



COMMUNICATIONS ANALYSIS: REAL-TIME

You've just reviewed the final results of your last pro-active media campaign to launch that new product or service. The numbers look pretty good: media impressions were in the millions; coverage was evenly split between broadcast and print; and a leading national paper ran three stories on the launch-pretty impressive. But could it have been better?

Analyze this

Analyzing issues or campaigns is the first big step in truly understanding any communications success or failure. With busy schedules and/or tight client budgets, more often than not, media analysis isn't always carried out. A big investment is being made on gathering the media content, but not on measuring and analyzing the trends, successes, and areas for improvement. Stories are often filed away immediately or distributed to a limited group, never to be looked at again or analyzed at all.

If you're already conducting ongoing media analysis half the battle is won. But if not, you can bet your client or director will demand it soon. New analysis technologies combined with increased expectations to determine communications ROI (Return on Investment) are making analysis a must, not a should.

Once you've determined the need or importance of analysis, what's next? This is where the confusion can set in. As can be expected, everyone has their own definition of how media content should be analyzed based on their own experiences. And usually the issue of PR standards and formulas arise...and that is when things often can come to a stand-still.

But before you get into how you are going to analyze, you must first determine what you're interested in analyzing. Here are a few considerations:

- Track success in key publications and mediums based on demographic suitability
- Evaluate key message penetration in media stories
- Track quality - not just quantity - of coverage
- Determine success vs. competitors
- Success of spokesperson pick-up
- Determine campaign ROI
- Measure advertising equivalency (if you must!)
- Monitor regional penetration comparisons
- Tabulate media impressions/audience numbers
- Compare key issues and/or product penetration
- Resulting editorial or other media commentary/letters to the editor

There are endless ways of analyzing and cross-referencing the information. But you should note that you can accomplish all of the above considerations without getting into confusing PR multipliers or complex formulas. The key is to determine what you're interested in evaluating and create benchmarks for future comparisons. And if you still want to add in PR multipliers you can, as long as you consistently keep to the same formula. So whether you're multiplying by a factor of 3, 5, or 10, the coverage is always being evaluated in a consistent fashion and can therefore be viewed as an unbiased and accurate portrayal.

Go Electronic, Go Real-Time

Reviewing the success of a new product launch, the impact of a crisis on your organization, or a monthly comparison after-the-fact can provide valuable insight for future planning. But imagine the change you could make if you have real-time data available to you at your fingertips in an instant. Using real-time data you could monitor:

- What regions are having the most success and which need attention
- Misinformation being published so you can correct it
- Which publications need another follow-up call
- Which issues are getting the most attention
- The quality and tone of the coverage
- The impact on your organization
- What tactics are working and which aren't
- How you can piggy-back on recent media trends or competitors' tactics or success

The benefits of real-time analysis are endless and important. Knowing that you can have a timely affect on the final outcome of a new product launch is empowering and helps speak to the real power of PR.

A combination of real-time analysis and benchmarking will provide you with the tools to improve the results of a campaign mid-stream and properly analyze its success using a predetermined set of objectives and consistent criteria. So make 2005 the year you start benchmarking your analysis-an opportunity to learn more about the impact your communications strategies are having will pay dividends for years to come.