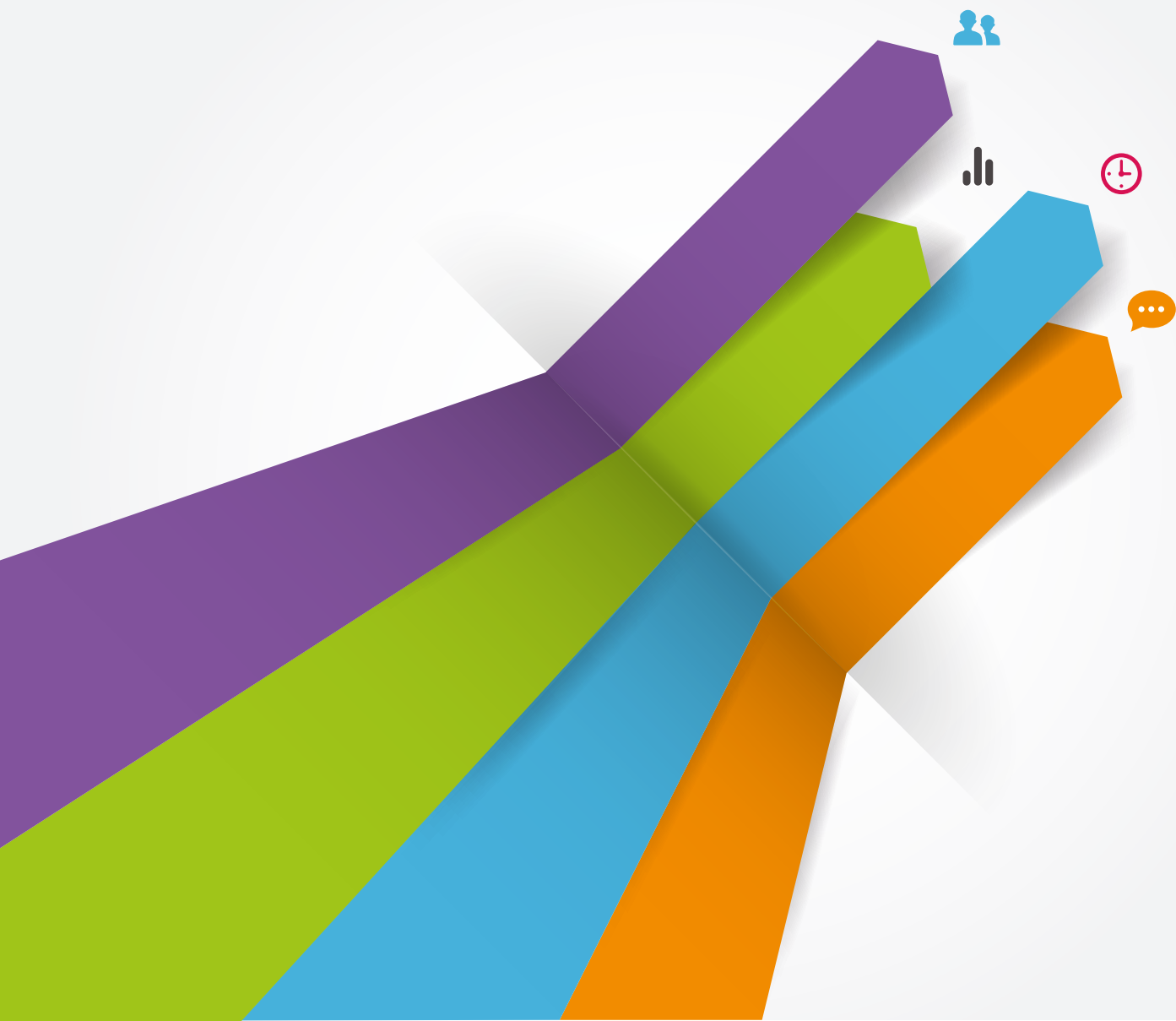

MEASURE & MAXIMISE PR IMPACT

Measure Your PR Programmes for Maximum Impact



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The rise of social and digital media has had a profound impact on public relations and is forcing slow and steady changes in the industry. Yet the real story, and the biggest change, is the growing demand for big data and measuring success by bottom-line results.

Today's PR professional is not merely the person writing news releases or pitching stories, awards and speaking opportunities. They are interacting with bloggers, influencers, journalists and other interested parties via social and other channels. New-era PR professionals work with product development and marketing to ensure successful launches of products or services, and are increasingly called upon to develop content for their brands. PR finds itself in a position where it has to report success based on bottom-line business results.

PR (Re)defined

The [Chartered Institute of Public Relations](#) (CIPR) defines PR as 'the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.'

For example, the PR professional shares crisis communications and branding policies with internal stakeholders to manage brand reputation. They pitch stories to the press, bloggers and influencers to generate attention that will drive third party mentions or 'earned media'. To accomplish both goals, they work with departments ranging from finance to marketing, and engage with everyone from prospects to the press.

