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GUIDE 2019

**How to
measure your
PR activity**

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Introduction

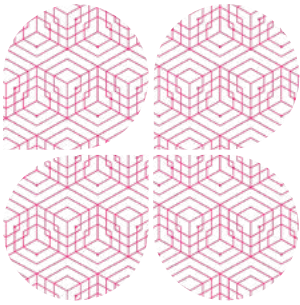
Once you've appointed your PR agency and provided them with a written brief which outlines the level of service you expect, it's a good time to establish how you're going to measure the benefits of the media coverage they help to generate.

After all, if you don't measure your PR activity how can you ensure you're getting value for money? You could be spending a lot of money every month on your communications agency – and you need to determine if it is being well spent – or not.

The challenge is that the benefits of PR are less straightforward to track than that of other marketing tools, like advertising. This is because there is no clear trajectory between what you transmit; e.g. press articles or online blogs and your Return on Investment (ROI). Yet PR is critical to the marketing mix and for it to be taken seriously by senior management and recognised that it really does aid the business in terms of revenue and influence in the wider market, it's just as important it is measured as other parts of the marketing campaign.

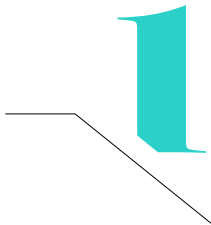
Within the PR industry, Big Data has been mooted as the way in which organisations can scientifically measure their PR performance. But unless your business is spending tens of thousands every month on PR, introducing high cost professional analysis methodology is a considered investment that will impact your PR budget. So if a customised approach from a media monitoring agency analysing tone, share of voice and the competition is not appropriate for you right now, there are a number of ways in which you can measure your PR activity, which will not only help you to determine how your organisation is benefiting from your PR spend but will, crucially, help to ensure the best ways to target your PR activity in the future for maximum returns.





This short guide takes you through the process.

Below we outline the top tips for measuring your PR agency.



According to the PRCA, the leading PR association in Europe, when evaluating campaigns many PR professionals will talk about outputs, outtakes and outcomes. Outputs are the activities that have been undertaken in a PR campaign, outtakes are the result of these activities and outcomes any change in behaviour of your chosen target group. An example in the built environment would be an agency writing a regular blog on a series of topics, for instance building security. The outtake would be that the once the blog appears on a client's website it generates a lot of interest and the ideal outcome, that it directly results in a new piece of business. The likelihood of such a clear outcome is rare, so this kind of activity should be measured in other ways, such as an increased level of brand awareness within the business security sector.



The most tried and tested mode of measurement in PR is a press clipping service, which counts the number of positive articles/mentions in certain types of publications. You may choose to set targets for the numbers of articles per month in the trade titles; how often you have broken into broader management titles, national or local papers and you may also want to measure the level of penetration within the bloggers-sphere. Although some organisations still hold onto the idea that the printed publication is king, these days, it shouldn't matter whether a 'clipping' is digital or whether it's a printed publication. Any form of positive coverage is a win.





Some organisations choose to measure the number of press meetings their PR people arrange every month, whether face to face or by conference call. The performance of the internal representatives within the business who contribute to this process may also be measured to determine how well they are delivering valuable content. Did the subsequent article include your brand's key messages and did they portray your company in a positive light?



Within the built environment, a shrinkage in the number of trade titles means there is a finite number of ways that businesses can get in front of their potential customers. By measuring your 'Share of Voice' (SoV) against your key competitors you can estimate how powerfully your brand message is getting through. Begin by compiling a list of no more than six or seven competitors whose press coverage is measured against yours by tone, i.e. positive/negative/neutral, and whether there were quotes from their spokespeople included in each piece, compared to the number of comments from your people which appear.



Your SoV isn't confined to mentions in magazines or websites. You might also want to measure PR performance based on the number of speaker platforms your communications people are able to deliver. This will of course also depend on the quality of people your organisation can put forward, so it's important to remember their performance is entirely measurable as well.

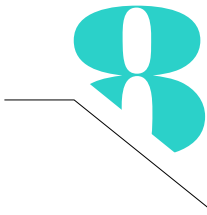


Aside from PR coverage that encompasses a mixture of pipelines, from press interviews to broadcast opportunities, you might choose to take a tally of less obvious measurable facets like the number of ideas the agency comes up with each quarter, their level of innovation and how well they deal with the executive team – including the quality of their counsel if there was a negative publicity issue.

