

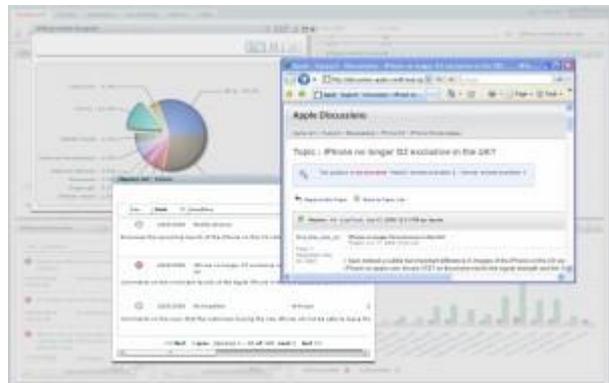
Chapter 7

You can measure social media.
Richard Bagnall



Why is it that the mere thought of measuring the effectiveness of our PR campaigns fills us with such dread? Why does it always seem so confusing and overly complex?

For 20 years or more, PR measurement has largely been a reasonably simple process that was dressed up as a bit of a black art. Media analysis companies focused on using content analysis to measure press clippings and focusing 99% of the time on purely output metrics. What do we mean by that? Well simply put, it's the easy things to capture from the editorial content - metrics like volume of articles, column inches, tone, messaging, company, brand and name mentions, journalists, publications and spokespeople etc.



To differentiate themselves from their competitors, most of the media analysis companies then created their own proprietary scoring systems and indices which took these different metrics, weighted them and then presented them as a single number. They then tried to tell their clients that this number and the other output metrics represented the success of their pr campaigns.

Which of course it didn't.

Measuring outputs alone is never going to tell a PR professional how successful their PR campaign has been. The analysis industry was answering the wrong questions. PRs were being asked by their bosses to demonstrate the value that their work was creating for their organisation. As an answer they were being provided with a proprietary score based on an output metric of which no one else in their organisation would have heard. And to cap it all off, most of these scores were largely meaningless, and all were flawed. It was no wonder therefore that PR measurement tended to confuse and disengage most of the industry, and consequently that PR has always struggled to prove its value successfully.

Recognising this challenge, AMEC took a leadership position back in 2010 when it drove through the Barcelona Principles (<http://bit.ly/YqJAB3>). In a nutshell, these 7 statements encouraged the PR and its associated measurement industry to think more credibly about how to measure communications success by talking the language of business.

In addition to confirming that AVE's were a meaningless metric, the Principles also state that to measure success properly, we need to move on from measuring outputs to focusing instead on measuring outcomes. Put simply, this means that instead of leaving the measurement just at what we have generated (outputs), we need to focus on what this work has actually achieved (out-takes / outcomes) for our organisation. The Barcelona Principles also state of course that social media can and should be measured.

Since 2010 a lot of further work has been done to help the industry think about the correct way to measure social media. AMEC has again taken a leadership position with its social media group working in partnership with other trade bodies around the world in PR and the wider marketing community to set best practice and standards for measuring social media.

At first glance, the massive changes that have occurred in the PR and media industries over the last 5-10 years make it seem that measuring our success must be even more confusing than ever. Many in the industry understandably are desperate for AMEC to come up with a single number that could let everyone know how successful their work has been.

This is not going to happen however. In the same way that a single number was always flawed in the more simplified world of traditional media analysis, a single number will not work when measuring social media. The search for a magic bullet can be called off now as it simply does not and will never exist.

The reassuring news however is that the more things have changed, the more they have actually stayed the same. The right approach to measuring social media is to focus relentlessly on your objectives and then to measure in a manner that reflects them. Think clearly at the outset what it is that you are looking to achieve with your social media campaign. What conversations do you want to join? What thoughts are you looking to influence? What outcomes are you looking to drive?

Don't be tempted to make the same mistakes as were made in the old days. Frustratingly, this is the number one problem that I have found PRs are experiencing with social media measurement. Specifically don't rely on the new SAAS (Software as a Service) platforms alone to monitor and measure your work, they are very unlikely to be able to get you to the tailored measurement and out-take / outcome metrics that you need.

Instead, think about the different objectives of each part of your social campaign and then how you might measure each in a credible manner.

So for example, if looking to measure the exposure that you are getting with your core audience you should consider measuring the following:

- Organisation / brand mentions
- Share of conversation
- Search rank
- Click-throughs
- Web analytics etc

If looking to measure the engagement that you are having with your core audience then you might want to consider these:

- Comments/posts ratio
- Number of links
- '@' mentions / Retweets / Retweets as a percentage of the total
- Number of bookmarks / likes / votes / 'pins'
- Shares & Likes
- Subscriber numbers
- URL visits
- Awareness
- Resolution rate

And of course if looking to measure the action that has happened as a result of the social media campaign then you should consider 'out-take / outcome' metrics such as:

- Footfall
- Purchase / donations
- Website visits & downloads
- Coupon redemption, endorsement
- Awareness etc

Clearly not all of these metric suggestions will be relevant to each campaign, and conversely these are just a few suggestions and not an exhaustive list. As is always the case, the metrics will need to be tailored to what it is that you are trying to achieve.

What you will also see is that not all of these metrics are available from content analysis of the online conversations alone. Instead they necessitate market research, others will involve working with web analytics, and others will need you to work with your marketing or sales team to gather the data required.

By following this approach however you will be able to focus clearly on what success looks like to your organisation and report back in a language that everyone understands.

AMEC is soon to launch a revised Valid Metrics Framework which will develop this approach into a grid that you can use as a template for each campaign. This will be launched at the European Summit in Madrid in June 2013 and will then be available for download from AMEC's website at amecorg.com/social-media-measurement.

In the meantime, you can follow the conversation on twitter with the hashtag [#smmstandards](https://twitter.com/smmstandards) and the march towards standards at smmstandards.org.

Social media measurement must not be allowed to make the same mistakes of the past. Don't just count what is easy to count and report using meaningless charts hoping that somehow you are providing effective analysis. Instead as an industry we must seize this opportunity to prove the value of our work with credible metrics, that reflect our objectives and really demonstrate our success. The PR industry deserves nothing less.

Richard Bagnall's Top 3 Measurement Tips

- ✓ Begin with the end in mind – Measure against your objectives, align your social objectives to those of your organisation
- ✓ Measure appropriately - Be wary of automation, and counting basic metrics that are easy to count but basically meaningless
- ✓ A few charts and numbers are not measurement – successful social media measurement needs relevancy, context and insight

And a bonus tip:

- ✓ Don't fear measurement, embrace it, it's there to help guide you not criticise you!



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