PR News Measurement Special Report

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Introduction

Foreword

Why You Should Begin Measuring Now

We know we should measure our PR and communications efforts. But do we? Do we consistently decide on measureable goals and objectives before beginning campaigns? We're supposed to exercise daily and eat several servings of fruits and vegetables, too.

PR measurement, a healthy diet and exercise have at least one thing in common: for a relatively inexpensive investment, they can yield large rewards. As you may have guessed, we'll restrict ourselves to PR measurement in these pages. We hope, though, that essays by measurement gurus Katie Paine and Margot Savell, as well as the advice of practitioners like Louis Gray of Google, Dr. Sarab Kochhar of the Institute for PR and APCO Worldwide, Leta Soza of AirPR and Southwest Airlines' Cindy Villafranca will provide food for thought and exercise your brain (both left and right sides).

While some say, "If it's not measured, it's not PR." Others say, "If it's not measured, it didn't happen." Perhaps those aphorisms are extreme to make a point. When the PR News brand holds measurement events and we survey participants, we often find the majority is failing to measure on a consistent basis; fewer know what the Barcelona Principles are. Similarly, when PR News Pro, the brand's weekly newsletter, sponsors a survey of readers, the numbers indicating who measures are poor.

But why measure? So you can know what is working and how well. Measuring also lets you know what isn't working and how badly it's missing. More important, armed with this information you can implement course corrections.

It's only when you've measured and know why things are working can you expand on the winning formula. Of course, when you're asked to prove the worth of your PR effort to the C-suite, measurement against the backdrop of specific business goals will be invaluable in your reporting.

We've arranged the report to begin with basics; slightly deeper dives can be found toward the back. The short essays cover topics including how to begin measuring efforts, using Google Analytics, dashboard considerations and measuring influencers.

In addition to what you see here, however, we urge you to become familiar with the Barcelona Principles 2.0, which you, as a subscriber to PR News Pro, can find at the PR News Pro Essentials page: prnewsonline.com/prnews-pro-essentials/ You'll also find other useful documents for PR measurement there.

Our hope is that these pages will convince you to begin measuring if you aren't already, demonstrate that it's relatively easy and inexpensive to begin. For those who measure regularly, we trust this brief report will spur you to continue measuring and be even more informed, extensive and creative.

Seth Arenstein
Editor, PR News
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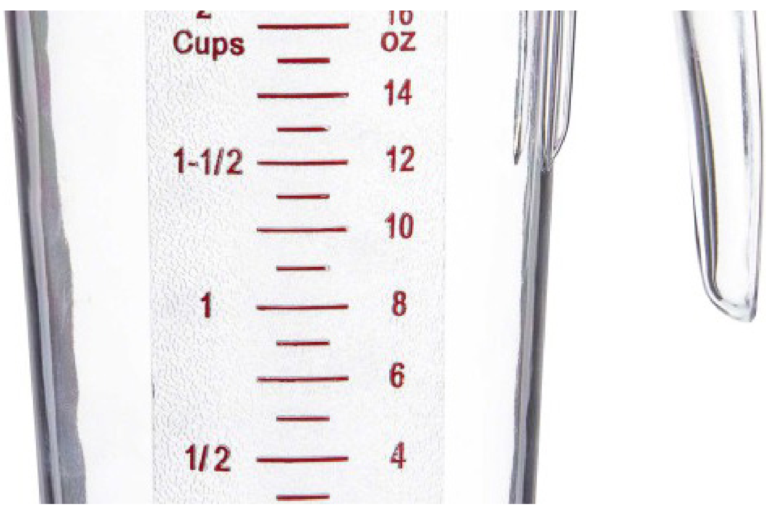
PR Measurement: 4 Basic Elements for the Uninitiated

By Seth Arenstein

Most American adults know exercise and diet are critical to a healthy, fulfilling life. Still, only about half of us get the amount of exercise the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends.

It's similar when it comes to PR measurement. PR pros know it's important to measure, but measurement itself often is done minimally or skipped altogether. With this reality in mind it was barely surprising that nearly 60% of PR pros are unaware of the Barcelona Principles, the measurement best practices adopted in 2010 and updated in 2015, according to a recent PR News survey.



Perhaps PR pros would pay more attention to measurement if they realized, as Leta Soza, director of PR engineering and operations, AirPR, wrote, "That [measurement] has the ability to drive optimization and improvement of future campaigns."

As such, Soza, recommends PR pros apply the following basic elements of PR measurement to their campaigns.