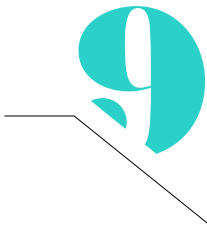


Website traffic is often mentioned as a measurement tool for PR, but this is notoriously difficult to measure as it is almost impossible to estimate how traffic is being increased as a result of a PR campaign. Even if you do get coverage in a major publication it might not necessarily push people to a specific part of your website. In our opinion PR cannot be ultimately responsible for web traffic as it's not a good enough measure to determine what it is driving. Another growing area of PR however, is that of social media, with tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter all having become integral to marketing and PR strategy. Twitter in particular is the most PR-friendly social media tool, which is why we have a separate guide to talk you through planning, creating and running your Twitter presence.

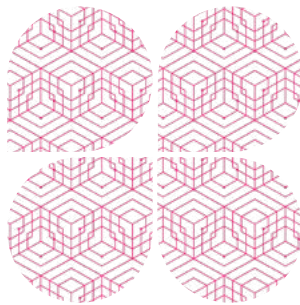




All these measurements are only useful if you do something with all the data, from producing a regular analysis of performance to how well the communications agency reaches its set targets year on year. And prior to launching any new PR campaign, it is worthwhile carrying out a survey of the market to measure the awareness of your brand; then, once the campaign has begun, check again to survey its impact.



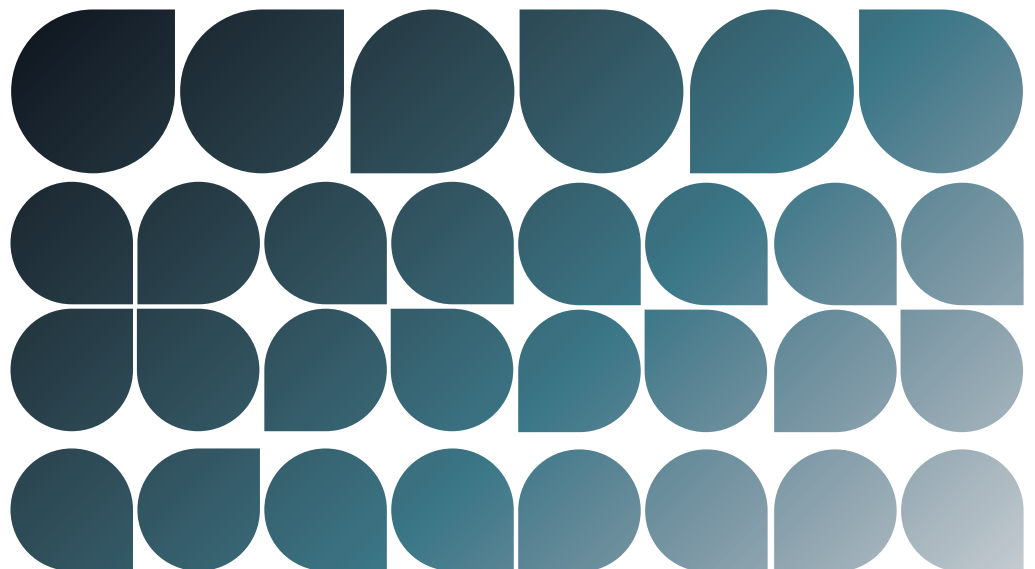
Depending on the level of commitment to the PR process from the CEO and board within your business, a more formal reporting process can be implemented. This could include a quarterly report on PR activity, including key coverage links and ‘trophy’ coverage (i.e. appearances in key media). The fact is that if the senior management team is very engaged about the PR contribution, this will dictate the level of importance PR had within the business and will impact on how it is measured. While this may add some further pressure to both the in-house marketing team and the external agency, the more PR friendly the executive team – the more likely is it to generate a dynamic PR environment.



Conclusion

Of course every business is different, so whether you’re a product-led brand, a service provider, an SME or a larger business, no one size will fit all. But whatever your circumstances some kind of measurement should be in place to monitor all the varying kinds of PR activity your agency provides, so you know what works and what doesn’t.

When it comes to measuring PR activity it’s important to remember that if you, the client haven’t implemented any form of measurement as the programme begins, the responsibility should then fall to the agency to advise on how they think the activities should be measured. Part of its remit should be to help set [reasonable] targets, hit them and promote them internally when good coverage comes flooding through. This way the whole business develops a greater understanding of the important role PR plays in the marketing and business development mix.





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