

AMEC MEASUREMENT MONTH
SEPTEMBER 2016 EDITION

WHITE PAPER DIGEST: ANALYSIS BEST PRACTICE AND PROVING EARNED MEDIA SUCCESS





Summary



Measurement is crucial if you want to prove PR and communications success. However, it is clear that not enough businesses and brands are benefiting from analysis and measurement of their comms initiatives and many don't see the relevance to themselves and their organisation. Even if they hear the message that they should measure PR activity, they don't always know how they should go about it. Most importantly, they don't know how they can benefit from it.



In this short White Paper, published during AMEC (Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication)'s measurement month in September 2016, we look at analysis best practice in PR and how you can use it to make your comms more effective. This is a digest of the White Paper which was first published in the run up to AMEC's Measurement Summit in London (<http://amecinternationalsummit.org/>) on 15 and 16 June, 2016. Both White Papers show why analysis in PR and comms is important, how to get started when implementing a robust measurement programme, and - with the help of a new case study of AMEC award-winning work for NHS Blood and Transplant in this revision- they show how to use analysis to prove campaign successes and ROI.



To get access to the unedited best practice White Paper, please visit events.gorkana.com/amecwhitepaper.



Why measurement and analysis is increasingly important

Budgets will only go from paid-for media towards earned media if PRs can prove to the marketing budget holders that their work is more effective and gets business results.

But budget holders should be listening. For instance, CEOs are becoming increasingly aware of the power of the media to destroy reputations – not only of their organisation but themselves as well. High profile corporate casualties include Martin Winterkorn of Volkswagen who lost his job following the emissions scandal, Tony Hayward of BP who didn't survive the Deep Water Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico or Bob Diamond who was forced to resign when Barclays was fined an industry record £290m for its part fixing the inter-bank lending rate known as LIBOR.

These examples show how the importance of building reputation into the overall risk management of the business - which means communication being front and centre in the management of an organisation rather than being the reactive 'press office' on the periphery. This is something the incoming CEO of Barclays Anthony Jenkins did when he came in following the LIBOR scandal, making the point that the whole of the business needed to act with more integrity - it wasn't just a marketing message.

How to make analysis work

Analysis is seen as complex because we are trying to understand the aggregated effects of thousands of individuals being exposed to thousands of words and pictures across many channels of media. However, rather than overcomplicating something that is already complicated, we need to simplify it. A useful analogy is a map - a simplified way of viewing the terrain that helps you plot a route, so that you can get where you want to go.

This introduces a fundamental point about effective analysis. Analysis is often used as a retrospective exercise but, for analysis to be truly effective, it needs to generate insight that can be fed into the planning process. It should help us understand how we can be more effective over time. But this is only useful if we know where we want to go in the first place, which is why linking measurement to our overall goals is so important.

Measurement best practice: The Barcelona Principles 2.0

Published originally in 2010, and updated in 2015, there are seven Barcelona Principles which outline measurement and analysis best practices. The Barcelona Principles 2.0 are:

Principle 1:

From (2010):

Importance of Goal Setting and Measurement

To (2015):

Goal Setting and Measurement are Fundamental to Communication and Public Relations

While the Barcelona Principles were intended to provide a foundation for PR programs, the updated Principles recognize that they can also be applied to the larger communication function of any organization, government, company or brand globally. In fact, measurement, evaluation and goal-setting should be holistic across media and paid, earned, owned and shared channels.

Principle 2:

From:

Measuring the Effect on Outcomes is Preferred to Measuring Outputs

To:

Measuring Communication Outcomes is Recommended Versus Only Measuring Outputs

The updated Principle is more encompassing of the role of qualitative methods. While the original Principle stated quantitative methods of measuring outcomes were "often preferable," the updated Principle recognizes that the use of qualitative methods (along with quantitative) should be used as appropriate. The updated Principle also specifically calls out advocacy as an outcome that can (and should) be measured.

Principle 3:

From:

The Effect on Business Results Can and Should Be Measured Where Possible

To:

The Effect on Organizational Performance Can and Should Be Measured Where Possible

The updated Principle emphasizes that communications impact more than just business results; rather communications can impact the overall performance of an organization. To do this, organizations must have, and practitioners must understand, integrated marketing and communication models. The PR channel does not exist in a silo, nor should PR measures.

Principle 4:

From:

Media Measurement Requires Quantity and Quality

To:

Measurement and Evaluation Require Both Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

The updated Principle recognizes that qualitative measures are often needed in order to explain “the why” behind the quantitative outcomes. In addition, the updated Principle reminds practitioners that to be truly objective, we need focus on measuring performance (be it positive, negative or neutral), and avoid making assumptions that results will always be positive or “successful.”

Principle 5:

From:

AVEs are not the Value of Public Relations

To:

AVEs are not the Value of Communications

The updated Principle continues to underline that Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) measure the cost of media space or time and do not measure the value of PR or communication, media content, earned media, etc.

