



## Rest Assured, We Will Recover. Then, We Will Rewire.



*Gregg Castano, Founder, Chief Executive Officer, [News Direct Corp.](#)*

With the entire world appropriately consumed by the physical, psychological and social effects of Covid-19, it's near impossible for any positive news from outside this alternate reality bubble we're all suddenly now living in to pierce through its outer membrane.

But despite global despondency, mass quarantine and the newly minted phenomenon of social distancing, it is necessary, possible and realistic to expect some thin rays of sunshine to slice through the dark, dense storm clouds.

While it's important to acknowledge and respect the seriousness of our current circumstances, it is likewise healthy and reassuring to seek out the silver lining. Plus, we're going to need some sort of relief from the visceral terror of possibly running out of toilet paper.

So allow yourself to believe that our long international nightmare will end soon enough and good things will follow. Go ahead, it's OK.

One such "good thing", if you're in the strategic communications business, is the impending launch of an exciting new service called [News Direct](#). I know this because I'm the founder. And at the risk of having an "aside from that Mrs. Lincoln, how did you enjoy the play" moment, I'd like to tell you about it.

Since founding [News Direct](#) in January 2019, myself and our talented team have been hard at work designing and constructing a custom-built news and content distribution platform from the ground up, to meet the demands of today's [communications](#) professionals. We're bringing long-overdue change to an industry dominated for almost seven decades by those familiar names ending in "wire".

What we've done is to "Re-Wire" this category and so decided to exclude that terminology from our name. That's because [News Direct](#) was conceived as a diversified news and content distribution platform that moves well beyond the traditional functionality of a newswire service. Yes, we will offer news release distribution, but even that will come with a thoroughly modernized user experience that's vastly different from what currently exists.

For starters, our platform allows for the distribution of standalone multimedia assets without needing to embed them within news releases. This enhanced, previously unavailable, option empowers issuers to more effectively flag the attention of journalists starved for multimedia content to feed the voracious 24-hour online news cycle.

The residual benefit is that you only have to pay for the asset you really want distributed, rather than being required to wrap it like a "pig-in-a-blanket" within an often-unnecessary news release that more than doubles the distribution cost.

Next, we examined the highly manual workflow that requires human editors to perform tasks such as text formatting, coding, spelling and grammar checking and applying AP style. We found that most of these actions can now be automated with technology and accomplished in far less time than a human editor can do it.

Plus, it provides the user with complete control over their documents and content by making it unnecessary to relinquish possession of that content to third-party newswires prior to release. Not even we can access user content on our own platform, unless we're permissioned in. In an age in which security is of the utmost concern, we thought this made a lot of sense. So we did it.



Taking that concept a step further, [News Direct](#) created a collaboration tool that enables seamless and secure interaction between stakeholders so they can comment on, review and approve works in progress, without ever leaving the platform.

Now don't get me wrong. It's not like we don't like humans. Some of our best friends are humans. Plus, we recognize that sometimes an issuer has a question, needs help or wants to ask advice. We have a human for that. Actually, several. At all times throughout the workflow, there is a Live Chat button that instantly connects the user to an experienced, knowledgeable Customer Success Team member who is eager to assist (and yes, we also have telephones, if talking is your thing).

As I said earlier, our distribution is comprehensive, so not to worry. But since we loathe conformity, we allow users to choose from among several distinct categories – geographic media, online news, disclosure, and trade media – rather than automatically lumping them all together. You like lumping? Be our guest, but you can alternatively order any combination of these options at your discretion. You make the call and it won't impact price.

OK, back to price. We suspect that this will become a hot button issue as the economy attempts to get off the mat. Fortunately, we've dramatically reformed the existing model by creating a subscription-based rate structure that is simple, transparent and economical. Annual subscriptions are calculated on a flat-rate-per-asset basis (an asset is a news release, video, image or infographic), with the per-asset rate determined by the size of the asset bundle purchased. The higher the asset volume, the lower the price of each asset, and vice versa. Simply multiply the number of assets by the corresponding rate-per-asset to calculate the subscription fee.

We've also built lots of flexibility into the pricing system, such as enabling users to roll-over a significant portion of unused assets in a given year into the subsequent year and making it seamless to purchase additional assets if they're exhausted before the subscription expires. Additionally, we offer billing frequency options such as monthly, quarterly or annual.

As we near completion of this ambitious project, and despite the current environment, we're still excited to begin demonstrating to potential users the many transformative, disruptive and modernized features we're introducing. Even if we have to do it over Zoom for a while.

Once we've completed an intense testing phase, which is currently underway, we'll launch News Direct with a special [Early Access Program](#) that enables first adopters to give it a vigorous road test. This offer will be available for a limited time, so click the link above to enroll.

At that time, [News Direct](#) will be live and fully functional and, for 30 days, users will be able to distribute unlimited amounts of content over the network at no charge. As in FREE.

While we're enthusiastic about launching [News Direct](#), in no way does it mitigate the tremendous challenges we all will continue to face. But it does provide a much-needed example of hope and optimism that we still have a bright future. So first and foremost – Recover. Then – Re-Wire.

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**About the Author:** *Gregg Castano spent 32 1/2 years at Business Wire, helping that company grow from a small niche player to a global leader in the newswire category. After spending much of his early years in sales and sales management roles, he eventually climbed the ladder into senior management, becoming Executive Vice President in the early 2000's. When Business Wire was acquired by Berkshire Hathaway in 2006, Castano was appointed Co-Chief Operating Officer, where his performance ultimately earned him a promotion to company president in 2009. He remained in that position until his departure in 2017.*

*Using his experience, knowledge and catalogue of ideas he accumulated during his long tenure at Business Wire, he founded News Direct in late December 2018 with the intent of reinventing what he believed had become a complacent and stagnant newswire industry. Since early 2019, he and his accomplished team have been building the soon-to-be disruptive News Direct platform, which is now completed and in Alpha testing. Expected launch is mid to late Spring 2020.*