

PCNY Luncheon
Why the Web Matters
April 23, 2003

Dean Wright, Editor-in-chief - MSNBC.com – Thank you. The question today was “Why the web matters.” I’m surprised we even have to ask the question. Allow me to be a bit facetious, we might just as well turn this around and say, “Why do newspapers matter anymore?” Now no one seriously believes that, but my site, for example, reaches more people on a daily basis than the largest newspaper in the United States. 4 million people look at MSNBC each day. And in times of strife, such as the recent war, that number increases. The war is really ample evidence that we are truly relevant. Major news sites posted an 82% increase in traffic during the war, and what we call ‘rich media’ finally came into its own during the war. We served 82 million video streams during the first 3 weeks of the war. Key reason for these rather gaudy numbers, one key reason: people at work. In the office you can’t always go to the break room to watch television and you look pretty suspicious if you have a radio in your pocket and an earphone in your ear, and most importantly your employer is probably provided you with that wonderful benefit High Speed Internet Access, which means that all that video looks really good. Makes the online site so much more accessible, so thank you employers of America for doing that. Now, as I said, no one would seriously suggest that the daily newspaper is irrelevant. But I think you can also not seriously suggest that the web is something that needs to be ignored, so the message I would have to public relations professionals is, if you want to reach out to a highly desirable demographic, people at work, who all have jobs, then you must include the web in your plans. At my site, content comes from a variety of places. It’s true a lot of it comes from our partners at NBC, Newsweek, Washington Post, but we also do a great deal of original content that many of your clients would be interested in reaching out to. The journalists who work for us, particularly in Tech, where we have a very robust channel, Health, Entertainment, Business, Science, many areas where your clients I think could find a really welcome ear. So, thank you very much.

Ruth Sarfaty – Thanks. Everybody will have an opportunity to ask questions after we go through each one. Let’s see, Jon Friedman, media editor of CBSMarketWatch.com. Before joining MarketWatch in August ’99, Jon worked for Bloomberg for 6 years specializing in writing about the financial services industry. He worked on the staff of Business Week, USA Today, Investor’s Daily. He is the co-author of HOUSE OF CARDS: INSIDE THE TROUBLED EMPIRE OF AMERICAN EXPRESS, hope there’s nobody here from American Express, and wrote a profile of Ellen Malcolm the founder and head of “Emily’s List” for the New York Times Magazine in 1993. Jon, whose hobbies include spinning and finding an agent or publisher for his latest novel, also writes a column called “Media Web” which appears on CBSMarketWatch every Friday. As for PR, Jon wrote me a note and says he prefers the low key approach via email, I’m sure he’ll talk more about that, and his worst experiences with PR professionals involve people who don’t do their homework, I’m sure he’ll tell us more about that, too.