Principle 6:

From:

Social Media Can and Should be Measured

To:

Social Media Can and Should be Measured Consistently with Other Media Channels

The updated Principle recognizes that social media measurement tools have evolved to a point where there is greater potential for consistent measurement on engagement, along with quantity and quality.

Principle 7:

From:

Transparency and Replicability are Paramount to Sound Measurement

To:

Measurement and Evaluation Should be Transparent, Consistent and Valid

In the spirit of integrity, honesty and openness, the updated Principle includes more specific guidance valid quantitative and qualitative methods in an effort to ensure quantitative methods are reliable and replicable and qualitative methods are trustworthy.

Gorkana's measurement framework

At Gorkana we use a measurement framework, or process, to design measurement programmes for clients and ensure that it is built around their individual objectives and goals. There are four clear stages:





1. Objectives:

First step is to understand the overall objectives of the organisation and how the team's communications objectives support these organisation objectives.

If your team has spent time building a strategic communications plan, this is where you want to start. As part of this we should ask who are our target audiences and what do they think about us?



2. Activity:

- What does the PR plan look like over the coming year?
- What campaigns are being planned?
- What events, press releases, interviews and content are going to be produced?
- In addition, what are the specific media channels and key influencers we want to target in order to reach our target audiences?



3. Outputs:

These are the metrics measuring earned media coverage generated as a result of our communications activity. This is what most measurement activity tends to focus on, but it is really important that the right output metrics are chosen carefully.

Gorkana usually recommends a balance of three types of output metrics to establish a balanced view: quantitative, qualitative and targeting. Unfortunately, there can be a tendency to lean on basic quantitative metrics, such as overall volume of coverage, impressions or, even, an AVE (advertising value equivalent).

But, in isolation, big numbers can be meaningless. For instance, a brand may have a lot of coverage. But what if that coverage was negative? Or off message? Or only featured the brand in a passing mention? It is important to balance the quantity of coverage with measures that reflect the quality.

In addition, you may have generated a lot of coverage that said all the right things but if this coverage appeared in publications not read by your target audience then it won't have had much effect. So, it's important to have a third category of metrics that indicate whether the media outputs have targeted our key audiences.



4. Outcomes:

The final element of the framework is audience and organisation outcomes. What has been the effect of our target audiences - have we increased awareness; are people engaging with the brand; have we changed perceptions and behaviour. Following on from this, what has been the effect on our organisation - have we achieved our overall objectives, such as increasing sales?

The answers show whether objectives have been achieved and will offer insights on what can be done to improve things next time.

Good examples of how outcomes show effectiveness include the case study for the AMEC award-winning Stroke Association's Action on Stroke month campaign (for details see the Analysis Best Practice And The Key To Proving PR Success White paper) and the National Health Service Blood Transfusion (NHSBT) Missing Type campaign, which is covered in detail later in this White Paper on page 09.

Process and priorities

Measurement for measurement's sake can often be counterproductive. For instance, many targets set by government departments have ended up diverting attention away from the intended result.

For instance, the NHS in the UK sets targets for ambulance waiting times. Once, the target was set at eight minutes for an ambulance to reach the destination of an emergency call. If an ambulance arrived in less than eight minutes it was seen as success and if it arrived after eight minutes it was seen as failure.

This arbitrary hard line between success and failure led to strange behaviours. Ambulance drivers would take unnecessary risks to get to the destination in seven minutes 50 seconds or give up as having failed if they took eight minutes and 10 seconds.

In many cases it also led to people doctoring the data in order to make it look like they hit the target. Administrators had taken their eyes off what really mattered - whether lives were being saved.

The challenge is that measurement on its own is useless without understanding where you actually want to go.

The original Barcelona Principles (see box page 03) were updated and relaunched during measurement month in September 2015 to reflect the changes to both the media landscape and communication practice over the five years since they were originally launched.

However, the starting principle is still how important goal setting and measurement are to communication, and that how you measure should be linked to your goals.

It is important to get the right balance of metrics, rather than relying on one overall metric, that matters. Your analysis should be based around a dashboard of the right quantitative and qualitative metrics chosen to get you where you need to go.

One of the big changes over the past five years is the increased integration across media channels – from PR to advertising to content generation across owned and shared platforms. Digital and social media has enabled much of this evolution and has introduced many more ways of recording data. But one of the challenges is that despite this integration, measurement often remains siloed, with inconsistent and often opaque metrics that don't seem to relate to each other. A new and important principle is the importance of consistency of measurement across media channels. And to support this it is important for measurement to be 'consistent, transparent and valid'.

But what is 'valid'? This depends on what our overall objectives are and how our activity supports those objectives. The following case study for NHS Blood and Transplant, illustrates this process.

