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Publisher’s Letter

Many Recipes, Not Enough Cooks

As you dig into this guidebook you’ll see measurement referred to as “the holy grail,” the critical link, the linchpin. It’s the one area of Public Relations that, if we could just figure it out, we’d all be OK and PR would be elevated to a new level in the organizational stratum. This is partly true.

In our research for this book and in discussions with countless PR professionals, we’ve found that while all agree that PR is important to measure, many will admit that because there are no agreed-upon measurement standards, PR professionals can get away with just a little bit more in proving or disproving the effectiveness of a campaign or an overall PR strategy. That is where this book comes in: there is no cookie-cutter approach to measuring. No one prescription for measuring right. There are many ways — effective but different — to ascertain if what you are doing as a PR professional is on track or off track, if your organization has the mindshare it needs to move the needle, and if your stakeholders believe in your brand or have lost faith.

This guidebook is intentionally filled with varying opinions on measurement strategies and techniques. There are case studies, metrics, formulas, points of view and steps for putting a value on your PR. I’d like to thank the many contributors to this book who took time out of their busy schedules to offer a recipe or two for PR measurement.

Now, more than ever, every organization, for-profit or not-for-profit, is being held more accountable, their actions magnified by more educated consumers and investors, and by citizen journalists who are skewing the whole definition of media relations. But you know this — and because you’re reading this guidebook you’re equipping yourself with the knowledge and tools necessary to make measurement work for you.

Enjoy this guidebook and let us know how it measures up.

Sincerely,

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Measurement Sets Company’s Rythym

By Tim Marklein

We all know PR can be incredibly valuable. But how do we know? Can we prove it? Unfortunately, the state of measurement in our industry is anemic at best. I hate to paint such a bleak picture, but I want to challenge us as an industry to embrace the numbers. They won’t bite. I promise.

Having worked with corporate and technology clients on measurement systems for 10+ years, I can attest to how hard it may be to get the ball rolling. PR leaders are almost proud of how averse they are to math. Marketing executives insist on metrics from Web and direct mail and advertising teams, but are often too willing to ignore the lack of metrics from their PR teams. Likewise, the numbers-driven business executives who should care most about brand, reputation and shareholder value tend not to understand PR’s role in all three.

The irony is that the solution is inherent in the problem itself. Most of our clients don’t expect metrics from us because too many of us have told them PR can’t be measured. Or we try to “sell in” metrics as an added feature, which reinforces that they’re optional — and probably less valuable than the outputs or outcomes we’re trying to measure.

Contrast this with our advertising brethren. They embraced metrics early as a sales tool, and eventually as a management tool baked into how they work. One can argue the metrics themselves are just as fuzzy as anything the PR industry uses. However, they use them brilliantly to justify big ad spend upfront — and increase their slice of the marketing pie. How else can you explain ad spending grew faster than the economy, up 4.5%, in the first half of 2005 (TNS Media Intelligence, Sept. 2005).

We can also learn some lessons from political campaigns, where polling is the lifeblood of an industry. Would they be satisfied with a “quarterly media analysis” delivered 4-6 weeks after the quarter ends? No way. Their measurement is daily, weekly and monthly. On multiple criteria and feedback levels — encompassing candidates, issues, competitors and alternatives. Is there any reason our clients deserve less for their business campaigns?

The most powerful argument for measurement is not just what it can deliver in gauging media trends, audience feedback, campaign success and business outcomes. It goes back to our clients — and our aspirations as an industry to have the value of PR get its “past due” recognition. Metrics are the linchpin of a company’s management rhythm. As the saying goes, “You can’t manage it if you can’t measure it.” And good luck getting more budget without metrics.
So what can we do now, individually and collectively?

Here’s my prescription:

1. Commit to measurement as a discipline. For real this time.

2. Build a simple “dashboard” of metrics for company or client. Even if you do it yourself, in a spreadsheet or by hand, track your progress every month or every week. (Quarterly is an afterthought, and usually too late to do anything about it.)

3. Start with mind share, media share, market share and market cap. Other indicators vary by company, but these are relevant and trackable for almost every business.

