

Revealed: What holistic PR measurement looks like today

By  Leigh Andrews

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Lauren Chavez, director at Atmosphere Communications and executive earned media director at King James Group, which came out tops at the [IAB's #Bookmarks2019](#) for digital excellence, was the presenter of Meltwater's most recent monthly webinar, on why 'the rands no longer make sense' for PR. Here's what you missed!



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Meltwater's junior marketing manager Philippa Dods began the session by reminding us that Warren Buffett once said, "If you lose money for the firm, I will be understanding. If you lose reputation, I will be ruthless." That's the crux of why having a solid PR strategy is vital, especially in today's digital age where making or breaking a reputation takes a matter of seconds.

Despite this, many communications professionals are still focusing on outdated metrics like Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) and wondering why ROI from their PR efforts isn't increasing.



AVE: What a load of rubbish!

Tonya Khoury 4 Nov 2013



To shed some light on how the industry has changed and how to keep up with it all, Chavez explained what PR measurement looks like today and how to master it going forward because that which is measured, gets improved.

First, we need to pinpoint what brands are looking for from a PR perspective. Chavez said it's important to consider the true business impact and to keep that in mind throughout, as metrics will differ based on the objectives set at the outset of any campaign.

The metric familiar to most is that of perception shift in terms of consumers' view of a brand, but the following are also important metrics:

- Reputation management, *a la* Warren Buffett
- Share of voice in a specific category
- Response to a specific call to action or CTA
- Consideration
- Conversion from leads to sales

In the past, PR was entirely separate from the overall business impact conversation and instead pointed to other marketing stakeholders for drivers of these metrics, but that's no longer an option. We all need to work together, towards the same goal.

Don't get bogged down: Quality over quantity

Chavez also touched on the 'quality over quantity' factor. It's easy to fall under the spell of wanting as much coverage as possible but we need to take a step back and think beyond the volume of exposure.

“ Did it reach the right consumers? Did it solve the right business problems? Did it position our spokespeople's expertise? Did it create affinity for the brand? Or did it just hit the 'thud factor'? ”

High volumes of coverage certainly show the brand is being spoken about, but if the majority of that exposure is negative, your PR hasn't done its job.



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Chris Mberdyk 27 Mar 2019



So what should you measure, instead? It can seem an overwhelming, daunting task, but Chavez says to take it step by step, and start at the beginning with the goal-setting. It's important to be specific, as vague goals won't get you anywhere.

There also needs to be a **shift from measuring output to outcomes**, to show the success of PR at a strategic level that drives the business forward and demonstrates its impact on the bottom line.



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29 Mar 2019



This means both quantitative and qualitative measures need to be in play, as well as understanding the tracking tools at our disposal.

“ To get this right, start with a ‘deliverables’ approach, and be clear on what you’re trying to achieve. Write it all down, look at the industry benchmarks and don’t get distracted by the noise out there. ”

In offering a high-level snapshot of whether you’re meeting those objectives, Chavez said to work towards a place where it’s no longer just about that rand-value.

Different metrics for different disciplines

Also keep in mind today’s integrated environments mean that the disciplines of earned, paid-for, owned and shared media, each have different focus areas and objectives and thus, different metrics. Part of the PR measurement journey is thus to find the common ground of packing those elements together so they make sense in your holistic view.

Show overall impact			
AWARENESS	ENGAGEMENT	THOUGHT LEADERSHIP	ROI
IMPRESSIONS 74,109,817	TRAFFIC TO SITE 66,659 (visits) 5:41 (time)	POSITIVE/ NEUTRAL SENTIMENT 96%	COST PER REACH R0.06
VIEWS 1,454,156	CLICK-THROUGHS 171,985 (clicks) 0.54% (rate)	BRAND MENTION 95%	ROI ON PR INVESTMENT x17
TOP TIER MEDIA 89%	ENGAGEMENTS 1,139,145	KEY MESSAGES 100%	COST PER CLICK R6.72
	HOURS CONSUMED 182,000	ITUNES PODCAST CHARTS No.1 during launch week	COST PER ENGAGEMENT R1.11
			COST PER VIEW R1.51

An example of different objectives as metric goals for the different PR disciplines, from Chavez' presentation.

We’re all here to achieve the same end goal – driving business success by improving that implementation. One way to do that is to change your focus so you’re not just tracking and measuring your PR success at the end of the campaign, but continuously as you go. This way, you can adapt to outshine the targets you set at the beginning of the campaign.

Next, Chavez fielded questions from webinar attendees:

> *How effective are sales conversions as a metric?*

It’s important to remember that the sales response to PR isn’t always immediate. Instead, it’s an ongoing journey that means there’s often a need for internal education within the brand.

It also depends on the specific industry and the life cycle in the category. We need two views in measurement – an honest, short-term view of what to expect, as well as to track the engagement from the start for the digital end-goal. That conversation funnel is much longer in 2019, as with your consumer hat on, you’ll agree that unless it’s something that’s been on your radar for a while, very rarely do you see an ad and immediately sign up for the product or service.

It’s about consistent exposure that guides the consumer, which means a purely short-term view of immediate impact isn’t necessarily realistic. The PR industry overall needs to consider how to demonstrate the conversion over a longer timeframe.

> *Share tips for better coverage on a budget, as working for an NPO means our efforts are often bootstrapped.*

This applies to some bigger brands too, where we need to remember the key is the stories we’re telling. We’re often so focused on the brand or business we’re trying to get out there that the stories are too inwardly focused and comes across as advertorial. These stories then don’t have relevance to consumers. In creating news, we need to look outside the brand

to how it can be better positioned in the broader conversation. Take note of the hot trending stories and find the news hooks where your client brand can have a credible voice.

> *With publications declining in size and value, what's the threat to PR?*

It's mostly just a threat to agencies that have painted themselves into a corner based on pure media relations, which is just one aspect of PR. It's still part of the mix, as the integrity of journalism lends credibility to the resulting coverage. But in only focusing on that you miss other channels on which to activate and position the brand, away from a pure editorial media focus.

There's no need to panic or have a knee-jerk reaction to the saying that 'print is dying'. Keep in mind that PR drives the brand message in a highly credible way through third-party endorsement, whether that's the use of a respected journalist or a popular influencer.

> *Speaking of influencers, what do you recommend as metrics for influencer marketing?*

This is definitely an interesting space, which has also evolved over time. Initially, it was just about the numbers, the biggest following, which the industry took to mean the highest reach for a third-party post about your brand. The problem is that some influencers with large followings have low engagement rates because lots of 'followers' are bots.



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Anne Dolinschek 1 Apr 2019



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You need to understand the influencer's role with the current onslaught of data, for which luckily there are new measurement tools that have made the metrics more sophisticated, as you can check the reporting in real-time as well as the influencer's business account analytics for the genuine engagement, so you're more considered in benchmarking against their general activity.

> *If you go the 'measure as you go' route, how often should you review the campaign?*

You'll still need upfront metrics of what you want to achieve at the end of the campaign, so the frequency ultimately depends on the timeline of the overall campaign. You may find you need daily check-ins for a shorter campaign, or deeper dive monthly progress of the activity if it's long-running. Whatever the timeline, the more frequently you check in, the better.



Beware of knee-jerk reactions

Chris Brewer 17 Jul 2017



But be warned – having access to so many data points and analytics means knee-jerk reactions are more likely. Some campaigns will have natural spikes as they gain traction. You can do damage by reacting and resetting the course daily, so consider what you're trying to achieve with the campaign overall and base your reaction on that.

Consider yourself warned. Visit Meltwater's [press office](#) and [Twitter feed](#) for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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