

# Liberty Communications.

Measuring the impact of PR



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## The measurement puzzle for PR.



The PR industry has always faced a challenge with measurement. The latest findings from the 2019 Global Comms Report carried out by Cision and PR Week revealed that **20% of respondents identified an inability to measure impact effectively as their single biggest comms challenge**. The survey gathered the opinions of 500+ senior-level PR and marketing professionals from across seven countries, including the UK and US.

If we're completely transparent, the honest truth is that a lot of the work carried out by PR agencies is intangible. After all, while it's not particularly difficult to measure what people do, how do you accurately measure what people think?

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), the UK's professional body for the PR industry, defines PR as follows:

*"Public Relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics."*

But how do you measure reputation? After all, the CIPR also states that *"reputation can be a company's biggest asset"*

Well the truth is that reputation as an asset or entity is extremely difficult (arguably impossible) to establish, even though we know it clearly has a value. In fact, it's arguably only when a company or organisation is in serious trouble because reputation is at risk and share prices subsequently fall that a direct correlation between reputation and business performance can be easily determined.

However, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't aim to measure the impact of PR. Absolutely not. What it does mean though is that we have to be realistic about what can be measured and apply this principle from the start of every client relationship. This is what we do at Liberty, because we take measurement extremely seriously.

But before that, it's worth recapping on how far the PR industry has come. Because while still not perfect, things have undoubtedly come a long way.



## A brief measurement history lesson.



It's only in recent years that the majority of the PR industry has turned its back on the now much maligned and derided practice of Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE).

This method of literally measuring the column inches generated by print media coverage, or length in seconds for broadcast media coverage, and multiplying the results against the publication's advertising rate per inch or second is at best imprecise and at worst misleading.

Moreover, AVE weights the focus far too heavily on output, with little to no attention on outcomes or impact.

All this started to change in 2010, when PR practitioners from over 30 countries around the world descended on Spain for a summit organised by the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC).

After discussions, the group agreed on a set of voluntary guidelines aimed at better measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of PR campaigns. This was the first time an overarching framework had been established for unified PR and communications measurement.

Referred to as **The Barcelona Principles**, these seven guidelines were updated five years later in 2015 to reflect the changing nature of the PR industry and media landscape, thereby referred to as **The Barcelona Principles 2.0**.

- Goal setting and measurement are fundamental to communication and PR
- Measuring communication outcomes is recommended versus only measuring outputs
- The effect on organisational performance can and should be measured where possible
- Measurement and evaluation require both qualitative and quantitative methods
- AVEs are not the value of communication
- Social media can and should be measured consistently with other media channels – focus measurement on engagement, conversation and communities, not just coverage
- Measurement and evaluation should be transparent, consistent and valid

## Liberty's approach to measurement.

At Liberty, we take measurement seriously and view it positively. It's an opportunity for us to showcase the work we have done for our clients; often to important stakeholders who we may not have had the chance to regularly engage with throughout our day-to-day campaigns.

We see measurement as an iterative process, integral to all of our client campaigns, rather than a checklist or box-ticking exercise. This means that we work with clients from the outset of our engagement to establish what their business objectives are and how they envisage PR supporting them with meeting those goals.

Crucially, we will not commit to delivering what we cannot. For example, if a client says to us that they want PR to drive their sales pipeline we will explore how we can support this but will be realistic and honest about what we can help them achieve. In this scenario, we can help with driving traffic to a website - but after that we would argue that it is the role of sales or marketing to take over in the rest of the customer journey.

There are some fundamental steps we take with all of our campaigns, including:

- **Requesting access to our clients' Google analytics data** – so we can measure the impact of PR on website traffic
- **Holding regular (at least quarterly) client reviews** – to review progress and realign targets if necessary
- **Regularly reviewing domain authority for online media** – to ensure we're gaining coverage in the right outlets
- **Encouraging the use of gated content** – so we can further track website visits, engagement and downloads
- **Building in Share of Voice analysis to all our client reporting** – to measure against our clients' competitors

If there is additional budget to spend on measurement, other steps we take include:

- Carrying out pre-campaign and post-campaign brand awareness studies
- Investing in proprietary research into audience insights studies
- Optimising all written content with key words





# Measurement in practice.

At Liberty we implement an industry recognised and recommended framework to measure the success of the activity we undertake for all of our client campaigns.

This is the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework from the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), which:

PREPARATION	ALIGN OBJECTIVES		INFORM & PREPARE COMMUNICATION			
	ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES	COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES	TARGET AUDIENCE	STRATEGIC INPUTS		
IMPLEMENTATION	IMPLEMENT ACTIVITIES	MEASUREMENT & INSIGHTS	MEASURE ACTIVITY	AUDIENCE RESPONSE & EFFECTS	ORGANISATION & STAKEHOLDER	
			OUTPUTS	OUT-TAKES	OUTCOMES	ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT

- Provides a means of reporting back on cause and effect
- Looks at the effect PR has had on a client's business objectives
- Operationalises the Barcelona Principles to turn them into action - and prove the value of PR activity

The AMEC framework allows us to align business and communication objectives, establish a plan, set targets and then measure the outputs, outtakes, outcomes and impact of the activity.

It also means we are able to succinctly frame the work that we do and report back on activity so that our clients can in turn report back to the board and other stakeholders as required.

The other great thing about the AMEC framework is that it is a live document, so in that respect we ensure measurement is an iterative process at Liberty and do not let it inhibit our creativity.

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With wholly owned offices in London, San Francisco and Lisbon, Liberty Communications has been driving award-winning, creative communications strategies for a technology client base that spans verticals including Telecoms and Media, Enterprise Software, and Consumer Technology for over 20 years.

Companies work with Liberty to develop and implement integrated marketing campaigns that cross both the digital and traditional channels to raise corporate profiles and visibility as well as create opportunities for engagement with key industry influencers on a local and global scale.

For more information about how we measure the effectiveness of our campaigns and align with our clients' core business objectives, email Elena Davidson, CEO; or James Meredith, Head of Strategy and Planning, via [info@libertycomms.com](mailto:info@libertycomms.com) or visit [www.libertycomms.com](http://www.libertycomms.com).

