



a practical guide to

measuring results in PR

a publication by 8020 Communications





_meet the authors



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Marc has over 20 years' international PR experience. He was a Middle East country manager for a top-three global PR consultancy and worked for three other leading international PR agencies in London. In-house, Marc was corporate communications manager for a FTSE 100 company and communications director for a technology start-up. He has specialised in aviation, travel and transport for more than a decade and served as a PRCA Awards judge.



Trudi Beggs

Senior Account Director

Trudi has more than 15 years' aviation and travel PR experience. She was previously PR manager at Marketing Birmingham, PR manager at national youth charity The Prince's Trust and worked for seven years at one of the foremost travel PR agencies in London where she managed numerous key accounts. Trudi's sector expertise includes tour operators, resorts and hotels, corporate travel management, travel technology, ferries and airlines.





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chapter 01

_introduction

01



_introduction

Public relations is one of the most potent tools in the marketing mix, particularly in an age when brands are judged on their ability to listen, have to prove their relevance and in which ‘authenticity’ is so highly prized. Furthermore, aviation, travel and transport businesses face growing challenges from regional instability, economic headwinds and natural disasters so need PR strategies to protect their reputations and earn goodwill.

However, many travel marketers would like a better process for measuring PR results and determining their return on investment (ROI). When comparing public relations to other marketing channels, there is sometimes a mistaken belief that “PR can’t be measured.” This knowledge gap can make it harder to allocate marketing budgets appropriately and justify PR investments to senior colleagues.

The good news is that PR can indeed be measured, and in ways that can satisfy the most demanding CFOs. We have written this ebook as a practical guide covering five approaches that, used individually or in combination, provide the reassurance that CMOs desire.



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chapter 02

what should we measure

02



_what should we measure?

Goal setting and measurement are fundamentally important to all marketing disciplines, including PR. These tasks are not only welcomed by CMOs but also by their agencies: there is nothing more rewarding for an agency than seeing the value it creates. However, the answer to ‘what’ should be measured has changed fundamentally in the past decade.

Advertising Value Equivalent, or ‘AVE’, used to be tolerated as an acceptable metric for PR. This approach measured the column inches occupied by an article and then used the publication’s advertising rate card to come up with an equivalent financial value. However, for many reasons it is now widely accepted that AVE is a fundamentally flawed notion.

PR industry associations have published the [Barcelona Principles](#) as a set of guidelines for measuring PR results more appropriately. However, these ideas stop short of offering specific measures that can be applied in practice.

As our goal is to offer a ‘practical’ guide for aviation, travel and transport businesses, we will focus on one of the core assertions of Barcelona, which is that the best measure of PR’s value is ‘outcomes’ rather than ‘outputs’.



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chapter 03

outputs and outcomes

03



_outputs and outcomes

The ‘outputs’ of a PR programme are the types and volume of activities produced, such as the number of press releases issued, interviews arranged, infographics produced or tweets posted.

While these statistics give a general sense of how active the programme is – particularly if different time periods are compared – they don’t show how effective your PR is.

Effectiveness is better assessed through the ‘outcomes’ of the programme. Ideally, we’re interested in plotting PR activities against customers acquired and income generated, and some of the tactics covered below enable you to do exactly that under certain circumstances.

However, you should also track other outcomes to gauge PR’s success in meeting narrower objectives. Outcomes worth tracking could include how PR is causing people to engage with your social media channels, interact with your website or request additional content from you.

These effects can be termed ‘business outcomes’ and are the most interesting for ROI measurement. However, we also recommend tracking ‘intermediary outcomes’ to gain a deeper insight into the effect your PR is having. The most obvious opportunity is to track and analyse the media coverage your PR activity achieves, as what journalists write influences the awareness and opinions of customers.

Therefore, let’s have a look at five ways of assessing the effectiveness of your PR activities. We’ll start with the techniques that are simplest to apply and work up through more sophisticated approaches which may require a little extra work but offer increasingly deep insights into true return on investment.



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chapter 04

_detailed coverage analysis

04



_detailed coverage analysis

Your PR programme should have a strategy and specific goals for target media and desired coverage. To see how you're performing you need to analyse coverage achieved in some detail.

Merely counting the number of clippings generated tells you very little. For example, for a luxury tour operator a single destination story in Condé Nast Traveller or Food & Travel could be worth a dozen or more travel trade news stories.

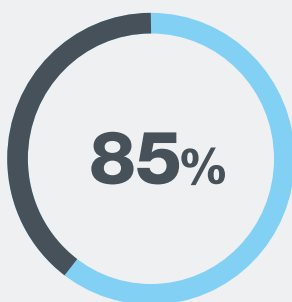
Instead, aspects to analyse include:

- **Tiers:** your target media should be divided into tiers according to how much influence they have on you achieving your goals. Compare a publication's relevance to your customer base: Skift might score as Tier 1 for a B2B travel management company but Tier 2 or 3 for a luxury ski destination. Determining factors will include circulation, reader profile and perceived authority (examine your customers' coffee table reading for a quick sense of which outlets have the latter). Now, look at how your coverage is falling across the tiers to judge if you're reaching the right audiences.
- **Tone:** is the article positive, neutral or negative in its treatment of your story? Rave reviews are lovely but rare. Neutral, factual reporting is the norm and of significant value in raising awareness when customers are in a buying mode. Negative coverage requires further investigation and potentially corrective action.



