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– Angela Vargo, PR Specialist

### Challenge

Southwest's PR team sought a comprehensive PR solution to build relationships with media in 59 operating cities and nationwide, and reduce the time and costs spent on activities such as list building, news management and reporting.

### Solution

Southwest manages all facets of its PR efforts, from media lists to measurement, with Vocus' online PR software, as well as with Email Campaigns and Analytics.

### Results

Vocus helps Southwest Airlines remain a low fare industry leader, saving the company thousands of dollars and hours each year. For the same price the company paid for one big-picture annual report, it runs in-depth reports any time, and can adjust its efforts mid-campaign. Measuring its coverage on key passion points and markets, Southwest has been able to enhance the quality and quantity of coverage in these areas.

## World's Most Admired Airline Keeps PR on Course with Vocus

### Customer Profile

From profitability to customer service to its corporate culture, you name it, and Southwest Airlines has likely been recognized for it. Since the airline got off the ground 32 years ago, it has blazed a trail in US travel. Honors include recognition as the most admired airline in the world, reporting the fewest customer complaints, and earning a spot in *FORTUNE's* Best Companies to Work for in America. Today, Southwest Airlines is the nation's largest carrier in terms of domestic passengers enplaned. The airline currently serves 60 airports in 59 cities in 30 states. Based in Dallas, it operates 2,900 flights a day and has 32,000 employees systemwide.

### Challenge

For Southwest's public relations team, maintaining the airline's prestigious reputation as a leading carrier, company and employer takes top priority. To that end, the team continuously identifies key messages, or "passion points," that it aims to see play out in the media in the 59 cities in which Southwest operates, as well as nationwide.

In the past Southwest's PR team built lists and targeted media contacts using Bacon's books, requiring close to 100 hours annually to keep media lists clean and current. Plus, the team often relied on costly outside vendors for news distribution and reporting, which even then took place just once a year. Southwest needed a comprehensive solution to streamline all its PR activities and regularly measure its progress on key messages.

### Vocus Solution

After evaluating several solutions, Southwest selected Vocus' online software for public relations to help manage all its media contacts, lists, distribution, and news tracking and reporting. "Vocus had the most offerings and greatest potential for future growth within the product," said Angela Vargo, PR Specialist at Southwest Airlines. "It doesn't just stop at building media lists. It is an all-inclusive product that has enabled us to manage all of our public relations efforts in one central system."

The PR team turns to Vocus' built-in, continuously updated media database to quickly build lists tailored and targeted by geography and media type to reach exactly the right contacts. Vocus also offers insight into how a journalist prefers to be contacted, which helps build valuable media relationships.

"We emphasize creating relationships with media, so we rebuild our lists each time," Vargo said. "Vocus makes that extremely easy for us. The information is there, so you don't have to do a lot of researching."

## Building Relationships, Lowering Costs with Interactive Email

Southwest releases most news through Vocus, leaving wire services for financial news releases. Using Vocus Email Campaigns, an interactive email feature, the PR team customizes releases with unique headings and action-enabled buttons that take recipients to company and city facts sheets. Email Campaigns also gives the team valuable insight into which contacts viewed releases and what actions they took. "We're able to save thousands every year by using Vocus to distribute news as opposed to going through a wire service every time," Vargo said. "That's a huge cost savings for us."

The team recently combined Vocus' extensive media database and Email Campaigns to publicize events surrounding the unveiling of its newest signature aircraft, "The Spirit of Hope," a special aircraft dedicated to celebrate the 30th Birthday of the Ronald McDonald House Program, temporary lodging facilities for the families of seriously ill children being treated at nearby hospitals. The team used Vocus to target media in each of the cities where the plane flew for festivities. With metrics from Email Campaigns, the staff knew exactly who had seen the release, allowing them to follow up by phone and increase event attendance.

Southwest brings all company and competitor news from its LexisNexis clipping service – approximately 800 to 1,200 clips per month – into Vocus via the Vocus News Gateway. The company can analyze coverage immediately, which cuts a major step in the news management process.

## Detailed Reporting Shapes Campaigns

Southwest brought reporting in house with Vocus Analytics. With the feature, Vargo draws on activity and coverage in Vocus to build reports based on any criteria – by city, type of media, reporter, frequency of key messages, campaign, and more. Mid-campaign, PR analyzes coverage and shifts its efforts to improve its numbers.

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For the launch of service at the Philadelphia airport, Southwest could quickly see its performance against legacy airlines in terms of message mindshare. With graphs showing message momentum during and after the launch, PR saw how its key messages appeared in stories in response to its efforts.

With Analytics, PR can "tie inputs to outputs" to show executive leadership how activities resulted in coverage, and how the public views Southwest. "We're not only able to show them results but also provide them with input and suggestions for moving forward – and that's very well received by management," Vargo added.

## Results: Low Fare Leader Saves Thousands Annually – in Dollars and Hours

Vocus helps Southwest remain a low fare industry leader, saving the company thousands of dollars each year by bringing activities such as news distribution and reporting in house. Meanwhile, it reduces time spent on building lists, managing news clips and following up with media by thousands of hours.

For the same price the company paid for one big-picture annual report, it runs in-depth reports. Measuring its coverage on key passion points and markets, Southwest has taken the quality and quantity of coverage in these areas to new heights. "Vocus provides value not only to our department by helping us direct our efforts but value to the company by showcasing what PR brings to the table," Vargo said.



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### About Vocus, Inc.

Vocus is the global leader in on-demand software for public relations and government relations. Vocus offers Web-based software that helps companies to meet today's local and global communications challenges, and to build and manage relationships with reporters, analysts, elected officials and other key audiences. Our award-winning software helps customers manage media relations, news monitoring and analysis, interactive email campaigns, online newsrooms and government relations activities. Vocus software is delivered as an easy-to-use and cost-effective annual subscription, with no need for internal hardware, software or IT support. Vocus has received broad industry recognition and is used around the world by more than 1,000 organizations in five languages. Vocus is a privately held company with headquarters in metropolitan Washington and offices in North America, Europe and Asia. For more information please visit [www.vocus.com](http://www.vocus.com) or call 800.345.5572.