Measuring PR: The New World Order

PR, marketing and social media professionals face growing pressure to measure their efforts and show bottom-line results. But how do increased engagement and exposure from PR tactics impact the bottom line?

The days of reporting on impressions, '[advertising value equivalency](#)' (AVE), and social likes are waning. Executives tune out those numbers because they don't mean anything. They are vanity metrics.

The days of reporting numbers that show a direct correlation with revenue and other quantifiable goals have arrived and are here to stay.

When executives ask why a PR budget should be increased, traditional PR professionals often struggle to tie campaigns to business metrics like increased revenue. Things like placement in print or even an appearance on a popular TV programme like *'The Today Show'* don't always translate to measurable bottom-line results.

In contrast, the new-era PR professional is better equipped to explain why one print placement is more effective than another, even if the recommended publication's advertising is more costly. They also have valid reasons for suggesting that a business appear on a television show; they have the demographics and buying behaviours to prove the potential return on investment.

PR and Measurement: Outputs, Outcomes and Results

Measuring PR isn't a one-to-one ratio of an action resulting in a specific business result. While that sometimes happens, PR measurement is more about measuring three components,



according to [Ketchum Global Research & Analytics](#): outputs, outcomes and business results.

Outputs examine reach and content. They look at frequency, visits, tonality, message impact and journalist inquiries. In essence, they show activity in response to PR messaging across various channels.

TIP

Develop a scoring system in order to establish your baseline reach, then track future gains or subtractions to it.

Outcomes assess knowledge, opinions and attitudes. They examine awareness, recollection and purchasing intentions. As such, they are about an audience's measurable changes in perception and/or behaviours.

TIP

Assess audience change with simple surveys. These can be one-off initiatives or a few questions added to existing surveys.

Business results address value of either increased revenue or decreased costs. They are based on contracts closed, employee retention, revenue/turnover and secondary purchases. This component assesses PR's impact on the business or organisation.

TIP

Work with marketing analytics to capture what PR efforts are driving sales, and which efforts are most effective.

With data from outputs, outcomes and business results, PR professionals can review and weigh it so that any of the three areas can be fine-tuned and switched to a different direction.

PR and Measurement: The Big Picture

Measuring PR efforts is crucial, but monitoring is equally so. PR professionals have to be able to respond to audience sentiment, something that can quickly change and

can't be readily quantified with Google Analytics or an outcomes report. They may be able to glean insights as to why their audiences act the way they do, but without monitoring, they're flying with at least one eye closed. In addition, they have to pay attention to real-time trends, a factor related to audience sentiment, but is also germane to pitching relevant, timely stories.

Monitoring conversations, a responsibility sometimes assigned to the marketing department or social media team, is the only way to stay abreast of trends and shifting attitudes toward the business or organization. Jason Falls of Social Media Explorer remarks:

“ [S]ocial media monitoring is often thought of and implemented as a reactionary practice. Find the keyword mentions, then respond. Done. Smart companies know, however, that using social media monitoring as a proactive business driver can make the difference between being successful with your social media efforts and not.

Communications crises aren't a matter of if, but when. By monitoring conversations, PR is better able to respond in real time, placate anger, and control the story. In some cases, a good PR team can seize an opportunity and contribute to a developing story, and create new earned media mentions.

Such responses are built upon preparation; that is, real-time responses are based on having the right content ready for the right time and place. PR professionals should prepare by doing the following:

- Monitor social with the help of good PR monitoring and automation tools like the Vocus PR Suite.
- Newsjack real-time trends. Follow the trends to prepare and pitch stories relevant to them. Newsjacking takes practice, but keep at it. It can have a huge impact on your brand's recognition and bottom line.



- Develop 'what if' scenarios, both good and bad, for publicity campaigns and employee behaviour. Rogue tweets and overloaded servers both require scenarios and plans of action.
- Determine appropriate, scaled responses to negative feedback and consider using a cross-channel approach (e.g. respond with short messages on Twitter that point to a blog post or video).
- Delegate responsibility and develop checks and balances so that the person responsible can answer swiftly. In the online world, no response is like pouring lighter fluid on a lit fuse.
- Define what constitutes an escalation and decide who needs to be involved if it happens.
- Provide training to all employees so that they know how to present themselves and the organisation and respond to negative feedback.



With that relevant content in hand, PR professionals can assess what is being said about their brands and what issues are important to their stakeholders, study the frequency and reach of social conversations, evaluate the influence of people and/or other brands mentioning the organisation and determine positive or negative sentiment.

Such information gives PR professionals the ability not only to respond with the right content at the right time and place, but also to identify issues of interest to both the organisation and audience. In addition, they can discover potential communications crises and mitigate when possible.

TIP

Don't forget to participate in conversations with journalists. Set up a Help A Reporter Out (HARO from Vocus) account to track reporters' requests for sources, as well as send pitches to bloggers and journalists.