1. Tie PR to Business Objectives and Setting Campaign Goals: A strategic approach to PR measurement starts with clear business objectives and specific PR campaign goals. Identify business objectives by asking explicit questions such as:

- What business problems do you want me to help solve?
- What does success looks like in a year's time from a company standpoint? From a PR standpoint?
- Are there competitive advantages you wish to elevate?
- Is there specific messaging that you want to gain traction with or see fade away?

2. Identify KPIs and Metrics: Once you know what PR is responsible for driving, it's time to identify specific metrics that will prove goals were met. Implementing KPIs and metrics ensures PR doesn't rely on purely anecdotal or observed data. Instead of vanity metrics like headline impressions, circulation, page views and AVEs, PR should be tracking: content relevancy, message performance/pull-through, spikes in web traffic, customer interaction across properties and brand sentiment amongst key audiences. The right metrics, when attached to clear goals, reveal what really matters versus numbers that massage the ego but fail to provide true insight for the business.

3. Evaluate to Cull Insights and Fuel Optimization: PR measurement is more than culling numbers. It's about systemically assessing signals and thinking critically about the influence those signals have on a greater strategy. After the execution of a campaign, critique what worked and failed. Next, take those critiques and apply critical thought to formulate a clear understanding of what you're going to do (or not do) next to make PR stronger and better. The application of key takeaways and insights should inform all decisions about future PR efforts. PR pros must evaluate objectively and apply the signals received as a result of measurement. The aim of evaluation is to derive insight into what to do next (based on the performance of recent efforts), how to go about it (based on top-performing tactics and outlets) and what was (potentially) missed in the previous approach.

4. Define PR Measurement Success: Meeting measurement goals is an indicator of success. Consider, however, the ripple effect of measurement.

PR measurement, much like PR, is dynamic and requires an evolving vision. Be sure you are doing more than measuring short-term responses. You must also apply that feedback within a long-term strategy. Avoid the fallacy that PR measurement must be derived from numbers. After all, PR is about relationships. Data can show what works, but it's always about people behind the numbers.

In the end, the most important thing any PR pro can do is to ensure the key elements of PR measurement are viewed as indispensable parts of a whole.

5 Ways Right-Brained PR Pros Can Use Google Analytics

By Mark Renfree

There's one tool that can help any communicator get ROI results without breaking the bank: Google Analytics.

Google's free tool has the power to transform a brand's understanding of its online presence, which can only lead to a better experience for users. Putting this analytics tool to work within a larger measurement framework has the potential to unleash a kind of transparency to PR work that was at one time unimaginable. This allows communicators to make well-informed decisions backed by data, which can then be used to concretely prove their team's business contributions to the C-suite.

With all this power, it's no surprise that measurement continues to be discussed from the boardroom to the break room. But for the typically right-brained PR pro it can seem a little daunting to begin fussing with all this data. Luckily, Google Analytics is a good place for the uninitiated to start.

Louis Gray, senior program manager, Google Analytics for Google and featured speaker at the June 6 PR News Google for Communicators Workshop in Miami, has five tips to help even the most math-averse PR pros get started with Google Analytics.

Learn what your visitors are doing

Your content and site are only as good as your visitors show you it is. Google Analytics will show you how users interact with your site, how long they visit, what path they take through your site and what actions they take—information that impacts your business and future development decisions

Learn how they got there

Beyond knowing what visitors do on your site, pretty much everyone wants to know how where they came from. You can measure marketing impact, whether social campaigns are bringing you visitors, or if sites are sending you traffic.

Set up goals for your website and begin to track against those objectives

What is your business trying to do? Are you trying to drive traffic to content? To an e-commerce store? Are you looking to drive subscriptions? Determine what your main objective is and set up goals in Google Analytics that track your progress.

Set up a custom dashboard that tells you what you want quickly

Every business is different, so what's important to you is different than what's important for others. Create a dashboard with the graphs and charts and information you find most valuable and want to gain updates on each day.

Set up alerts to stay informed

You can set up custom alerts that let you know when there are big changes in traffic, conversion rate, bounce rate or other measurement points. If a large crush of visitors comes to your site, you'll know right away.

Measure Any Social Media Campaign With These 3 Guidelines

By Mark Renfree

The revolution in human communication brought on by social media helped to usher in a new era of public relations that is measurement-focused and data-driven. With the rise of social media and digital technologies came an influx of relevant data to the public relations discipline.

