

PublicRelay

# 5 PR Measurement Best Practices

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**Harness the Power of Your Media Data**

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What to measure and why are still looming questions over the PR and communications industry. A lack of data is no longer the problem, but communicators still struggle to make sense of it.



At PublicRelay, we believe your measurement program shouldn't just show you what you've done, it should tell you what to do next. It should give you actionable insights that can be used to optimize your communications tactics and strategies to achieve your goals. **Establish a robust measurement strategy around:**

- **messaging and campaigns**
- **reputation management**
- **competitors**
- **influencers**

The insights you glean will inform the way you pitch to authors and outlets, which messages you push on which platforms, where there is space to start a new conversation in your industry, and much more. Using insights from data will also help to make your communications team more agile. This agility will allow you to quickly understand whether you should (or should not) insert your brand into a conversation or pivot on current tactics that are not working.

# 1. Measure Based on Business Goals

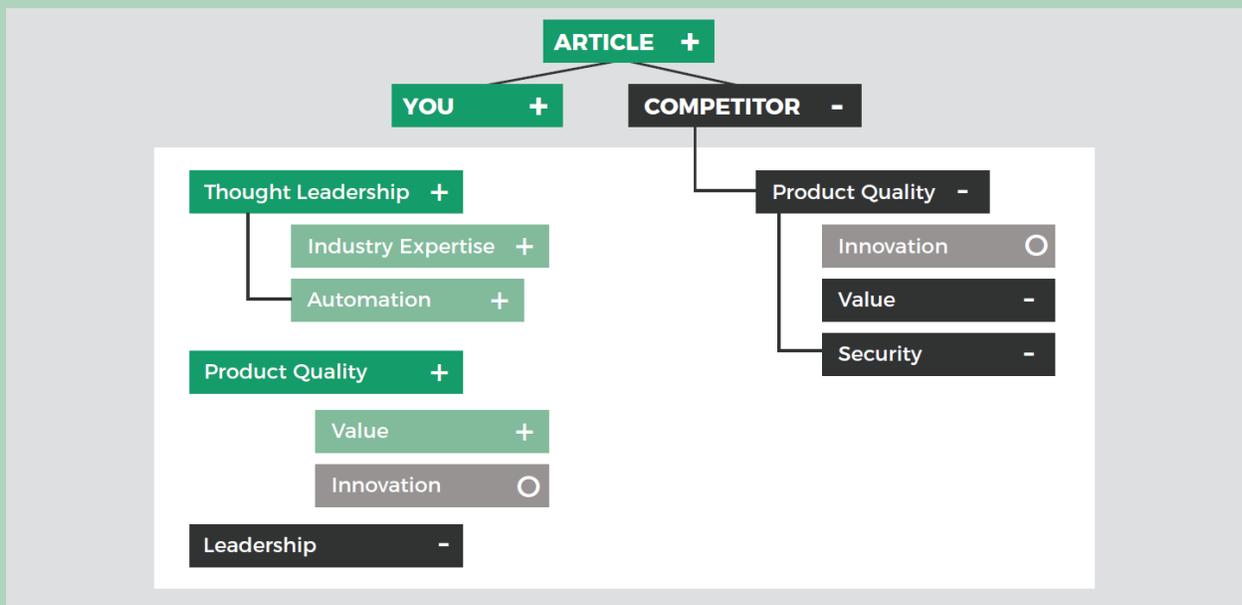
Rooting your communications strategy in the broader goals of the business makes demonstrating your impact easy from the start.

Business goals include wanting to be known as an innovative company or a great place to work or establishing your CEO as a thought leader in the industry. These are business priorities that multiple departments within your organization will contribute to. Objectives such as getting three articles per month published in your top tier outlets are considered departmental tactics that help achieve those business goals.

So how do you measure your contribution to these goals?

If your overall communications strategy is tied back to broader corporate goals like those listed above, you have probably outlined major themes or topics that will be the basis of your campaigns. These can also be called brand drivers. Following these main brand drivers will be sub-topics that you will want to analyze.

When analyzing your media coverage, it is no longer enough to simply report on the tonality of articles. You need to know **WHAT** brand drivers these articles are positive or negative about. Below is an example of how an article can be analyzed for both its reputational context and tone.



Understanding not just volume of mentions, but the quality of mentions will help you understand how you are progressing toward achieving your business goals. Are you reaching the right outlets and respected authors for a given topic? Is your brand the feature of the article or mentioned in passing? Which topics and spokespeople received a high amount of social sharing and on what channels?

When establishing your measurement program, collect data for a baseline and plan to measure the same brand drivers over time. This consistency will not only help you measure progress but also allow a level of predictability as you see trends emerging. You can set goals based on these trends and also spot anomalies more quickly. Did that author that normally covers you favorably suddenly write something critical or negative? You'll want to reach out sooner than later to see why.

