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How do you measure PR?

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This white paper explores how to measure PR. It considers the principles and frameworks that provide a guide and offers practical insight into measurement tools.

It examines how to measure outcomes as well as outputs and the role both quantitative and qualitative measures can play. It provides a snapshot of the many and varied digital measurement tools which offer a convenient and targeted way to help measure and assess campaign outcomes.

Throughout, this paper highlights the importance of starting at the beginning, determining 'what' and 'why' before looking at 'how' to measure PR success.

Introduction

PR measurement: getting to the basics

Effective PR measurement is in the best interests of practitioners and marketing stakeholders, because continuing investment in PR initiatives quite rightly depends on the demonstration of results.

Stakeholders look to agencies and marketing teams to provide clear, easily comparable measures that can sit alongside results from other communications initiatives and demonstrate a return on investment.

When planning PR campaigns and executing strategies, it is important to be clear on how outcomes will be measured. Once this is understood, PR and marketing practitioners have a range of measurement techniques at their disposal to help them. These have evolved over time, but the importance of beginning with a deep and clear understanding of aims, objectives and desired outcomes remains unchanged.

Traditional measurement tools – both quantitative and qualitative – provide legitimate ways to determine success levels against objectives. In recent years, these have been joined by digital measurement tools that can provide insight into everything from search engine ranking to social media engagement levels.

However, it can be easy to get distracted by the array of measurement tools on offer and lose sight of the goal. Methods must be chosen wisely, always with a clear line of sight to measuring outcomes against objectives.

PR measurement guidelines

The aim of PR measurement is to be able to determine if PR activity achieved what it set out to and, if it didn't, to understand what must be changed.

To do this, PR measurement must assess outcomes against specific PR objectives.

PR campaigns vary in their aims – from raising awareness to shifting perception to inspiring the discovery of products or services as part of a buying cycle, and so on – and therefore so too do objectives, but when it comes to measurement, it's still a case of comparing what resulted against what was intended.

There is no single way to do this, but there are accepted best-practice principles and frameworks that help guide PR managers and practitioners in arriving at an approach and tools and techniques to measure campaign effectiveness.

The Barcelona Principles 3.0 are the globally trusted measurement method used by the communications industry. Launched by AMEC (the Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication) in 2010, they provide guidance on how to measure PR's impact. The Principles have been updated twice since their launch to retain relevance as communications, and its channels, evolve.

AMEC has also established the Integrated Evaluation Framework to inform several industry organisations that have recognised the need to develop evaluation standards that are based on best practice which, it states, “shows how to ‘operationalise’ the Barcelona Principles and turn the Principles into action, and to prove the value of PR in a meaningful and credible manner.”ⁱ

AMEC's Integrated Evaluation Framework replaces previous earlier metrics and measurement to provide a single, integrated approach.

The Barcelona Principles

The Barcelona Principles, convened by AMEC, named after the summit where they were conceived, were initially devised in 2010, updated in 2015 and later updated again in 2020. They are backed by a range of industry associations including AMEC, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and the PRCA. The Principles provide a general set of edicts – a self-confessed ‘framework’. So, while they do include example approaches, they are not to be considered a ‘how to’ guide.

The Principles range from setting goals through identifying outputs, outcomes and potential impact, evaluating both qualitatively and quantitatively to rooting measurement and evaluation in integrity and transparency. Importantly, the Principles state that advertising value equivalents (AVEs), which used to be used to measure PR results as advertising value would be measured, i.e., by looking at the physical size of media coverage and multiplying this by the equivalent cost of advertising space, are not the value of communication.

For the full Barcelona Principles visit <https://amecorg.com/2020/07/barcelona-principles-3-0>

The AMEC Framework

The AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework emphasises the importance of aligning each element with the organisation's objectives and tailoring the measurement and evaluation approach accordingly.

It encourages the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data and insights, allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of communication effectiveness.

By following the framework, communication professionals can establish a standardised and systematic approach to measurement and evaluation, enabling them to demonstrate the value and impact of their work, make informed decisions, and continuously improve communication strategies and tactics.

The AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework is a flexible tool that can be adapted to various types of communication campaigns and activities. It provides a common language and structure for measuring and evaluating communication efforts, allowing for better comparisons and benchmarking across organisations and industries.