However, the discipline at large is still trying to come up with widely applicable measurement criteria. The Barcelona Principles—which now include specific suggestions for measuring social media—do a good job at this, but they remain unknown to many communicators.

On top of this general confusion, many social networks offer their own native analytics, which don't necessarily play nice with metrics from other platforms. To make sense of the often-disparate data, Sarab Kochhar, associate director measurement, APCO Worldwide, offers these best practices that communicators can apply across any social media measurement effort. With these tips, PR pros will be able to gather and analyze their data to align with business goals and build social media intelligence into organizational strategies.

Integrate insights from social media with other information sources

- Work across departments to create a collaborative environment for analysis.
- Separate your financial outcomes from non-financial outcomes. Each needs to be measured and interpreted separately.
- Maintain a list of everything you can measure against everything you must measure to make sure you're focusing on what matters.

Align social media to business goals

- Differentiate between strategy and tactics by separating what you want to accomplish from how you'll accomplish it. Set metrics for each strategy and tactic in the beginning to gauge progress, and adjust if necessary.

Plan for performance measurement

- Choose the tools and methodologies you'll use to measure carefully. Make sure to select the right social media measurement software for your program.
- Set key performance indicators from the beginning that are aligned with specific business goals. Track these throughout a campaign but be on the lookout for blind spots.

How Much Influence? Tips and Tactics to Measure PR Influencer Success

By Margot Savell

There is a lot of buzz about influencers at the moment. The word has become ubiquitous in PR and marketing circles, particularly when we talk about building valuable relationships in social media.

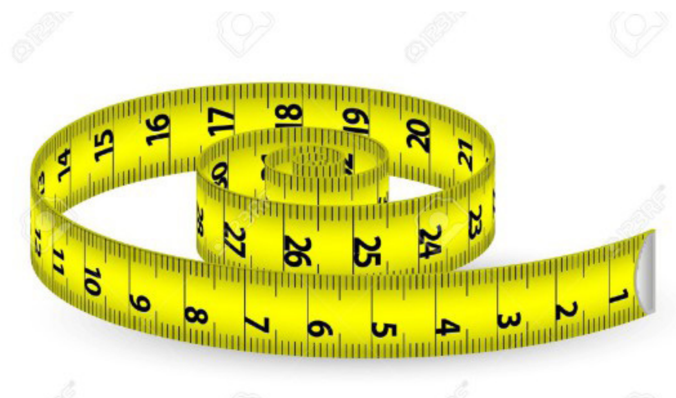
Brands are increasing their development of influencer programs. At the same time there is a growing demand to measure PR influencer success.

But reaching out to influencers in PR is not new. PR practitioners have been pitching influencers, and measuring the success of their efforts, since our profession was established more than 100 years ago. The strategies and tactics have evolved over time, but a major tenet of media relations always has been to target influential journalists, industry analysts, newsmakers, subject-matter experts, academics and other thought leaders.

The more recent trend of paying attention to online media influencers dates to 1994, when the web-hosting service GeoCities was created. Influence was measured by the number of page views on a website. Many sites featured counters to proudly display their traffic numbers in a transparent effort to showcase influence and attract even more views.

From a personal perspective, 1994 was also the year that I joined AOL, which offered searchable "Member Profiles" to help determine influence. At the time, this was considered a forward-thinking feature.

In 2002, social networking came into play with the launch of Friendster, followed by LinkedIn in 2003. In 2006, Facebook opened up to the general public and Twitter launched.



With each new social media milestone, the movement to cultivate relationships with influencers has grown. As we know, modern-day social influencers are prominent people, often bloggers, who have the reputation and power to sway others with their opinions. They represent opportunities to shape perceptions about your corporate and brand reputation, in addition to your products and solutions. The long-term goal is to convert them into brand advocates.

A meaningful measurement program can help get you there by:

1. uncovering influencers who have the most significant voice and are passionate about your brand and your industry;
2. analyzing what resonates with influencers; and
3. finding insights to drive future strategy.

Where to Begin?

As with any measurement program, your first job is to define your business and communications goals. Once you've done so, choose metrics that matter, based on your goals. And make sure they are measurable.

Is your goal to increase the number of brand mentions by influencers in social media and if so, by what percentage each month? Are you trying to enhance your social footprint in specific channels that are most important to your target audiences? Do you hope to increase the engagement of influencers with your content in those channels?

Once you know your goals, key metrics and the most important channels, conduct a media analysis to find relevant online influencers.

