



PR POINTERS



Measuring the Effectiveness of a Media Campaign

[By Susan Benton]

Oftentimes, there's a divide between the perceived benefits of a media relations campaign and the actual effectiveness of the campaign.

With so many media outlets vying for readership in today's age of increased fragmentation and rapid-fire information, how can you — as a public relations professional — sell your services and subsequently convey the value of your well thought-out, highly strategic campaign?

The answer is simple: demonstrate results.

Whenever a media campaign is introduced, executives — regardless of the industry — want to see results, or return on investment (ROI). Below are a few ways to capture the effectiveness of your campaign, while reinforcing the overall value of PR.

Employ Metrics for Evaluation

We often liken a media relations program to that of a political campaign, where message platforms are continually evaluated relative to the impact they're having on the audience and the frequency for which they are appearing in the media. It's through this analytic approach that it's possible to gauge the impact of the media campaign and evaluate which messages are resonating with key audiences, which messages are not, and adjust efforts accordingly.

There are several ways in which to evaluate the ROI of a media campaign via qualitative and quantitative means. Be sure to build in these measurement tools as part of any program, and allot a portion of the budget to reporting and analysis, since producing these reports takes time and close attention to detail.

- **Qualitative Measurement**
 - o **Create Awareness Among Key Media Targets and Influencers**
How well-known (if at all) was your company with your target audience(s) prior to the launch of your media campaign? Measure this against the increased awareness after the campaign ends.
 - o **Enhance Corporate Reputation**
What is the overall perception of your company before the campaign? What is it after?
 - o **Influence Audience Behavior**
Gauge audience behavior before and after the campaign. Have sales increased or decreased? Has traffic on the web site gone up or down? Many times, while there's no tangible "cord" connecting your media campaign to these elements, chances are a shift in audience behavior that occurs at the time of your campaign is a result of your efforts.
- **Quantitative Measurement**
 - o **Evaluate Media Placements on a Publication Hierarchical Scale**
Establish at the onset of the campaign what the cream of the crop placements will be. If it's a business audience you're after, list the outlets you'll be targeting. If it's consumer, name the editors you have relationships with or with whom you plan to meet. Putting these elements in a plan make your efforts more tangible and indubitably targeted.
 - o **Evaluate stories, based on placement. There are a number of ways to do this, including:**
 - Show the percent of messages represented in all articles
 - Record the frequency of messages
 - Register the tone of articles (neutral, negative, positive)
 - Share of voice — is your company mentioned alongside key competitors and/or market leaders?
 - Media hit trend curve — overall analysis of media hits

Reporting and Analysis

When selling in a media relations campaign, try to incorporate one or several methodologies to track the impact of the campaign over a defined period of time. From a media perspective, PR professionals should conduct evaluations that gauge, not only the volume, but also the strategic content and quality of media coverage. These should be compiled every six months or more frequently, as determined valuable (and as the budget allows).

An example of some of the most effective reporting and analyses include:



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- **Coverage by Overall Tone?**
Evaluation of quality of coverage generated. Is the article neutral, positive or negative? Is the article balanced/fair?
- **Overall Number of Articles**
At the six-month mark of the campaign, provide an illustration of the number of placements achieved in local versus national media
- **Performance of Key Messages**
Monitoring of program impact on the media environment, media "update" of positioning, and messages
- **Audience Impressions**
Six-month breakdown of impressions per million, per month
- **Cumulative Value as Advertising**
Illustration of the ROI of PR programming results, when compared to advertising
- **Cumulative Number of Stories**
Analysis which captures the amount of stories that have been placed — starting at the onset of the media relations program and illustrating increased results as messages and program tactics were introduced to the media

Conclusion

There is an art and science to evaluating a media relations program, both from a market position and from a sales perspective. The aforementioned methodologies will allow you to realize and accurately articulate the results of the campaign, and they also serve as a sophisticated reporting system that your executives expect when evaluating the overall ROI of a media program.

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