make all the headaches disappear. Even your IT people will be pleased because, in our experience, they usually don’t want to get involved in the first place. Importantly, your online newsroom can offer so many options that even unusual media needs can mostly be met with little or no special effort on your part.

For a start, video can be made available in various formats. Online publishers rarely need the big files that TV newsrooms require, and our survey tells us they have several preferred formats. An online newsroom can supply them all as standard, and naturally we can do the same with audio and images. Just specify it in your newsroom brief and it can all be there at the click of a mouse.

You can also use your online newsroom to push information via email, complete with links to multimedia. Not only can you create targeted lists, you can collect reports on which items generated the most interest.

At the same time, journalists can pull information from your newsroom as and when it suits them, and our survey tells us what they are most likely to want:

* 93 per cent want your latest media releases to be there;
* 90 per cent want your PR contact information; and
* 90 per cent also want a search function.

And they *will* use it. When they are researching your company:

* 37 per cent will turn to your newsroom first;
* 27 per cent will search Google; and
* only 21 per cent will phone you.

It changes in a crisis, of course, with 44 per cent making a phone call to you their first preference. This is even more reason to have a newsroom because, while you are busy handling all those phone calls, 21 per cent will still visit your newsroom for your latest information.

So, yes, you’re probably not surprised that our survey shows, among many things, the desirability of coordinating all your **Digital Delivery** through an online newsroom. But please remember that, newsroom or not, it mainly confirms you can still get your message through to those busy and overstressed media people, simply by using all your existing professional skills to send the right stories, and then using the available technology to distribute it with the minimum of fuss.

The very best news is that plenty of media people love you for what you contribute to their world. As one of them told us:

*The best PRs do a good job in a tough situation when most journos are time poor and running up against hard deadlines.*

So, next time someone asks how important PR is to the media world, just quote our survey.

Thanks for your attention – and now I’m up for any questions you may have.

– ENDS –