



HOW TO REPLACE AVE FOR MODERN PR MEASUREMENT

Almost five years ago, a conference of PR professionals and practitioners developed the Barcelona Principles, a set of standards designed to measure the impact of public relations. They decided on seven principles:

1. Goal setting and measurement are important.
2. Measuring the effect on outcomes is preferred to measuring outputs.
3. The effect on business results can and should be measured where possible.
4. Media measurement requires quantity and quality.
5. Advertising value equivalencies (AVEs) are not the value of public relations.
6. Social media can and should be measured.
7. Transparency and replicability are paramount to sound measurement.

Practitioners innately understand the importance of measurement and data. They are the means by which (a) programs and results improve and (b) proven return on investment (ROI) is delivered.

A Forbes report "[Data Driven and Digitally Savvy: The Rise of the New Marketing Organization](#)" found:

- Businesses with data-driven practices are almost three times more likely to see an increase in revenue than industry peers (55 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively).
- They're also more likely to "achieve competitive advantage in customer engagement/loyalty" (74 per cent versus 24 per cent).

What can today's communicators do to move toward modern PR measurement and deliver better outcomes? This tip sheet offers six points for guidance. It will also help you implement a metrics-driven program starting today.



1. Decide what you need to measure.

Shonali Burke, public relations and social media expert and consultant, says the first step in measuring PR is to "figure out what you're trying to do." Decide on objectives and goals that align with business outcomes. They naturally lead to relevant metrics.



2. Know what is and isn't ROI.

"AVE is not ROI," says KC Brown, general manager of Cision Global Insights. "It's a metric provided by service providers. It has no established currency value." Then what is ROI? Return to the standard formula. You should be able to give a quantifiable return, not just the cost of media space or number of impressions. Look at earned and paid media. Which efforts move brand objectives forward? They are where true ROI lies.



3. Establish general and specific metrics.

Because objectives are brand-specific, metrics should be determined on a "case-by-case basis," says Burke. But you can generalize when first starting out. She adds: "If you're just embarking in PR, you're likely to focus on awareness metrics. They show if you're gaining a foothold with the audience. Once you've gained it, now what? You have to move beyond awareness and general education. What do you want it to lead to? Advocacy? Leads?"



4. Start small.

You don't need a huge budget to get started with measurement. Begin with a single campaign. Treat it like a controlled experiment. Change one output, and then observe the outcomes. Use data to ask for a larger budget—not to increase PR activities, but measurement. More measurement means more knowledge, analysis and strategic insights. And the more you have of those three, the more capital you'll get.



5. Track as you go along.

Historical data is a precious resource. Use it to establish benchmarks and compare campaigns. At the same time, you still need to be able to respond in real time, so infuse every PR effort with measurement. "Isolate outputs at the outset," says Burke. "Plan the program that way. With a good listening and measurement program in place, you'll be able to respond to changing public sentiment, trends and other factors."



6. Implement a sustainable measurement program.

PR measurement must be replicable and sustainable to have long-term, positive effects. Embrace data. Create processes and procedures. Ensure that people follow them. When you do, not only will you get better data but also better efforts and results.



CISION.COM

877.269.3367

150 Ferrand Drive, North York, ON M3C3E5
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