_detailed coverage analysis

- **Message:** does an article get your message across, either in the journalist's words or in a quote taken from your press release? For example, if you're an airline paying for a journalist's press trip flight, how well does a brief fact box credit alongside a competitor serve your marketing aims?
- **Links:** does online coverage include a hyperlink to your website or landing page? Inbound links, particularly from highly ranked news sources, can be very influential in SEO and lead generation so deserve a positive weighting in your coverage analysis.
- **Source:** did the coverage result from a press release, an incoming press enquiry or an arranged interview? This information can help you understand if coverage reflects your own hard work or is a happy accident.





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chapter 05

_opinion sampling

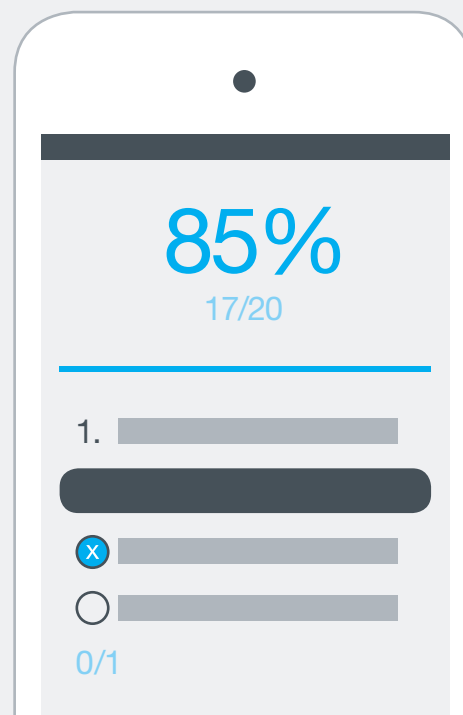
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_opinion sampling

Opinion polls and focus groups can be very effective for understanding customers' opinions and how these have been changed by PR initiatives. While they don't reveal a financial ROI they offer a lot of insight into the wider return your investment is yielding. The effects of PR can be isolated from other marketing activities through your questionnaire design.

For general consumer audiences, the omnibus surveys offered by most pollsters are a viable, cost-effective option. They cost a few hundred pounds per question for a panel of 1,000-2,000 respondents, so a total outlay of, say, £2,500 can bring a wealth of insight. For B2B audiences, it may be necessary to find more niche, potentially more costly vehicles, such as reader research services offered by a trade magazine. Alternatively, businesses can save large sums by conducting their own research using customer databases and free research tools such as SurveyMonkey and Polldaddy.





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chapter 06

_social engagement metrics

06



_social engagement metrics

PR programmes should be run across social media as well as news media channels. In-built analytics in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social platforms make it simple to track the number of likes, follows, retweets and shares your PR content generates. For a 'quick and dirty' assessment of travel PR effectiveness, this approach is free and often sufficient for day-to-day needs.

However, travel marketers increasingly want to push beyond 'vanity metrics' and gain a deeper insight into how social media activity is driving customers towards a purchase.

It's a faux pas for brands to adopt hard-sell tactics in social media conversations, so drawing a straight line from a tweet or post to a purchase is generally difficult. Instead, by offering content that is helpful to the customer – such as insider tips about great hidden bars at a holiday destination – you will build trust in your brand and encourage the user to visit your site for more information, where a purchase may ultimately be made.

Aviation, travel and transport businesses are amongst the most sophisticated in measuring the performance of websites. Google Analytics makes it easy to see which social media platforms have referred traffic to your site. Furthermore, by using tailored tracking codes in your social conversations you can also measure traffic by PR campaigns, posts or shared news stories.





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chapter 07

_correlating PR exposure to website traffic

07



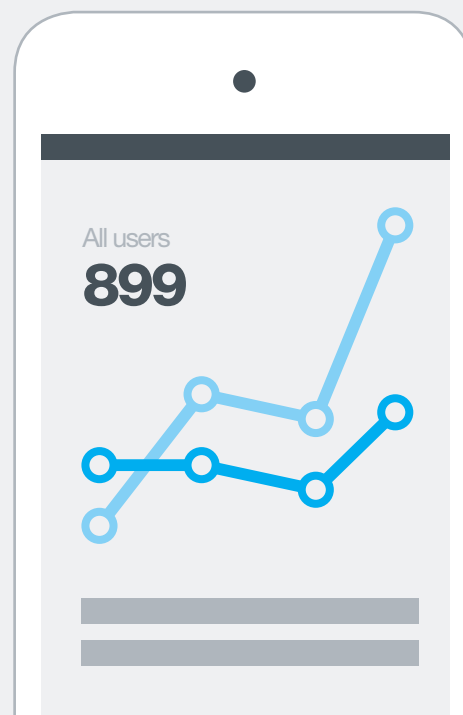
_correlating PR exposure to website traffic

In the same way that Google Analytics lets you see traffic referred from social media platforms, it can also identify traffic from many published online news sites.

