

PR Measurement:

Assessing media coverage



Introduction

Public relations for B2B and technology companies is a lot more than simply gaining media coverage;

but this is often a core element of a PR program, so it's important to know if your media relations efforts are effective.

Here are five questions you should be asking to determine whether your media relations efforts are effective.



targeting media

1. Are we targeting the media that matters most?

All media are not equal in value for delivering your message, nor are the media with the biggest circulation necessarily the best for you.

The credibility of the publication needs to be assessed, as does its ability to reach your target audiences.

Most organisations define several media categories as integral to reaching their target audiences, eg: trade/retailer, suppliers, business, consumer, or financial.

It pays to categorise and prioritise media by type or tier.

If you set goals for ideal exposure sought you will be able to track your performance and demonstrate your results.



coverage quality

2. What is the quality of the coverage we are achieving?

Many simply rate media by circulation. That's a start - but all it really tells you is how many people bought the publication.

Measuring by impressions goes further.

It measures how many people are potentially exposed to your messages.

This delves into statistics usually provided by the media, such as figures of actual readers, listeners and viewers.

It also takes into account factors such as:

- Salience
- Branded images
- Branded headlines
- Placement
- Tonality (positive, negative or neutral)
- Spokesperson quotes



coverage quality

Done properly, measurement by impressions can start to build a strong case showing how many people your media campaign is actually reaching and whether it is conveying the messages you seek.

For example, the Return on Impressions model allows users to ascertain the number of people likely to fulfil the desired behaviour (i.e. buy your product, etc) based on readership figures of publications featuring coverage of your organisation/brand/product.



on message coverage

3. Is our coverage on-message?

You put so much effort into developing key messages for your organisation, brands or products, but if the media coverage you generate doesn't contain these messages, it has been a wasted opportunity.

To measure the effectiveness of your messaging delivery it is essential to set up an evaluation system.

This is also a useful tool for measuring the media's perception of your organisation.

If you are constantly writing material with the correct messages, but it is not being reflected in your media coverage it could indicate there are some issues or discrepancies in the media's perception of your organisation or its products or services.



Are we getting a return for our media relations investment?

If you have a major campaign involving launch costs - and perhaps a PR agency - you may wish to measure the cost related to the outputs. You can measure by cost-per-impression.

This involves calculating the favourable impressions and dividing by the cost of the campaign to come up with a cost-per-impression.

You can also measure by cost-per-message.

This involves an analysis of the media coverage to determine how many of your key messages were delivered.

By dividing this by the cost of the project or campaign you arrive at a cost per message.

These are not a true measurement of ROI (Return On Investment) but they provide a statistical basis on which to make a judgment.

They can be particularly useful in comparing one campaign against another.



Share of Discussion

But what about our share of discussion?

Whilst looking at the quality and reach of your own media coverage is an important indicator, you also need to consider it in relation to that of your competitors.

You need to duplicate the measurements that you perform for your own organisation for each of your competitors; the only exception is message delivery, because you are not privy to their key messages.

This should be your ultimate test.

If your organisation has 20 percent market share and you get 40 percent share of discussion you are performing well.

But if your organisation has 40 percent market share and you are getting only 20 percent share of discussion you have a problem!

Common measures of share of discussion are Share of Voice (circulation) and Share of Ink (quantity).



Conclusions

The days have gone when media relations was all about how many releases were sent out with no regard to measuring results.

Today, the pressure is on for everyone to be more accountable. Spending more time (and budget) on measurement is simply part of the process. But there is a good side to it.

The smart operators will see the introduction of measurement as a way to obtain better management buy-in to PR.

Measurement can ensure PR is seen as a profit centre, as opposed to a cost centre.

In times of financial pressures, PR budgets are often among the first to go.

By being more accountable and providing management with statistical results, you are better able to protect the position of PR as a necessary component of the marketing mix - not just a luxury for when times are good.

resources

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