Bottom Line: Measuring PR is Critical

While many people may argue that PR is important, they might not be able to justify why. Measuring PR is crucial because it helps correlate efforts with tangible outcomes, such as reaching a particular audience segment, increasing inbound sales calls or email signups, or growing brand awareness and/or positive brand sentiment.

[Southwest Airlines](#), for example, tracked the results of its SEO-optimised news releases during a set time period. The airline discovered its releases had produced \$2.5 million in ticket sales.

Another reason to measure PR is to increase efficiency. By measuring efforts, actions can be assessed and analysed for improvement. With data, you will be able to optimise your campaigns, cut actions that don't return the results you want, and invest more resources in those that do.

[Tom Foremski](#), publisher of Silicon Valley Watcher and journalist blogger at ZDNet, reflects:

“The incentive to do that [automate PR] is threefold – first, it'll automate dull activities which is great for staff; second, it gives the agency a 'magic widget' which you can't get elsewhere for clients; and third, it increases the agency's valuation [higher profits] for the same reason. Anything which frees up staff from repetitive activities to be more creative should be embraced. Sure, it cuts out the less-skilled administrative, but most people aren't attracted to our [PR] industry for that.”

TIP

Evaluate your current PR efforts. Identify points where tasks are repetitive and implement methods for automating them.

Measuring PR validates efforts and the time and money spent on initiatives. Marketing and PR may bemoan the fact that their departments are trimmed or cut during lean times, but measuring efforts can provide the data you need to show a real return on investment (ROI) – proving that your work is essential to keeping the business afloat until better times come again.

Measuring PR: Where Do I Start?

Many businesses and organisations recognise the value and necessity of measuring PR, but don't know where to start. If they cut vanity metrics, what should they replace them with?

A number of PR organisations and professionals, including the [Institute for PR](#), [Katie Paine](#), [Deirdre Breakenridge](#) and [Jay Baer](#), have seen the need for basic measurement standards or principles, and offer advice for implementing measurable PR metrics.

The Institute for PR makes available full-length measurement standards that agencies and businesses can use. The standards are found in a more abbreviated form in the [Barcelona Principles](#):

1. Set goals. Goals are tied to both business results and desired, measurable changes in your target audience. Your goals should include [reach](#), [awareness](#), [comprehension](#), [attitude](#), and [behaviour](#).
 - **Reach:** What audience segment or percentage is to be 'reached' with a specific message(s)?
 - **Awareness:** What will that segment see, hear, or read that they haven't before?
 - **Comprehension:** What will that segment understand after seeing, hearing, or reading the message(s)?
 - **Attitude:** What emotion should the segment feel? Believe?
 - **Behaviour:** What should the segment do after receiving the message(s)?

TIP

To ensure you write quantitative goals, answer the questions of who, what, when and how.

2. Map your efforts according to outputs, outcomes and business results. As you analyse your programme, study the impact you have on the media and other channels, your target groups, and your business or organisation.
3. Analyse your efforts. If possible, use an automated solution, like the Vocus PR Suite, that keeps all your data in one place. If that isn't possible, start with something as simple as an Excel spreadsheet that maps outputs, outcomes and business results.
4. Don't forget to monitor. You can do all the testing in the world, but you won't get anywhere if you aren't listening to the conversations around you. Use social media to assess brand sentiment and invest in resources like HARO (from Vocus) to pitch stories.
5. Be transparent. Measuring PR is not cloak-and-dagger. If you're asked for a report, you should be able to provide it then and there. The old model of PR reporting may have been a magic act, but the new one is based on data.
6. Don't spin the numbers. You can make the numbers say anything, but don't. Look at them carefully before deciding there's a correlation between one data set and another. Also, before you present any findings, have someone proof your work. They may see something you missed or note an error.
7. Rinse and repeat. Your PR efforts should be replicable. That is, you shouldn't have to start from scratch each and every time you have a new campaign. Tools like the Vocus PR Suite can help with this, but you can set up task reminders and segmented email lists on your own. Doing so will increase not only your efficiency, but also improve outputs, outcomes and business results.

Measuring PR: Maximise Your Impact

Like measuring marketing or social media, analysing PR outcomes is the only way to know if a tactic is working and meeting desired goals. To have the most impact on business results, PR must be measured to determine where it can be improved and what its return on efforts, time and money is.

Cision is a leading provider of public relations software that enables professionals to plan, execute and measure influencer-oriented campaigns in one integrated platform. Communication professionals use Cision to access the world's largest pitchable media and blogger database, distribute press releases, manage influencer outreach, measure social media activities, and analyse the effectiveness of campaigns. Cision, which recently combined with Vocus, also represents the Visible Technologies, PRWeb, Help a Reporter Out (HARO) and iContact brands. Headquartered in Chicago, Cision has over 100,000 customers and maintains offices in Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Finland and China. For more information, visit www.cision.com or follow [@CisionUK](https://twitter.com/CisionUK) on Twitter.

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