4. Don’t get hung up on what you can “own.” You’re not just measuring your work or your agency’s work — you’re measuring the entire organization.

5. Create a few charts, and share them regularly with your executives. They might not understand them at first, but it’ll definitely change the conversation.

6. Read up on the Web — you’ll be surprised at the PR measurement foundations that already exist: http://www.instituteforpr.com/measurement_and_evaluation.phtml.

7. Get your hands on other function’s measurement reports. Study them for clues.

8. Don’t start any new program without defining a target outcome. Even if the idea starts with “get coverage,” take the time to flesh out the “why.” If not, you won’t know the “what” to do or the “how” to know it worked.

The bottom line: It’s time to stop paying lip service to measurement. Whether it’s our lack of understanding, investment or confidence in PR measurement, we have set the bar too low for our clients. We need a lot more PR science to complement the PR art. The clock is ticking, and while we dally, the other marketing disciplines will continue eating up our budgets. And we won’t deserve that proverbial seat at the table.

Tim Marklein is Executive VP & GM, Northern California, Weber Shandwick Worldwide

KEY MEASUREMENT DEFINITIONS

Outputs = What activity you generate
Outtakes = What people “take away”
Outcomes = Behavioral changes
Old Habits Die Hard: Print Still Most Important Media To Monitor

Despite the explosive growth in cable channels — not to mention the digital lurch — the overwhelming majority of corporate PR managers continue to place the most importance on print placements, according to an exclusive PR News/BurrellesLuce survey in mid-2005 on how PR pros track media coverage.

Nearly 300 PR News subscribers responded to the survey, which was conducted in October/November 2005. With media outlets proliferating at a furious pace, media monitoring is shaping up as one of the biggest challenges facing senior PR execs in 2005 and beyond. However, bombarded by other media choices, many PR execs prefer to stay in the comfort zone of counting clips, according to the survey. Dusting other media, 75% of respondents said print is the most important media to monitor.

“The problem is there's so much to monitor,” says Shelley Buckingham, project manager at the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), who participated in the survey. “And I can't say the media monitoring companies for radio and TV are doing the best job. [But] there's so much to gain in those areas, and we're hoping that they get more sophisticated and accountable.”

Perhaps it's a chicken-or-the-egg question. If corporate PR execs are reluctant to get their feet wet in other areas of media monitoring (aside from print), vendors have little incentive to bulk up alternative monitoring programs. Just 3% of the respondents chose radio as the most important to monitor, while 13% chose TV and 9% chose the internet, even though it's easier to track customers online.

“I don't know how many people go to the Web for news,” Buckingham says. “Unless you're a news junkie, you're not going to the Web” aside from getting the headlines. Yet Sue Ross, vp/marketing at BurrellesLuce, disagrees. “I read so much about how more and more people are using the Internet as their source for news,” she says. “News coverage is handled differently in print than it is on the Web, and if you want to get a good view of what people are saying about your company, you should be tracking both mediums.”

Although print still is perceived as the major game in town, less than half of the respondents have figured out a way to match their media hits with business outcomes. This suggests that many PR pros still are behind the eight ball when it comes to simply developing (effective) scoring systems. The main problem is money, or lack thereof; nearly 60% of respondents spend less than $500 a month to monitor the media. About a quarter spend between $500 and $1,000 a month while just 8% spend more than $2,000 a month.

Asked why measurement budgets are so paltry, Ross says a similar survey in the future would yield different results not just for budget allocations but for measurement activity overall. But even as measurement is fast morphing into the “Holy Grail” for corporate America, nearly a third of respondents plan to spend the same amount on media monitoring in 2005 as they did in 2004, which is to say: not very much.
Is the Road to ROI Paved with Pay-For-Placement PR?

By Richard Virgilio

During the past few years, pay-for-placement PR has been gaining traction. Some newly launched agencies, in fact, are built exclusively around this model, and they are racking up some respectable clients. So why are corporate PR departments embracing this model, and is it a passing trend or here to stay?