Case Study: NHS Blood and Transplant - Missing Type

The NHS Blood and Transplant campaign took the AMEC platinum award in the Grand Prix for Most Effective Media Intelligence, Research & Insights Company Campaign at the 2016 Measurement Summit. It also secured gold in the Best Use Of Integrated Communication Measurement/Research and Best Measurement Of A Public Sector Campaign categories.



As part of National Blood Week, in June 2015, NHSBT launched the #MissingType campaign. Its main objective was to encourage 40,000 new volunteers to register as blood donors.

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) is a Special Health Authority which provides a wide range of services to the National Health Service that save and improve lives. The authority encourages people to donate organs, blood, stem cells and tissues and ensures that a safe and adequate supply of blood and blood components is delivered to hospitals across England and North Wales.

NHSBT faces a challenge in recruiting new blood donors - there has been a 40% reduction in new donors coming forward in the last decade which has meant that those regularly donating tend to be older - half of current donors are over 45. This means that supply is struggling to meet demand.

Some 200,000 new volunteers are needed each year to help meet patient needs. Ethnic groups are a particular challenge - Black, Asian and minority ethnic people (BAME) make up 14% of the eligible donor population but only 5% have given blood in the last year.

Activities

The campaign stimulated mainstream and social media activity by removing the letters representing the blood types 'A', 'O' and 'B' from recognizable names places and brands. Examples included the Odeon Leicester Square, Waterstones in Trafalgar Square and the street sign on Downing Street.

In addition, NHSBT issued a series of press releases conveying hard hitting facts about blood donation and promoted a number of patient stories. Quotes from spokespeople were used to help convey the message that the number of donors had declined. In addition there were a number of specific events aimed at raising awareness among ethnic groups.

Measurement

Gorkana's measurement programme was developed to measure success in three key areas:

- 1 Raise awareness about the decline in new blood donors coming forward to donate
- 2 Promote donors and encourage other people to donate blood
- 3 Analyse the effect of the campaign on target audience groups

Gorkana worked closely with the NHSBT communications team to create a measurement programme to identify both media outputs and audience outcome. Traditional coverage was coded by experienced analysts to ensure metrics were reached effectively, such as message deliverability and favourability.

Social media coverage was monitored by Gorkana's social media tools, capturing mentions and conversations across multiple channels. Analysis focused on overall outcomes as well as specific PR tactics, enabling evaluation of all parts of the campaign.

Regular reports showed, among other metrics, the volume of coverage achieved in each region and which journalists were driving the coverage. This allowed NHSBT to work out which areas of the country were underperforming and which media contacts they should begin to target.

Outputs:

- Mainstream media volumes doubled compared to last year.
- The use of spokespeople helped to drive message delivery. 97% of articles delivered a key message which was a year on year increase of 16 percentage points. "New donors had decreased by 40%" was the most prevalent message, delivered in 78% of content.
- The website address featured prominently and was the most frequently mentioned 'call to action'.
- The national campaign reached 69% of 18-24 year olds and 73% of ethnic groups.

Outcomes:

- There was significant engagement on social media with more than 19,000 posts, - more than double the previous year. Coverage had a longer 'burn time' than previous years and was sustained over many weeks. A strong driver of social media engagement was the sharing of the #MissingType hashtag which featured in more than 12,000 Tweets.
- 11,000 people visited the campaign website with 17% clicking through to book an appointment to give blood.
- Registrations during the campaign period reached 47,000 (more than double the number the previous year) while the total for the whole month was 57,000 exceeding the original target of 40,000.

- There were strong correlations between media coverage and registrations which showed peaks of registrations around key media activity on the 5th and 8th of June, suggesting a strong causal link. In addition there were significant correlations between coverage that reached key audiences of young people and ethnic groups and the resulting registrations of those specific audiences.

Andrea Tfofa, head of media and PR, NHSBT, said: "Knowing what works well and taking learning forward is vital as the media and social media landscape is constantly changing and we absolutely must constantly evolve to ensure we publically promote donation as effectively as possible to continue saving lives."

Results:

- NHSBT generated highly successful results within traditional and social media in terms of engagement, but it was crucially important that people booked appointments to give blood.
- Analytics showed a disparity between high click-through rates and relatively low appointments booked, which led the organisation to investigate its supply and demand model regarding available clinics and sessions.
- Gorkana's data also showed that a large percentage of referral traffic from social media came from mobile, where hitherto it hadn't. This insight was used to justify more budget being allocated to the development of the website in order to make it mobile optimised ready for future campaigns.
- The integration of data on donor registrations with data on media coverage provided a range of important insights. Gorkana showed that there was a direct correlation between traditional and social coverage and new donor registrations across June 2015, with registrations peaking on the 5th June - the day the main story of the campaign hit the media.



