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MEDIA RELATIONS Guidebook

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Media Relations Measurement: Start By Knowing What You Want to Change

By Jesse Landis

Measuring and reporting the effectiveness of your efforts is vital to proving the worth of your involvement on your team. Measurement makes the case that someone should keep you or hire you. Measurable results show how an organization is different when you are within its walls.

However, showing how your media relations work contributes to the organization's bottom-line is generally not simple or streamlined. Indeed, there is no agreed-upon, industry-wide standard for measuring media relations results—and there shouldn't be. Every campaign is different. Every set of objectives is unique.

Where to Start

Just as strategies and tactics are tailored (and continually refined) for any particular media-relations effort, a system of measurement should be approached pragmatically and customized per the unique needs and characteristics of the particular situation.

Throughout planning and measuring, think about these two questions:

- 1) What precisely are we trying to change?
- 2) To what parts of that change are we able to apply a meaningful metric?

The first question forces us to define what success looks like. What is the purpose of putting forth effort? Why exactly are we dedicating this time and these resources? What's going to be different after we've done what we're doing?

These types of questions lead to clarifying your program's objective.

Craft a Clear Objective (With Numbers)

Your program's objective should be as specific and quantifiable as possible. Whatever you are looking to change, assign a number to that desired change. The number might be apparent if a certain threshold is critical to the success of the program, or it might be an approximate projection from the information available—a target to help guide your aim.

Either way, your quantitative objective might involve such achievements as:

- Increased knowledge about the brand
- Enhanced reputation
- Register-rings
- New clients
- More business with existing clients
- Ticket sales
- Increased attendance
- More sponsorship money
- More volunteers
- Votes
- Web hits
- Phone calls
- Traffic in your store

Once your program's objective is crystallized, you might want to write it on the wall, on the top of every sheet of paper, on your arms, whatever it takes to ensure that every action of the campaign is in some way a step toward the objective. The objective will dictate how we determine if the program was successful.

Decide What to Measure

Sometimes your program's change can be measured outright. But typically one individual metric is not indicative of a program's success or failure. Most often, a litany of meaningful changes paints the best picture of the effectiveness of your work.

There is an array of possible metrics to choose from, with different combinations for different situations. When looking at these possible metrics, it is most informative to separate Outputs and Outcomes.

Outputs generally relate to the news-media coverage that you facilitated. Outcomes refer to what was accomplished from that coverage—what resulted from the media relations results. Outcomes are the most meaningful, as they are directly related to the objective. Outputs are important to help support and explain the Outcomes. Where possible, always apply numbers to both areas.

Outputs

- Amount of coverage - Column-inch-measuring is antiquated, but there certainly is relevance in looking at the overall amount of media coverage. Detail whether it was a major multipage cover piece in a prominent national outlet, a solid half-page article in a reputable local magazine, or a minor business brief in an industry publication.
- Advertising equivalency - Advertising value equivalency (AVE) is another old-school approach that reveals little on its own. Some business leaders want to see this dollar value—and it can be interesting to see that your *New York Times* hit would have cost tens of thousands of dollars had that space been purchased for advertising. However, there is simply too much gray area with AVEs to represent a true value. If you are required to provide such values, include a preface about the weight with which they should be considered, and combine with other more meaningful metrics.
- The reach of each news article - There are a variety of methods and services (free and paid) to find the reach of a news media outlet. To measure online news articles or blogs, Quant-

cast.com is a free service that includes most major websites and will give numbers for daily, monthly and weekly reach. Media research subscriptions, such as MyMediaInfo, will include the circulation of all media types (TV, Web, and print, including daily, weekly and monthly publications). Media monitoring subscriptions, such as BurrellesLuce, will find and clip media coverage and include the reach with each clip.

Another free way that can be a little more time consuming is researching a publication's media kit on its website, which will often include the reach, intended for advertising purposes. (Keep in mind that an outlet will of course want to portray itself in the most positive light when talking about its own readership).

- What audience the coverage reached - Was the coverage targeted to a primary niche audience or key influencers? Most advertising media kits will also offer this type of information on readership. Note that successfully reaching a core audience is generally more important than the total number reached.
- Key messages delivered and tone - Did the key messages make it through? Was the organization or issue portrayed positively?
- Images included - Images such as photos or infographics tend to increase the readership, impact, and memorability of news media coverage.

Outcomes

- Audience reaction - Did a group or individual take a specific action as a result of the coverage? Were opinions changed? Are new audiences now following the company? Are existing audiences now more engaged with the brand or issue? Are leads converting to sales at a higher percentage? Was there a spike in phone calls or more people coming in the store? Polling or surveys can answer some of these questions. Sifting through sales analyses can answer others.
- Digital reach and reputation - Did you see a spike in web traffic in the days following coverage? More Facebook likes or Twitter followers, or more activity on your pages or blog? Do you see an improvement in your search rankings? Do you have new rich content for your website?