Tools such as Traackr and Simply Measured look at three criteria to determine the foundation of influence: the people who can influence your business and hopefully bring you closer to your customers.

In addition to Traackr and Simply Measured, there are many tools that can help you find influencers: Appinions, Brandwatch, NetBase, Radian6, Sysomos, Talkwalker and Zignal, to name a few.

After you've identified influencers important to your brand, evaluate their conversations and develop insights to inform future strategy. Look to the data for the answers to the questions below:

How many influencers mentioned your brand name in a month?

- How many mentioned your messages?
- What are they saying about your company, your brand and your products?
- Who discussed the topics most important to you?
- Who discussed those topics most frequently?
- Are influencers showing brand preference?
- Do they have strong opinions about your competitors?
- Who is most engaged with your content and social channels?
- Who generated the most engagement with followers?
- Did they share your research, infographics, fun facts, photos, videos or other creative content?
- Did they share links to your news?
- Are they using your unique URLs to drive referral traffic to your website?
- Do your influencers have followers who are influencers also, and who might not be part of your outreach program yet?

A close examination of reviews by influencers is important, too. These days, many studies suggest that online influencer reviews and recommendations increasingly guide consumer decision making.

After you've analyzed the data, use these findings to adjust your messages, craft content, refine your strategies and engage further with your influencers. But keep in mind that the media landscape shifts quickly—new influencers enter, existing influencers exit, and topics of interest shift.

Ongoing measurement will help you stay on top of these changes. Even more important, measurement demonstrates the success of your PR influencer programs and helps find ways to further refine your strategies and tactics.

6 Tips for Your Measurement Dashboard

By Ian James Wright

"It's not just tracking mentions, but how are you being mentioned, what messages are you getting across!"

With this important central concept in mind, Cindy Villafranca, senior specialist, communication & outreach at Southwest Airlines, walked the audience at the recent PR News Measurement Conference in Washington, D.C., through her experience building a methodology and framework for measurement, establishing a cadence for reporting and getting stakeholders familiar and comfortable with her efforts.

Here are the key takeaways she highlighted:

1. Update! The first version of your dashboard may not be (and probably should not be) your last.

Don't be afraid to change it if it makes sense to do so. Changing it every month is probably not a good idea, but update it as needed to show relevance to your business.

2. Keep your methodology and framework consistent.

The KPIs you measure should not change much, if at all. What may change is what data you collect, and the correlations you make with that data.

3. Pull in data from other sources.

Look outside of Communications if it makes sense and yields data that shows a correlation to how your team supports the business.

4. Establish a measurement cadence that is achievable.

Does this mean monthly, quarterly, bi-annually? You decide based on your business, but be careful not to overpromise and under deliver.

5. Socialize the dashboard with your team; highlight results.

Build awareness about the existence of your dashboard. That will garner buy-in from others, and highlight the hard work your team is doing. And don't assume everyone understands or knows the metrics on your dashboard. Explain, educate, and inform!

6. Allocate the right resources for a successful product.

Dashboards take time! They take time to develop, they take time to compile and analyze, and it takes time to meet with colleagues and leaders to talk about the data. So be sure you are allocating the right resources for a successful product.

Measuring the World: Tips & Tactics for Global Measurement Programs

By Margot Savell

It is becoming increasingly critical to meet the needs of businesses that operate in different markets around the world. As a result, many companies are integrating global media measurement programs into their communications plans to provide a worldwide roadmap that drives future strategy.

If you are considering a similar path, here are some important steps to take your measurement program global. Many are the same that you follow in your U.S. market. But there are some stark differences that require your attention.

It is also important to note that global measurement is a big lift that requires a team to tackle.

Choosing markets and languages

When setting up your global measurement program, your first step should be determining which of your markets should be measured. After that rank their order of importance based on your business and communications goals. This will help you focus your analysis, insights and recommendations on the priority markets.

The next step is to pin down the languages that are important to your industry in each market. For example, a measurement program in India might require an understanding of six languages in coverage about consumer electronics, but only one language in the technology industry.

Next, find out which media channels are used most frequently in each market. Don't waste your time and effort on media that is not being consumed by your target audiences.

Once you have all of this information, check to make sure your listening tool has the functionality to pull coverage in those markets, languages and media channels. Every tool does not cover media sources in all countries and languages.

Finding the right tool

If you don't already have a data license with a specific tool, reach out to several vendors to determine which one best meets your needs. Many options are available; for example, one tool offers coverage in 40 countries and 80 languages, while another spans 186 languages in 190 countries.

