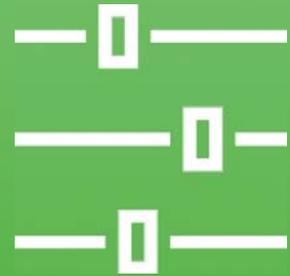




CHAPTER 11

Evolution of measurement in India: From numbers to business impact

Nitin Mantri



A decade back, if I was asked to write a chapter on how public relations firms in India were measuring their work, it would have been a tough one. Back then, it was always about the numbers and never about the influence. About output and never outcome. About quantity and never quality. About width and never depth. As a result, the PR industry was seen as a bunch of order-takers at the end of the value-chain, while strategy and creative programming was led by advertising and other marketing functions.

From the fringes to the boardroom

The advent of digital media changed all that. The simple world of communication suddenly became complex and tricky. Reputation became a fragile commodity and accountability the biggest ask. Clients no longer wanted PR firms to just communicate to their audiences what they had done. They wanted their consultancies to sit with them at the high table and help them manage their business environment.

Firms were required to understand the dynamics of the market and customers through data and analytics, craft campaigns that broke through the content clutter and deliver impact through creative storytelling, while being fully prepared to handle any crisis.

The traditional role of PR firms was being shaken to its core.

But all that hard work – the beautiful strategies/the seamless execution of innovative ideas/the creative campaigns – would come to nothing if firms failed to show the impact of their work on the clients' businesses.

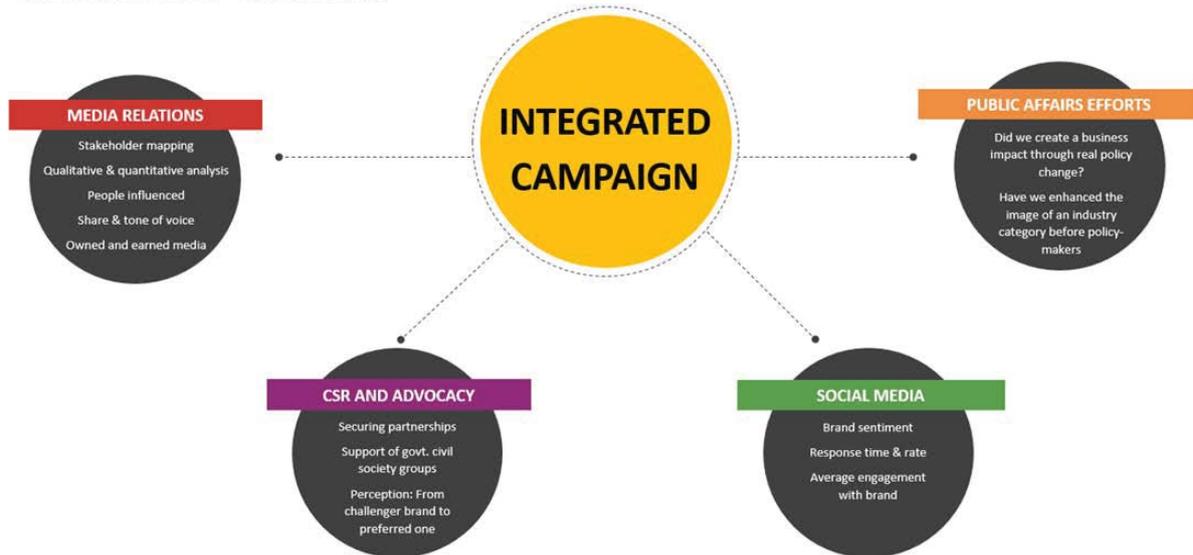
So, how do you show impact? Coverage? Nah!

The truth is the only time you can honestly know you've delivered your message is when you hear it back from the audience. Your audience has understood what you have to say and made it a part of their own thinking. That is successful communication.



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MEASURES OF SUCCESS



Seeing the light of measurement

American author, entrepreneur and marketer Seth Godin once wrote in his blog, “People do not buy goods and services. They buy relations, stories, and magic.” While I agree with what he says, I understand the predicament before communicators. While goods and services are easily quantified, how do you assess the impact of building relationships, or, how well your stories have been received? Is it really possible to measure “magic”?

Evaluating our work is difficult, and more so in a complex market like India, which has a varied audience and a cumbersome legal system. Sample this: India has a population of over 1.3 billion people, more than two thousand ethnic groups, every major religion represented, and 22 major languages. Further complexity is lent by the variation that occurs across this population on social parameters such as income and education. Add to that the 29 states and seven union territories, which are governed by both central and state laws. Executing a successful PR campaign here is no mean task. Hence for years, measurement has been a dreaded word for us.

But change is the only constant and if the change is for the good, it should always be welcomed. And that’s what communicators in India did – they embraced business-driven measurement and the future never looked brighter.

Today, firms are increasingly taking the help of both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the true impact of their work, build a narrative about their hard work and provide insights for future strategies. It is heartening to see communicators use data/analytics and research for message development, selection of channels and tools, audience selection and campaign management, among others.



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There's no one-stop solution

However, with each passing year, understanding what matters and what does not, and how to measure it in a meaningful manner is getting more and more complex. Firms have to deal with Alexa scores, impressions, reach, followers and number of visitors, and, adopt the use of paid, earned, shared, owned media to deliver the results.

Much as we would like it there is no one stop solution to measure integrated communications. Therefore, different disciplines tend to follow different metrics and measurements depending on what is to be achieved (see graphic)



Nitin Mantri addresses the AMEC Global Summit

Seamless integration

When we execute an integrated campaign, we use all the above measurables to evaluate the impact of our work. For example, recently when two of the world's largest breweries had merged to become the undisputed leader of the alcohol industry, they wanted to create a better world by shaping the future of industry.

We helped the company achieve this goal by executing an integrated campaign, which included training 200+ employees in two plants in India in responsible manufacturing, bringing about a change in the mindset of industry practitioners towards serving alcohol responsibly and narrating the story of the merger with care to avoid negative escalation in the media. PR, CSR, Content, PA and Digital teams worked seamlessly to achieve all the objectives.

The success of the campaign was measured based on the behavioural changes it brought in employees, industry practitioners and the positive it created amongst key stakeholders for the company in advance of the merger.



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SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE THIS



In summary

PR firms in India have come a long way from the days of obsessing over media clippings to finally understanding the need to provide market intelligence and link results to business impact. However, there is still much to be done as this is happening in pockets. Clients also need to understand that investment in good measurement will actually lead to increased budgets as they can now show business impact.

As PR gains importance in the growth strategy of key businesses, its impact on business will be scrutinized more. PR firms will, therefore, need to focus on tying the appropriate metrics against the client's goals and objectives, and control how they can grow the brand audience, thus increasing revenue creation or top line growth. This is the only way to grow the industry and ensure that clients value the work we do.

Nitin's Top 3 Measurement Tips

1. **Keep a pulse on your brands' needs:** Just as no two people are the same, no two brands are similar either. Thus, it is important to know what is unique to your brand and the need to keep up on how its evolving
2. **Link results to your goal:** It does not matter how many great results are achieved, but the one that links to your goal must not be missed. That is when you show impact
3. **Quality over Quantity:** If there is no quality then even large numbers cannot make the desired impact



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