The Framework's seven points cover objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, outtakes, outcomes and impact.

View the AMEC Framework at <https://amecorg.com/amecframework/>

Quantitative and qualitative measurement

Quantitative PR measurement provides numbers-based insight into deliverables and achievements.

It is particularly useful in reporting results that can be used comparatively. It can feed into other quantitative key performance indicators (KPIs) in the broader business and enable progress tracking over time, delivering valuable insight into upward or downward trends.

Quantitative measures may include, but are not limited to:

- **Coverage:** number of articles or percentage uplift during a set period
- **Share of Voice (SoV):** a comparative view of coverage against competitors
- **Media meetings:** demonstrating engagement levels with target journalists and influencers. Over time, movement in this measure can indicate relationship building
- **Website traffic:** earned media article referrals to landing pages created for the purpose
- **Email subscription registrations:** captured data tracked through bespoke URL links
- **Social engagement:** the number of shares, tweets, retweets and new followers.

Qualitative measurement provides indications of the impact of PR on audience perception.

Depending on the objectives, measures may need to consider how the campaign has increased awareness or brought about a shift in attitude.

A range of approaches can be used to provide this insight, such as:

- **In-person focus groups:** with target audiences that capture qualitative responses to questions and comments made during discussions. This approach has the potential to provide detailed information, but it is time-consuming and potentially expensive
- **Self-completion surveys:** this method is most successful with an incentive, such as the download of a valued piece of content to increase completion rates
- **Telephone/video conferencing interviews:** conversations guided by a defined questionnaire, sometimes combined with self-completion surveys
- **Sentiment analysis:** the examination of coverage and online conversations to assess opinions and perceptions

Whichever combination you choose, measurement needs to provide answers to the questions you have about the success of your PR strategy and the execution of your campaign plan.

There is no single 'silver bullet'. The approach you take should be tailored according to your specific business needs, it is likely to consist of a combination of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, and should be tracked through consistent reporting. Specialists in [intelligence and insights](#) should be able to advise on both quantitative and qualitative approaches, so that you can find the right mix.

The digital landscape

Budgetary pressures and the need to demonstrate return on PR investment have driven demand for new ways of measuring PR. There are now many digital services available, each with specific measurement in mind.

It is easy to be convinced that more measurement is always a good thing. Instead, consider digital measurement tools always with the same principle in mind: before the 'how?' of measurement must come the 'what?' and the 'why?'

Also, remain focused on capturing outcomes, not just outputs. This can mean supplementing methods that, for example, track number of mentions, with those that help you understand what those mentions signify.

Search engine performance and social media interactions are numbers-driven measures, but

Examples of digital measurement and audience insight tools

Talkwalker & Infegy:

Social listening tools focused on tracking a brand's global online reputation and understanding owned and earned conversation through online, social, print, TV, news, blogs and radio. These also include measurement and dashboard capabilities, and more advanced social listening capabilities such as share of voice and topic themes.

Global Web Index (GWI):

Audience targeting platform that segments audiences using detailed profiling that includes demographics, behaviour and attitudes of people across the globe. Custom audiences are compared to the general population who have participated in surveys to generate secondary audience insights. Can be used to track longitudinal changes in consumer audience perception.

Relative Insight:

Comparative text analytics software that generates actionable insights from multiple data sources (primary or secondary). Leveraged to gain clear insight from the comparison of qualitative data sets, to measure message pull-through from comms work to media coverage, for example.

SEMRush:

Full scale SEO platform to uncover keywords, competitive search intelligence, domain knowledge, and other more technical aspects of web and SEO.

they can also demonstrate a contribution to achieving defined outcomes. If individuals within a target group read a tweet, and are also inspired to retweet it, that indicates an achieved level of engagement. In a similar way, fresh and tailored content might result in website visits, but can also inspire a higher level of engagement such as filling out an enquiry form.

The digital tools that capture this information help create a more direct line of sight from campaign activity to reaction and action, while also offering more seamless and automated reporting.

This can help teams to track generated leads and other target outcomes such as the progress, through PR, from communication to conversation, all with the aim of driving up engagement.

There are many digital measurement tools to assist in this endeavour, from those that measure website visits to those that look at brand perception, search engine ranking and keyword monitoring. Specialists in [digital marketing](#) can help you arrive at an optimal approach.

