

A Data-Forward Media Strategy Isn't as Hard as You Think

While PR software allows communicators to report the true ROI of their efforts, the data available can also help you build a more effective media strategy. As technology has evolved, reporting on potential reach and advertising value equivalency no longer holds the same weight that it once did, yet diving into new analytics can often be overwhelming. With that in mind, we created this cheat sheet on how to track data in a way that will inform and empower your PR efforts.

Real-Time Alerts

First and foremost, it's crucial to set up alerts so that you can track, in real time, when your brand is mentioned in the news. These email notifications make it simple to keep track of all your coverage daily.

Tags

Simply put, tagging each piece of your media coverage keeps you organised. Whether it's tagging an article right when you see it's gone live, or reviewing your coverage once a week, it's helpful to stay on top of tagging. And since it's up to you to name the tags, it's best to take time to really consider what will be most helpful to keep track of ROI, and then update those tags as necessary (you can always add new ones).

For example, if you need to report the results of an important media campaign, you might want to create a tag just for that project. To keep track of earned media, create a tag and then a corresponding dashboard just for those articles tagged as earned in order to measure the success of all the press coverage you've worked so hard to make happen.

Total Mentions

While 'quality over quantity' is a great philosophy to have when it comes to PR, it's still important to track your number of media mentions. You likely have a designated goal to hit, and this way you can easily monitor these numbers on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Tracking total mentions also allows you to predict when there may be peaks or lulls in coverage and to plan accordingly. Additionally, it can allow you to prove why the number of mentions shouldn't be the end-all be-all goal.

For example, just because you may have gotten the most mentions a certain month, won't necessarily mean that was the most successful month in terms of actual impact PR had on the business. With that in mind, it's important to look at the direct link between mentions and true conversion in order to help your teams and leadership understand which numbers are most important to monitor. It's not just about the number of mentions, but what happened after you earned those mentions.



Real Time Alerts

Get the news that matters to you most as it happens.

PR Referral Web Traffic

PR Referral Web Traffic is arguably the most valuable data for PR professionals to monitor in order to track the ROI of their media coverage. These numbers are helpful to look at on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis to regularly measure what coverage is making an impact and what isn't.

PR Referral allows you to view how many people went directly to your website as a result of media coverage, along with what actions they took on your site. This is where you're able to truly showcase the power of PR and highlight which specific publications and articles converted to real leads and business. For example, did a specific article garner a spike in product purchases? Which publications led to the most first-time visitors to your website? This information will help inform you which outlets and reporters are worth putting your time and energy into pitching.

Social Amplification

Social amplification is a crucial part of measuring the success of a piece of coverage, and its value can often get overlooked. Tracking social amplification will allow you to monitor which articles are being shared most on social media. Arguably more important, is tracking the type of engagement your media coverage got on social. How many people actually read the article after it was shared? At the end of the month, quarter or year you can then see if you're finding any common themes among the articles that are being shared and engaged with the most and integrate those themes into future pitch plans. This is also a helpful tool to integrate earned media into the larger marketing strategy.

It's also helpful to look at which reporters and publications you've worked with that get strong engagement on social media and consider this when building media lists. Ultimately, more social shares of an article means more eyes on your brand and potentially an increase in customers and revenue.

Brand Sentiment

[Brand sentiment](#) allows PR professionals to monitor the tone of the articles written about them. Were they positive, negative or neutral? While brand sentiment is important to keep track of, it's not something that necessarily needs to be reviewed on a daily or weekly basis.

With that said, you'll want to keep track of it more regularly if your organisation is going through a major crisis or just made a big announcement. For instance, if you see that there's suddenly a trend in articles being more negative since a launch, you can investigate what those articles are saying and create a media plan to help combat that type of press.

Share of Voice

Share of Voice comparison is important to look at over the course of a month, quarter and year. One of the most helpful ways to use this data is to review the mentions your brand is getting in comparison with your competitors. Did a competitor suddenly get a peak in mentions? If so, dive deeper into what was covered about them and which reporters are writing about them. There's a strong chance those reporters will be interested in writing about you too. And if you see a certain subject matter is getting a competitor an increase in press, perhaps consider how your organisation can have a unique perspective on that topic.

At the end of the day, the data you track and report is up to you and should reflect the specific needs of your business and your KPIs. We all know PR professionals are busier than ever, so focus on the information most valuable for you to move forward more strategically. Don't waste time analysing data that won't help you get to your end goal.

Ultimately, analytics should make your job easier, provide you with a clearer roadmap when building a communications plan, and allow you to showcase the value PR brings to your organisation.