# 2. Understand Message Pull-Through

Measuring message pull-through of your brand drivers is one of the most important parts of media measurement. It gives you insight about the messaging strategy you created to hit the high-level reputational goals that your CEO and board care about. It is also one of the most difficult parts of your media intelligence program because the hard data is trapped in the context of your coverage. Unfortunately for PR professionals, authors don't write in keyword phrases, so the words "corporate social responsibility" are rarely used when talking about your organization's charitable activity or stance on social issues.

Accurate insights into how your messages are pulling-through allows you to refine messaging strategies and campaign tactics, especially if you find that your key messages are not pulling through. You can use the data from your coverage to either pivot completely or simply tweak the message. Conversely if you are having success with a message, you can look to expand coverage by reaching out to authors that may not have been receptive in the past.



The interplay of traditional and social media can also give you insights on message pull through. Over time, clear trends will emerge about which messages are more likely to get shared on social and on which platform. This allows you to push certain messages to the authors getting shared on the preferred channel of the audience you want to reach.

**Understanding message pull-through also allows you to allocate resources from successful brand drivers to weaker ones and identify whitespace opportunities to start a new conversation in your industry.**

### 3. Proactively Manage Brand Reputation

Measuring your brand drivers and evaluating their reputational health on a regular basis will show you where you need to focus your efforts before something becomes a problem. If you start to see even a small uptick in negative coverage around “brand quality”, you can combat this proactively.

When an issue does require a response, use data to disseminate your crisis response messages most efficiently. Understanding the social sharing of your traditional media is important here again to focus your outreach on the influencers of the channels you know will reach the right audience. Not all of the authors that cover you most often or most favorably get the same amount of social uplift. If you are dealing with a reputational crisis, speed and reach can be a game changer.



The First Step to Reputation Management is Knowing Where You're Starting From.

Establish a baseline reputation across your brand drivers in the first quarter or six months of your measurement program. Deviations from this baseline will make clear when negative coverage requires a response or when positive coverage could be an opportunity to capitalize on.

You may never need to react to a crisis but if you do, each crisis measured makes the next one easier to manage. Even if your response strategy wasn't a complete success, you will have invaluable data to understand what worked and what did not in order to hone strategy.

# 4. Measure Competitors or Peers

Measuring the progress on your communications goals for your own brand over time is important, but it can also be very informative to understand your brand position in relation to your market or industry. Analyze your competitors' coverage against the same brand drivers as your own organization and compare to know if you're gaining or losing share of voice on the topics that matter most to you. With a clear understanding of the industry landscape, you can look for gaps that will allow you to differentiate your organization.

Tracking your competitors can answer questions like these:

- Are our campaigns for “workplace environment” resulting in larger SOV for our brand?
- Which authors are writing about our competitors, but not us?
- How are our peers positioning themselves in the market?
- What are industry authors and influencers talking about?
- Do these two conversations align?
- What are our peers doing well that we are not?

Answers to these questions provide competitive intelligence that not only benefits the communications team, but your CEO and executive leadership as well.



**Case Study:** The Head of Communications and Marketing at a leading materials engineering company routinely shared competitive insights with his CEO and CFO. By bringing forward previously unknown data points, the communications team was quickly seen as a strategic function and trusted partner to the business. [\[WATCH\]](#)

# 5. Make Your Influencer Strategies Data-Driven

Hiding in the context of your coverage and social media conversations are authors and outlets, third-party influencers, and brand evangelists that can move your brand forward. Use data to identify the authors and outlets that are interested in the message you want to push and have a wide audience reach to amplify it. Then use the data to understand the way they've written about the topic in the past and personalize your pitch, so they will be more likely to engage.

Analyze industry coverage to uncover third-party influencers like academics and regulatory experts that already align (or need to) with your organization's stance on key issues. These influencers lend a high level of credibility and expertise to your brand or to your view on the issue even if they don't mention your organization by name.

Your brand spokespeople are also powerful champions for your brand. Your CEO, executives, and PR professionals are the personification of your brand and can significantly impact company goals when used strategically. Measuring your spokesperson strategy helps you understand which spokespeople are resonating with authors and with which messages, if your spokespeople are staying on message, and if they are amplifying key messages.



**Case Study:** When a leading health care system wanted to establish themselves as a thought leader in the industry, their communications team employed an aggressive executive spokesperson strategy. Analysis revealed that, on average, stories that included a quote from executives received 6X the amount of social sharing as stories that did not. This insight helped to pivot the team to focus on earning fewer, high-quality placements with quotes rather than trying to earn a high number of mentions that were less likely to get shared.

# About PublicRelay

PublicRelay is the most trusted media analytics solution for communications and marketing professionals at the world's most recognizable consumer and business brands, associations, universities, and government agencies. Our clients confidently use our media analysis to plan and measure influencer engagement, reputation management, competitive landscape, and message pull through. Known for its innovation, superior data quality, and actionable insights, PublicRelay helps communicators not only understand what they have done but what to do next.



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