Pay-for-placement service is built on a simple concept: The most effective way to get what you pay for is to pay only for what you get. Usually, a set fee is charged for each placement a client receives, keyed to the depth of coverage and the circulation or audience rating of the media outlet — an attractive idea in this era in which every CEO is on a return-on-investment (ROI) crusade.

The traditional retainer-based value proposition, under which a PR agency sells hours and not outcomes, works well for clients who:
1. Require a broad range of services to supplement their own in-house capacities
2. Need help with their messaging, positioning and target markets
3. Are winning the publicity they need, where they need it
4. Are achieving targeted and measurable ROI

The persistent problem for many retainer agencies and in-house teams is Numbers 3 and 4: publicity and ROI. Publicity is the PR capability that corporations and their agencies struggle hardest to manage, principally because media relations has become a more sophisticated and specialized endeavor that demands greater amounts of time, expertise and contacts across an increasingly diverse range of print, broadcast and online media.

Additionally, most corporate management unconditionally demands positive coverage in precisely those media venues that reach and influence their particular stakeholders. Pay-for-placement agencies marshal all their resources to achieve that single objective.

As to ROI, CEOs are not now, and probably never will be, satisfied with our publicity-measurement techniques and, therefore, our ROI estimates. The pay-for-placement model does not directly address the ROI problem, as some of its practitioners may contend. But the model is client-driven, as clients may choose to commit their investment based on their assessment of the placement’s worth - the risk is assumed by the agency. So while it is not the answer to ROI, pay-for-placement PR does represent an unmistakably

The pay-for-placement firm's mandate is publicity, and only publicity. Don't expect proposals, plans, strategy, counseling, reports and meetings about scheduling the next meetings.}
Dictionary Of Public Relations Measurement And Research

This Dictionary was prepared and edited by Dr. Don W. Stacks, University of Miami and reprinted with permission of the Institute for Public Relations

A

Alpha Level (·) — the amount of error or chance allowed in sampling or inferential testing

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) — an inferential statistical test of significance for continuous measurement dependent variables against a number of groups as independent variables

Articles — an output, typically printed but also found on the Internet

Attitude — a predisposition to act or behave toward some object; motivating factor in public relations; composed of three dimensions: affective (emotional evaluation), cognitive (knowledge evaluation), and connotative (behavioral evaluation)

Attitude Research — the measuring and interpreting a full range of views, sentiments, feelings, opinions, and beliefs that segments of the public may hold toward a client or product

Attitude Scale — a measure that targets respondent attitudes or beliefs toward some object; typically interval-level data and requires that an arbitrary or absolute midpoint (“neutral” or “neither agree nor disagree”) be provided to the respondent; also known as Likert or Semantic Differential measures

Audience — a specified group from within a defined public targeted for influence

Baseline — an initial measurement against which all subsequent measures are compared

Behavioral Objective — (1) an objective that specifies the expected public relations campaign or program outcome in terms of specific behaviors; (2) a measure that is actionable in that it is the behavior requested of a target audience

Belief — a long-held evaluation of some object, usually determined on a basis its occurrence; clusters of beliefs yield attitudes

Benchmarking (Benchmark Study) — (1) a measurement technique that involves having an organization learn something about its own practices, the practices of selected others, and then compares these practices

Bivariate Analysis — a statistical examination of the relationship between two variables

BRAD — (1) British Rate and Data measure (2) provides circulation and advertising costs data

C

Campaign (Program) — the planning, execution, and evaluation of a public relations plan of action aimed at solving a problem

Case Study Methodology — an informal research methodology that gathers data on a specific individual or company or product with the analysis focused on understanding its unique qualities; is not generalizable to other cases or populations

Categorical Data — measurement data that are defined by their association with groups and are expressed in terms of frequencies, percentages, and proportions (see: nominal and ordinal data)

Category 3 Coefficient Alpha

Category — in content analysis the part of the system where the content (units of analysis) are placed; also referred to as “subjects” or “buckets”

Causal Relationship — a relationship between variables in which a change in one variable forces, produces, or brings about a change in another variable

Census — collection of data from every person or object in a population