What should you measure?

An integrated approach

Start at the beginning with your goals, so you can be clear on the aims of your PR campaign. This will make setting PR measures more straightforward and meaningful.

For example, if the goal is to increase sales leads, the objective may be to drive more traffic to the website, and the tactics may include publishing valued content and engaging audiences through social media to generate click-throughs. Measurement should be at each stage – sales leads, website traffic, content consumption, social media engagement and click-throughs.

To engage target audiences, you must start with awareness, so ask yourself where your brand needs to be. What would it take to inspire your target groups to consider your brand when they research options, and how can you positively impact their buying decisions? Couple this with an understanding of the media landscape and the media consumed by your target audiences and you can determine ‘what good looks like’ in the measurement of media relations.

To help with this, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- What makes a difference to our prospecting?
- Where do we want to achieve coverage?
- Who do we need to influence and interact with on social media?

At the start of the PR campaign, be clear about its aims and how activity will support the achievement of goals. Set clear KPIs that will enable not just outputs, but also outcomes to be measured. The precise measures, and methods of evaluation, will vary according to the aims of each campaign - be they to raise brand awareness, rebrand, manage a crisis or so on. Don't forget that PR is opinion-based, so measures will need to include the means to evaluate perception.

While the sheer volume and variety in digital measurement tools can be daunting, always start at the beginning. Work with your in-house PR team or agency to decide what needs to be measured and then perhaps set up a trial of relevant tools. Generally, service providers will be happy to work with you to devise an approach to meet your needs. While the choice can be overwhelming, it is also reassuring to know that if your measurement requirement is niche, there is likely to be a tool out there that will do it for you.

The 4Ps

[FINN Partners' Global Intelligence team](#) has developed a proprietary methodology to remove guesswork from audience research insights, called the 4Ps. This is a quantitative analysis of clients' key audiences' Preferences and Priorities – showing how they currently Perform against these and the Potential they have to improve.

The 4Ps approach enhances measurement by providing insight into what brand attributes and which competitors' brands clients should prioritise measuring themselves against, as well as generating a benchmark in performance to track effectiveness of communications activity over time.

The approach establishes precisely how a brand, product or service is currently performing against competitors in the eyes of target audiences and dictates what needs to be done in order to improve performance in the mindset of those audiences.

4Ps creates a measurement framework and score system for you across the four critical areas of:

- **Preference**: What do target audiences care about?
- **Priority**: How do they rank those preferences? What is most important to target audiences?
- **Performance**: How is your brand/product/service performing against the attributes and actions that matter most? How does performance compare to key competitors?
- **Potential**: What are the best opportunities to improve performance against what matters most? What gains can you expect to achieve?

It is important to report consistently and at regular intervals once goals and measurement methods are in place. That way, you can see the progress of your activity and assess results over time. Effective measurement supports you in continually re-evaluating campaign tactics based on results, adjusting as required to optimise outcomes. A post-campaign review of objectives, results and outcomes is also essential to inform subsequent campaigns.

About FINN Partners

Founded in 2011 on the core principles of innovation and collaborative partnership, FINN Partners has grown from about \$24 million in fees to nearly \$200 million in fees over ten years, becoming one of the fastest growing independent public relations agencies in the world. The full-service marketing and communications company's record setting pace is a result of organic growth and integrating new companies and new people into the FINN world through a common philosophy.

With more than 1,400 professionals across 35 offices, FINN provides clients with global access and capabilities in the Americas, Europe and Asia. FINN Partners clients are also supported through longstanding partner agencies and its membership in the PROI network of leading agencies around the world.

Headquartered in New York, FINN has offices in: Abu Dhabi, Atlanta, Bangalore, Beijing, Boston, Chicago, Delhi, Denver, Detroit, Dublin, Fort Lauderdale, Frankfurt, Guam, Hong Kong, Honolulu, Jerusalem, Kuala Lumpur, London, Los Angeles, Madison, Manila, Mumbai, Munich, Nashville, Orange County, Paris, Portland, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Shanghai, Singapore, Vancouver and Washington D.C.

Find us at finnpartners.com and follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @finnpartners.

ⁱ AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework <https://amecorg.com/amecframework/>