Top Tips to Media Measurement

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Introduction

> Measurement occurs in virtually every facet of life, the only difference being what is actually being measured.

> For the past several decades, since the Total Quality Management ethos swept through the developed world, every management discipline has been involved in measuring the different elements that control or influence their businesses.

> Closer to home, we know that within communications, our "above the line" colleagues in advertising have utilised researched measurement criteria in the planning, testing and effectiveness of their campaigns.

> Public relations is no different, for there are tried and tested methodologies for measurement and/or analysis and/or evaluation, that every professional communicator could and should use not just after the event to show that something has happened but in the initial planning, formulation, tracking and reporting of a campaign or dedicated course of activity.

> Additionally, some methodologies can be used across all media types - press, broadcast and the Internet without any alteration or adaptation to their analysis software and more recently, qualitative pre- and post-campaign, attitudinal research through the analysis of focus group tapes has been added to their product offerings.

> But rather than looking at the different systems available, let us look at what they can do and where they can help in continuously improving the effectiveness and efficiency of your communications plus the benefits that can be gained by their use.

1. Measuring Coverage

> Measure the amount of coverage your company and your products/brands are receiving within press, broadcast and online media is usually the first step in ensuring your company and brands are achieving maximum coverage within the different media types.
> Such measurement can be by simply counting the number of articles, broadcast items or Internet sites that carry your messages.

To these basic measures can be added such things as how much space within the article did you message occupy, was it in a headline, first sentence, first paragraph, what page, what journal, which journalist wrote the article, was the message in a photograph, and what was the tone of the portrayal of the message?

Then you need to consider whether this coverage means are your key messages reaching their targeted audiences. And how many times are these targeted people having the Opportunity To See (OTS) your messages? Additionally, you can calculate what percentage of your target audiences were reached in any given time period. – similar metrics to those used by advertisers, i.e. Reach, Frequency, Opportunities to See, plus geographic and demographic assessments of the coverage.

Benefits of measurement are:

- You can identify any message or geographic or demographic coverage issues in your target audiences and make adjustments to your future activity;

- You have a check on the Return On Investment (ROI) for your media activity;
- You can compare the value and effectiveness of editorial investment against advertising on a message-by-message basis.

2. Following Stories

Measurement can help achieve your business objectives through the placement and management of beneficial media stories that run and run, that sets your organisation, brand or product in a good context and where necessary stand the scrutiny of interested parties, pressure groups or competition.

Measurement will allow you to identify and track what are the messages in your story: are they being portrayed as you intended and of equal importance, what significant messages are not there? With this knowledge of:

- What messages;
- Where;
- Who reads them

you have similar measurements as that for purchased and placed advertisements.

Benefits of this measurement are:

- Knowledge of what stories interest the media;

- The tone of your stories in the media;

- How different media treat stories and how stories move from media to media and publication to publication;

- Identify which messages build the story and which key messages are lifted or missed;

- Refresh key messages that are declining or decaying in influential media; and

- Identify the media agenda (their messages) and plot changes in volume and tone over time.

3. Influencing the media

Measurement allows you to track the effectiveness of PR activities by tracking the performance of press releases within different media types, to show which messages appear and those that do'nt and how quickly messages decay.

Additionally, it is important to know which elements of each Press Release produce the best coverage.

As campaigns gather pace prompt reporting of media activity enables campaigns to be reinforced or re-directed to achieve maximum influence.

Some of the benefits from this measurement are:

- Knowledge of which journalist acts upon your press releases;

- What additional or "pulled through" messages are added to those in your press releases and in which journal and by which journalist.

4. Benchmark against competition

Rarely does an organisation operate alone in their marketplace, therefore the ability to compare your media coverage with that of your competitors through monitoring:

- Percentage share of voice;
- Reputation balance;
- Volume;
- Tone;
- Reach

of coverage is an important part of the overall marketing communications function.

Benefits of this measurement are:

- Benchmarking ensures that your competitive position is maintained by monitoring your communications' "Share Of Voice";

- Provides the only method of assessing what incremental costs are needed when a substantial change is required in media coverage because of competitive activity;

- It allows you to quickly respond to any new competitive messages;

- Look for opportunities in your competition's communications proposition;

- Assess media budgets through performance or non-performance.

5. Products and brand performance

To many commercial organisations the media coverage of their products, services and brands is often the most important aspect of their communications performance. Therefore the media that compares and contrasts competitive products are especially important to track, as is the ability to track the media that correctly or incorrectly identifies the attributes of individual products, brands or services.

Many organisations need product media coverage as a direct revenue generator. This is either as a third party endorsement, a visual aid for their salespeople or a means for a prospective purchaser to make an enquiry by post, e-mail or telephone.

Benefits of this measurement are:

- Communications seen as a cost effective part of the marketing mix.
- Media coverage becomes critical marketing activity including as a guide to gathering competitive intelligence.

6. Tracking the Commentators

The ability to track the way in which journals and journalist portray an organisation and /or its products and services is a powerful management tool. Particularly when you are also able to distinguish whether the stories and messages originated from the organisation itself (as with a press release), came as part of the media commentary on that organisation (the media agenda) or from a third party source or a competitor.

Having such ability, then allows for the identification of those sources that can have an influence on an organisation's media coverage. Plus as an internal management tool to track appointed (and none appointed) spokespeople and thereby help an organisation to improve its representation and establish it as a credible proof-source with the media.

Benefits of this measurement are:

- Knowledge of the reaction of journals and journals to an organisation enables future media activity to be more targeted;

- Journals and journalists with an atypical reaction can be targeted for more specific activity;

- The monitoring of a spokesperson list enables an organisation to improve its presence in the media and overtime develop its own sources;

- Tracking references from journal to journal or media to media enables the organisation to develop a chain of influence

Finally, you now have at least one supplier that offers you the opportunity to use their software in a four-step process to "complete the communications circle".

This is because they provide both qualitatively & quantitatively measurement and analyse from the recorded responses (audio or VCR tapes) of focus groups or larger audience samples, to open-ended, unprompted questions, plus all of the "traditional" product offerings of analysis from media items.

This means that they provide an accurate understanding of the current attitudes of your target audiences to a variety of reputation, brand, product, current or future issues and so form the basis against which campaigns or promotions can be planned. Then the same software products can be used to formulate the best "output" messages and themes for the campaign.

Plus which journals and journalists are most likely to react positively to your Press Release and carry your messages into your target audiences. Identify which messages have actually been delivered, by tone, with what frequency, into their target audiences.

Finally, again with the same software (thereby reducing the likelihood of transcription errors and increasing the accuracy and reliability of the resultant analysis and database) revisit your target audience and "complete the communications circle" by repeating Step One and capture what attitudinal shift has occurred after the campaign.

7. So....

>>Step One: 'This is where we are'

Record and analyse the responses of your target audience (or focus group) as part of an attitude survey prior to the campaign.

>> Step Two: 'This is what we did'

Use the same software to track the campaign delivery in the media.

>> Step Three: 'This is where we are now'

Go back to your target audience and both qualitatively & quantitatively research their responses to your post-campaign open-ended questions.

Communications professionals need not prove their worth, but to ensure that every initiative that they undertake is both appropriate for the situation that it is intended to address, and that they use the most effective and efficient means of delivery to bring about the required effect.