Key benefits of getting analysis right

If you get your measurements priorities right and follow the lead of established measurement frameworks, what can you expect to prove? Ultimately, a business that measures its PR activity successfully should be able to understand the impact on the organisation and brand(s), and it should be able to understand what the return on investment (or ROI) on its communications activity is.

Proving ROI

ROI is a financial ratio comparing the gain from investment minus the cost of investment to the cost of investment itself. However, by definition, this explanation causes problems.

As the noted academic Tim Ambler points out in his article 'ROI is dead, now bury it' (<http://bit.ly/1PfYTnm>), the fastest way to maximise your ROI is to minimise your investment. As the cost of investment tends to zero, ROI tends to infinity. Ambler provides examples of the type of investment that produce ultimately better business gain despite technically having a lower ROI.

Another challenge, particularly when it comes to marketing is to understand what investment and gain actually mean.

The problem comes when you think about the chain that links the investment to the gain. If a manufacturer owns a widget factory and wanted to know the ROI of a widget making machine it is fairly straightforward. The widget making machine has a cost and we can measure the profits from the number of widgets that the machine makes.

With PR, the investment is in activity (events, interviews, press releases and other forms of content) aimed at getting third party influencers to write about a business on different media channels.

These are the media outputs which are then read by our target audience, and who may be effected as a result. And they can be effected in a variety of ways: from building awareness and knowledge through to prompting action. The 'gain' is the aggregate effect of our target audiences in terms of increasing sales, improving reputation and building shareholder value. As Sir Stuart Rose, former chairman of Marks & Spencer, has said: "for a business leader, building reputation and trust is the day job, which makes communication the day job too".

We can see this link between reputation and value when things go wrong. Following the deepwater horizon oilspill in the Gulf of Mexico, the value of BP fell by more than 50%. After news broke that Barclays was being fined £290m for fixing the LIBOR interbank lending rate, the bank's value fell by almost a third. The value of Volkswagen fell by almost half when the Environmental Protection Agency accused the company of falsifying emissions tests.

The objectives of the communication depend on the organisation's purpose. For NHS Blood and Transplant (see Page 09), its core objective is to ensure the supply for blood and organs to hospitals. Its 'missing type' campaign was aimed at raising awareness particularly amongst ethnic minorities and young adults and to encourage them to donate blood.

Registrations during the campaign period exceeded targets and were more than double that of previous campaigns. We were able to show statistically significant correlations between media coverage and registrations with peaks of registrations around key media activity.

Correlations between mainstream media and social media coverage and the number of new donors showed the effect media coverage had on donations. Spikes in coverage corresponded to uplift in donor registrations.

The importance of context and the 'whole' picture

Comms, or PR, activity is just one way of boosting business so it is important to understand the overall context and media environment as campaigns increasingly involve other marketing, advertising and media initiatives.

Digital may have created a complex media landscape for brands to navigate, but it does allow them to see what initiatives are having an impact on objective.

For example, UNICEF wants to engage with significant numbers of people via its web site UNICEF.org in order to donate money or support causes.

Gorkana worked with the charity to monitor its social media and mainstream media coverage. This, with website analytics, shows the online articles people have read immediately before visiting the site and, effectively, the media coverage which is 'working'. It also provides insight on what types of coverage are more effective at driving visitors which the UNICEF comms teams can use to optimise future activity.

As well as isolating the effects of PR coverage there are also ways of understanding how PR contributes to more integrated marketing efforts.

For instance, by monitoring 'conversations' on social media sites such as mumsnet, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) - which owns the Aquafresh toothpaste brand - developed a number of good creative ideas to solve a common problem of getting young kids to brush their teeth.

It developed toothfairy calling cards, introduced the concept of toothfairy inflation – the fact that kids get way more money these days than before.

Finally, it developed an App that played music for the recommended two minutes it takes to brush your teeth properly. This generated a decent amount of media coverage but working out impact on the bottomline is a hard question to answer as there were a number of parallel marketing activities, from TV advertising, to pay per click online advertising to PR.

Gorkana worked with GSK's analytics team to develop an econometric marketing mix model to show how these different activities contributed to overall sales.

GSK has developed market mix models with various advertising inputs but had not included PR before.

The resulting model showed that PR contributed 3% to incremental sales, which may not sound much but was significant given the relative spend compared to advertising. Indeed for every pound spent on PR, there were £4 of incremental sales, in other words an ROI of 4:1 - the highest return on investment of any marketing discipline.

This was a revelation to an organisation who up until that point had been advertising dominated - it realised that PR was becoming an increasingly important part of the marketing mix and needed to take a key role in future activity.

Sources

Amec.org.com

AMEC is the world's largest trade body representing communications research, measurement and insights. AMEC has over 140 members in 40 countries, including media intelligence companies, global PR Groups, Government departments and Non-Profit organisations.

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