When measuring the effects of social media, such free services as Facebook Insights provide

Tips for Presenting and Reporting results

- Strive for and start with a scientific approach as much as possible—emphasize hard numbers and bottom-line needle-moves.
- Underline numbers with words—combine quantitative evidence with qualitative elements that contribute to the vitality and longevity of the brand.
- Tailor reporting to your organization's or client's needs, wants, and style—different types of data and methods of presentation will resonate with different types of audiences.
- Focus on outcomes, but don't leave off outputs.
- Speak the lingo—express an understanding of the organization's priorities and how its leaders define success.
- Maintain constant communication—don't wait until the monthly report or staff meeting to show off your work.
- Offer feedback on coverage—what went well, what didn't, and what we will do differently next time.
- Above all, do impressive work—when the results are good, they are fun to report and present.

an in-depth understanding of fan demographics, page views, likes, and overall reactions to posts.

When distributing or posting links, Bit.ly is a free and easy way to shorten a link and measure clicks, including when the link was clicked and from what source.

After a significant media hit (or any other PR effort), use a website analytics tool like Google Analytics to measure website views, spikes in traffic, sources of traffic, and the popular search terms used to find the website.

- Added value to the organization's brand - Was an element of validity or credibility established with the coverage? Did it help put the organization on the map? Did it validate a claim? Or if you are combating negative perceptions, did the news coverage help?

Third-Party PR Measurement Providers

- Google Analytics—Real-time website analytics. Tracks new and returning visitors per page, referral sources, keyword searches, and user demographics. The analytics can be compared on an hourly, daily and monthly basis to determine spikes and lulls in traffic. (May need an IT administrator to add tracking code to website).
 - Alexa—Type in any website address for website traffic rank, reputation (how many outside websites link to the site), audience, and top search queries driving traffic.
 - Quantcast—Provides daily, weekly and monthly website audience/traffic.
 - Bit.ly—Real-time click-through tracking with referral sources. Can be compared hourly, daily, and monthly.
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- Employee engagement - Were employees proud to see their company in the news? Are their friends and relatives now talking about the company? Remember, the people on your team are typically the most important ambassadors of your brand—the conversations they're having in the community or in the industry can make or break an organization.
 - Possible uses and avenues to increase reach and shelf life - Can the coverage be incorporated with collateral materials? Can you hang it on the wall for added credibility with visitors? Might it be helpful to share the coverage in the company newsletter?
 - Brand equity and brand loyalty - Did the coverage facilitate improved perceptions or connotations with the organization or the issue? Is it likely that the coverage created front-of-mind presence with key audiences? Do audiences see the organization as a thought leader? Again, a survey could help with collecting this sort of data, while anecdotal evidence is ideal for proSome of the above metrics are more meaningful than others, but every possible metric should be considered, since it is their combination that paints the picture.

Social media measurement:

- Facebook Insights—Tracks page activity, growth, reach, referral sources, and demographics of people ‘talking about’ the page and liking the page.
- Social Mention—Search engine that searches across all social media platforms. Includes tonality, frequency, top keywords, top hash-tags, and top users.
- Tweetdeck—Twitter tracking and monitoring.
- HootSuite—Social media management with the option to search for keyword mentions across multiple social networks and create custom analytics reports (from multiple social networks) with click summaries, keywords, and page growth.

Miscellaneous measurement:

- Media kits—Outlets’ advertising kits often include a detailed audience profile and reach.
- DIY polls, surveys, focus groups—Nonscientific snapshots and qualitative evidence. One source for this type of research is Survey Monkey.
- In-house staff/departments—Certain staff/departments are responsible for tracking progress toward business goals, including customer service calls (number and content), sales leads, lead-to-sale ratios, purchases, admissions, etc.
- Google—It’s often interesting what you can find if you roll up your sleeves. Be patient, and follow rabbit holes. Also see Google Alerts for keyword mentions delivered to your inbox, Google Webmaster Tools for reports about a webpage’s visibility on Google, and Google Trends for trends in keyword searches.

Paid**Formal research:**

- Professional research and polling companies—Measures audience opinions, knowledge, and behavior. More credible, quantitative, and projectable than do-it-yourself research.

Monitoring and clipping:

(The following are sometimes perceived as more credible than free services. They are certainly more efficient; offerings are all similar, while capabilities, interface, and fees differ. Choosing one over another essentially comes down to personal preferences and budget.)

- MyMediaInfo—Online, print and broadcast reach, and social media monitoring and measurement.
- BurrellesLuce—Online, print and broadcast clipping and reach, and social media monitoring and measurement.
- Cision—Online, print and broadcast clipping and reach, and social media monitoring and measurement.
- Vocus—Online, print and broadcast clipping and reach, and social media monitoring and measurement.

Parting Advice

While we strive for and start with a scientific approach, emphasizing numbers where possible, a large part of the value of media relations is expressed in qualitative terms. When a client or boss asks why the phone isn’t ringing off the hook after one news article, remind them of some of the points above and how they relate to the brand’s long-term vitality.

Manage expectations in advance—explain that while news media coverage can and does generate leads, its primary function is to lend credibility and validity, to multiply the value of the awareness created by quality advertising.

Maintain focus on the program objective, keep an open mind as to how that objective might be impacted, and exhaust possible metrics. Some metrics may be discovered during or after the work. **PRN**

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