As CMO, you need to play match-maker and introduce your PR manager and agency to your webmaster.

Even if an inbound link isn't included in media coverage, it's still possible to use Google Analytics to see its impact on your online following. Daily visitor traffic can be mapped against coverage from PR events, such as a venue launch or a destination feature. Where there's a traffic spike and a close correlation it's reasonable to conclude that PR has played a strong contributing role.

Furthermore, for businesses with a short sales cycle, you may even be able to attribute a financial value to some of this exposure by relating that day's visitor traffic to sales data in your CRM system.





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chapter 08

inbound marketing

08

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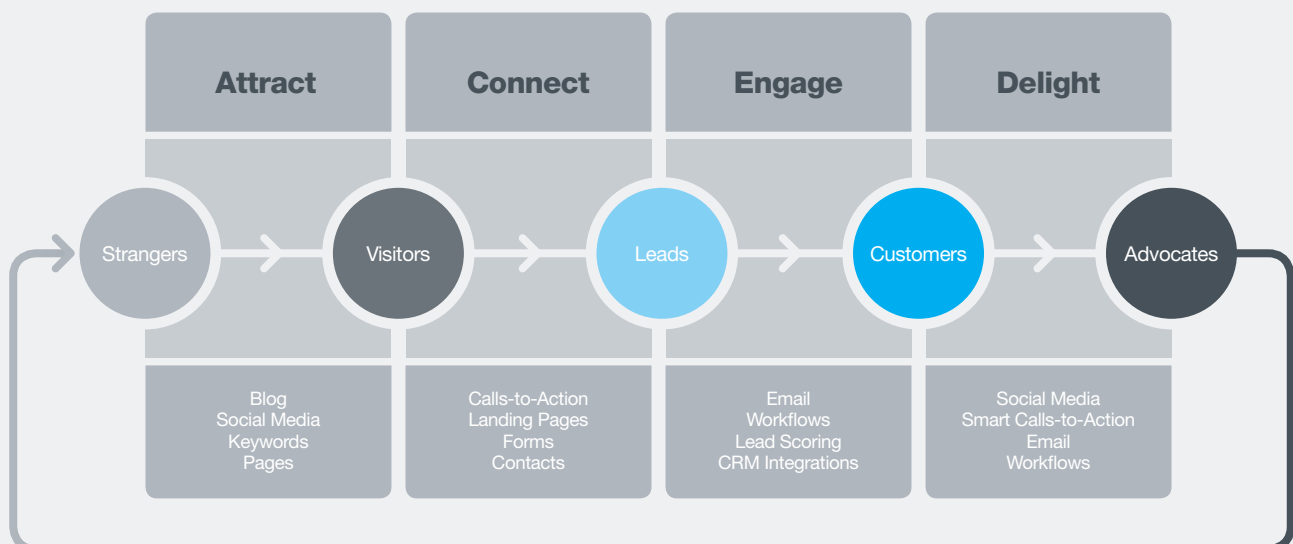
_inbound marketing

The ultimate way to measure the ROI of PR is to show how a lead acquired using the PR skill set has been nurtured through the sales funnel to the point he or she makes a purchase.

The convergence of PR and social media with other marketing disciplines has led to the rise of Inbound Marketing or marketing automation, an integrated lead generation approach well-suited to many aviation, travel and transport businesses.

Inbound Marketing brings together marketing and thought leadership content, blogging, social media, SEO, e-newsletters, analytics and CRM into an active lead generation strategy. It is a way to help the right prospects find you online and for you to nurture them with relevant content offers, developing them from anonymous website visitors to paying customers.

Inbound Methodology





_inbound marketing

With its strengths in storytelling, news generation, social media and relatable content creation, PR is ideally placed to fuel an Inbound Marketing programme and be the common thread drawing all activities together.

For example, a cruise ferry operator could publish a series of blog posts about the best food and drink shopping in Cherbourg, helpful to foodies considering weekend break ideas. Promoted through Facebook, Twitter and other platforms, these posts could link to a downloadable ebook about planning the ultimate trip to Cherbourg, offering a greater breadth of tips and advice. By entering their details to download the ebook, website visitors would become leads whom the ferry operator could continue to engage with increasingly tailored content, such as downloadable city maps or packing checklists, ultimately driving them towards making an online ferry booking.

The ROI insights possible through an Inbound programme, which can be managed through a marketing automation software tool such as HubSpot or Act-On, are potentially powerful.

However, it is important to appreciate the significant time, resources and, crucially, quality content that this approach demands. For these reasons, Inbound Marketing is often more easily adopted by mid-size or larger organisations, but is worth investigating by any business looking to attract self-qualifying customers.



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If you'd like to discuss how PR, social media and marketing content can connect you with customers and generate measureable returns, please get in touch with us [here](#).



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