

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR Media Relations Measurement

Current economic conditions and widespread reliance by executives on managing performance by the numbers demand that you measure the outcome of your media relations efforts. Managing "up" aside, the real value of a media measurement program is to help you know what's working and to fine tune your creative efforts towards those initiatives.

But that doesn't mean measuring media relations results follows a standard formula or is easy to do well – especially considering the quickening in the evolution of the media.

"A valid measurement report includes data that can be replicated and validated. The minute that information is not replicable, and that the methodology is not transparent, you have a problem. I think you have an ethical dilemma that you have to overcome to be able to demonstrate the validity of the impact and the value."

Johna Burke, AMEC Global Managing Director.

THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

A plethora of media sources means more chance of exposure for your company or brand. It also means that PR professionals must:

- Engage print, online, and broadcast media.
- Understand the difference between web content and premium web content.
- Address all forms of media coverage, from the near-advertorial byliner and standard press releases to user-generated content such as blogs.

Clearly, journalists are affected by media relations challenges, too:

- The media landscape is continuously changing and expanding.
- More emphasis is being placed on niche publications and consumer-driven content.
- There's more demand for responsible, fast, and accurate content, as well as investigative reporting.

BENCHMARKS OF SUCCESS

Although you might not be able to control the future of the media, you can take charge of your results. First, determine your media relations goals and objectives. These may include building brand awareness, generating inquiries, or proving the value of your media relations efforts.

Once you've defined those, choose the metrics that best enable you to determine effectiveness. Consider...

1. KEY MESSAGES

How are your key messages playing in the media? Make sure your messaging complements your company's core values and business propositions.

2. TONE

Not all coverage is created equal. It is important to understand not only the type of story in which your company appears, but also if it casts a positive, negative or neutral light upon your company or product.

3. PROMINENCE

Context influences the way your audience receives your key messages. This includes the position of the story in the publication or website, exclusivity (only your company is mentioned), location of initial mention, length of mention, and overall appearance. Knowing this information proves useful when comparing the power of your company's coverage to that of its competition.

4. SPOKESPERSONS

Are your key spokespeople acknowledged as experts? Does the media quote them by name? Does the media embed your key messages in their quotes? An analysis will help you determine if the media considers your spokespeople an expert source, and if your representatives appropriately convey your organization's point of view.

5. MARKETING POWER

Does the story persuade your audience to act favorably towards your company? Endorsement of your company or products along with calls to action all contribute to the selling power of your coverage – allowing your company to distinguish itself from its competitors, establish consumer trust, and elicit positive buying power.

“Most reputable researchers view such arbitrary ‘weighting’ schemes [like AVEs] aimed at enhancing the alleged value of editorial coverage as unethical, dishonest and not at all supported by the research literature.”—The Institute for PR.

ALTERNATIVES TO AVE (ALSO KNOWN AS MEDIA VALUE)

Many in the C-suite are devotees of Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE), also termed Media Value (MV). As a simple number that is relatively easy to compute and compare over time, the popularity of MV is understandable. Given the opportunity, however, you can try to introduce other, more revealing quantitative measures.

One such formula is the Burrelles Quality Rating Score, which merges crucial story and media factors together, and assigns a single value to each story. Story scores are based on factors that you deem valuable such as editorial tone, delivery of key messages, prominence of mention, and inclusion of spokespeople. Each item also receives a media score determined by the importance of the outlet in which the story circulates. Multiplying the two scores produces your quality score.

Burrelles then compiles the data into comprehensive graphs to illustrate the quality score (this aggregate number depicts both the volume and quality of stories) and average quality score (the mean value of story quality), allowing you to compare trends over time.

QUANTITATIVE METRICS

Many public relations practitioners use “multipliers” to prove the value of their media relations coverage in terms of impressions and “pass-along” readership figures. Research shows that the facts don’t support the use of these devices. In fact, relying on a multiplier can actually hurt the credibility of the profession. However, there are real quantitative metrics that PR professionals can rely on:

- Media (ad) value over time
- Number of stories over time
- Number of impressions delivered over time

USE YOUR RESOURCES WISELY

Even armed with this knowledge, PR measurement still presents a special challenge to marketers.

- Analytics consume time. When you personally gather today’s media releases, assemble a clip book, and analyze the data, you have spent valuable time away from your main mission: generating coverage.
- Measurement requires effort and often a line item in your budget, especially if you monitor and measure the exposure of your competition, as well as your own.

APPLY BEST PRACTICES

Although no fix-all exists for overcoming measurement challenges, you can use these helpful tips to find a solution that works with your measurement goals:

CONSISTENCY

Aim to create measures that consistently compare coverage over time – whether through a few of the metrics cited earlier, or through impressions, share of voice or return on investment (ROI). With such data, you will be able to track trend lines of the handful of values you choose.

MANAGEABLE SCALE

Pick key publications when measuring your company’s share of voice versus its competition. This will cut down on the volume of stories to examine and provide you with the most relevant results. Limiting your analysis to a few select competitors will also keep the scope and cost of measurement to a manageable scale. You may also choose a short time period – say two or three months – to gather data about coverage of your new product rollout versus the coverage received by a competing product.

OUTSIDE EXPERTISE

Enlisting the aide of experts, who have developed efficiencies for coding and reporting, can save both time and money. If you decide to outsource, be sure to ask the right questions of potential providers to make sure you get the end product you are seeking. For example, find out about their methodologies and sources of data so you know from the beginning exactly how the media coverage is measured. You should also decide whether the quality of reporting you require can be obtained solely by artificial intelligence, or whether you need to employ a service that offers the accuracy of human analysis as well.

Global communication trade associations AMEC, IPR (Institute for Public Relations), PRSA (Public Relations Society of America), PRCA (Public Relations and Communications Association), the Global Alliance and ICCO (International Communications Consultancy Organisation) all agree that AVEs are not a valid metric.

The use of technology in PR is expected to evolve, with an increasing focus on analytics and measurement, according to a 2019 USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations study.

YOU'LL GET THE REPORTS YOU PLAN FOR

Think about how the data is best organized so all of the audiences who could benefit from reviewing the results can find out what they need to know. For example, should the data be sorted by lines of business and sub-sorted by individual campaigns? Should corporate coverage be separated from product publicity? Will you be easily able to find the stories published in target media or in particular DMAs? Can you easily report back to individual sponsors regarding coverage of the event?

RECOGNIZE THE JOURNEY

Media measurement is a process. Start slowly and lay a firm foundation by building a strategy in line with your planning goals. Over time, add metrics that meet your evolving measurement needs.

INSIGHTFUL MEASUREMENT STARTS WITH PLANNING AND MONITORING

Make sure you capture and measure all of your coverage in local and national print, online, and broadcast outlets, and well as in the social media, such as blogs. Burrelles helps communication professionals maximize their media relations results through a full range of planning, monitoring, and measurement services. Besides delivering content, the company's online platform, called Burrelles MYNEWSDASH, enables clients to target and connect with journalists and bloggers, monitor the media for coverage, and measure and understand the impact of their outreach efforts. Founded in 1888 and headquartered in Florham Park, New Jersey, Burrelles is a media intelligence services provider generating strategic data insights that help drive winning communications programs. Burrelles provides a simple, seamless and personalized connection to media data across all of today's channels with human-verified coverage from print, online, broadcast & social media.

CONTACT US

For a free consultation, or to find out more about Burrelles media relations planning, monitoring and measurement services, please [contact us online](#) or at: **Burrelles.com | 800.631.1160**