In addition, some tools provide online coverage only, while others access data from television, radio and print, in addition to online. As well, be sure to check how many media sources are included—I've seen ranges from 2,000 to 2 million depending on the number of media channels, countries and languages available in each tool.

Translating keywords and results

After you finalize the priority markets, languages, media sources and tools, the next step is to set up keywords and search strings in all languages important to your global measurement program. The best choice is to have a native speaker in each language translate the keywords for you. An additional benefit: Analysts on the ground in different countries also have the advantage of being able to interpret the data from a local perspective, with an understanding of the resident issues, challenges and cultures.

If you lack native speakers in your organization, this step can be outsourced to PR agencies or research companies that have a global presence.

A less-desirable option is to use a free tool to translate your keywords and search strings. Such tools also can be used to translate coverage results. Should you take this route, however, the best practice is to use more than one translation tool to make sure the context is accurate. I have seen analysis based on only one tool, which provided a translation that was out of context and made no sense in conjunction with the report itself.

Validating data

Data is inherently messy. It's more so when coverage is in different languages. For example, one company discovered that its stock market ticker formed an unrelated word in Spanish. Additional qualifiers had to be added to its search strings to eliminate that coverage.

Be sure to plan for extra time to validate and optimize your results to eliminate unnecessary noise, ensuring that the data is clean, relevant and consistent in each language and country.

Visualizing data

Global data, like domestic figures, can be sliced and diced in several ways, depending on your PR strategies in each country. For example, if your PR activities are consistent across markets, identical metrics can be applied to each. This will demonstrate a global view of how each country stacks up against others and can showcase performance successes around the world.

But when different strategies and tactics are developed for each country, as is often the case, consistent analytics and data visualization gets a bit trickier. Coverage volume and other metrics cannot be applied equally across markets because some have unique PR activities. For example, one country might focus on a video program, so video metrics such as views come into play. Another country might activate an Instagram and Twitter program, where the metrics are quite different.

In these cases, comparing metrics across markets is unlikely to yield an accurate global view of performance. It might be more helpful to equate coverage of key messages or topics in different countries. Perhaps comparing results and outcomes from campaigns or launches is the answer.

Customizing your program

In summary, your global measurement program must be customized for countries, languages, metrics and visualizations. Look for global trends and overarching themes when analyzing the data to see what is generating attention in the global media landscape. This will enable you to uncover your high-impact markets across the globe. It also will unveil opportunities to revise strategies and build brand awareness for the most important industry topics in each country.

7 Steps You'll Need to Complete the AMEC Measurement Framework

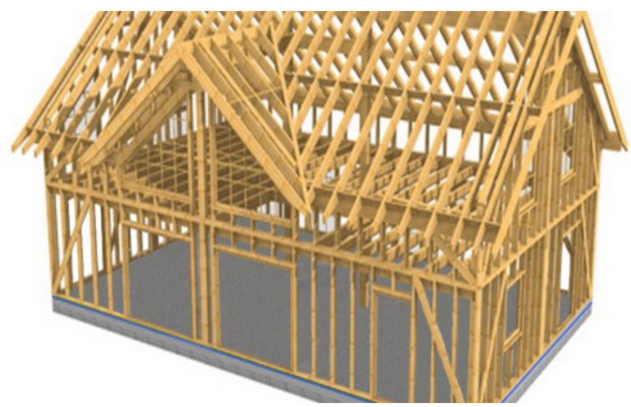
By Katie Paine

[Editor's Note: In the interest of transparency, the author runs a consulting organization that designs measurement programs. She's also developed a framework that she uses in her business.]

I've just spent the better part of one day trying to navigate the hottest thing in measurement this month: the **AMEC** Measurement Framework, unveiled with great fanfare in July during the AMEC Measurement Summit in London. It's an interactive version of the original AMEC framework, designed to make it easier for clients to implement Barcelona Standard-compliant measurement in their organizations.

It features multi-colored squares. Each requires you to provide information about your organization program or campaign. The squares are: Objectives, Inputs, Activity, Outputs, Out-takes, Outcomes and Organizational Impact. When you click on a square it asks you questions like, "What are the broad objectives of your organization? And what are your communications objectives?"

Visually, it is certainly an enormous improvement over the old version, which, I will confess, I have never once been able to get a client to comprehend. And the interactive nature of the Framework is a lot less daunting than the old PowerPoint version. Still, I love it. I will tell you why below. But be aware, in the end, it will be just as challenging to fill out as the earlier version. That's because the problems inherent in the old framework remain, despite the sexy, new front end. Sure, there's a taxonomy that offers examples of the type of answers it's looking for, but the confusion will persist because the very smart people who created the Framework live and breathe measurement. Many, if not most, primarily work with large, sophisticated organizations that have staff with at least some background in measuring results. But that's not your typical PR program. Despite the impression that Samantha Jones of Sex and the City left on a generation, the vast majority of PR is for small to medium-sized businesses. The people in these businesses are asking far more basic questions than the Framework will answer.



Taking the Plunge

I decided to fill out the Framework using a PR campaign I recently helped a client measure. I used the responses that members of its PR team gave me at our first meeting. In short, there was considerable confusion between inputs, activities and outputs, no clear connection between organization objectives and no clue what the actual impact would be. The good news is we eventually identified target audiences and objectives and connected the dots between the communications activity and the ultimate impact. The client now has a wonderful working dashboard.

Then I went back and tried to fill in the Framework with the information I used to make this client's dashboard. After a long day of checking the taxonomy and making sure I put everything in the right boxes, I have these tips:

1. Before you Google AMEC Framework, do your homework: What all PR measurement requires, regardless of what framework or tool you employ, is a thorough understanding of the business goals of the organization. What is the mission? How does it make money, and what is the perceived role of PR in that process? For agency PR folks, this is your biggest weakness and the reason why PR gets no respect when budgets tighten. If you don't have an agreed-upon definition of how PR contributes to the success of the organization you'll never get beyond square one, literally. So meet with your boss, your boss's boss, the board and get one.

[Subscribers: See Katie Paine's dashboard recipe and other useful measurement documents at the PR News ProEssentials Page: prnewsonline.com/pr-news-pro-essentials/]

2. Bake cookies to find your inputs: Some answers to Framework questions about target audiences and strategy may reside in other departments. Depending on the size of your organization, information on specific target audiences or personas, or even overall strategy, may well live in sales, marketing or customer intelligence. Visit whatever departments hold the clues and bring treats. I've always gotten more information with chocolate chip cookies than an email. Depending on their stress level, a good scotch also can work.

3. Look at the communications budget for activities: What you're really doing with this Framework (and any measurement program) is determining what efforts are and are not worthwhile. The fundamental concept is worth, which implies a financial or resource commitment. So rather than just a laundry list of activities, which could quickly become a nightmare of random metrics, only list those activities that require either a significant amount of budget, time or resources. (You can get to the others later.) To simplify the process, since the Conclave has determined that you earn a share, I wouldn't even bother with the S column, just include any shared data under earned. Also, note that earned doesn't mean what you have already earned, but rather what you plan to do in terms of earned media, i.e. what you're writing, the nature of the media outreach, speechwriting etc. – anything that is going to require resources.

4. Outputs are what you've checked off your to-do list: After you've listed all the activities, you need to see what actually happened, i.e. did any of that activity reach the target audiences? This is where you can count the number of media items that ran or that you earned. Tally up the paid media placements and anything that was shared. Add data on clicks, time on site or whatever metrics you've agreed are important from your web analytics platform. When measuring events count the number of attendees as well as anyone who used your hashtag. Whatever you do, try to avoid completely inaccurate definitions of reach and impressions.

5. If you don't have good survey or engagement data, skip the out-takes section: Essentially out-takes are what your target audience actually takes away from all the stuff you've listed in step 4. To understand what an audience member takes away, you have to ask his/her opinion. In other words, are they more aware, more likely to consider or prefer your brand? While not the same as awareness, engagement may be an acceptable proxy for evidence of attention on the part of your target audiences. So likes, shares, favorites, reactions and comments may all be evidence of out-takes.

6. Outcomes should be the same as the communications goals in step 1: Go back to step 1 and cut and paste your communications goals in the Outcomes section and change the tenses, i.e. if the goal was "To increase preference in the new brand by 10%," the outcome should be "Increased preference in the new brand by 10%, as measured by pre/post testing." If that didn't happen, prepare a good explanation.

7. Impact should be the same as the goals you listed in step 1: Go back to step 1 to copy and paste the business goals in the Impact section and change the tenses. As above, if the impact is different, prepare a good explanation.

Ultimately, I love this Framework, not because it is perfect, or even particularly easy to use. I love it because it poses the kind of questions I've been answering for 30 years. I know all too well how hard many of them are to answer.