

Measurement That Matters

5 Approaches to
Judging PR Success



VOXUSPR





• Summary

Adapting Your Approach to PR Measurement

Public relations has long been a core tactic for building brand awareness and thought leadership.

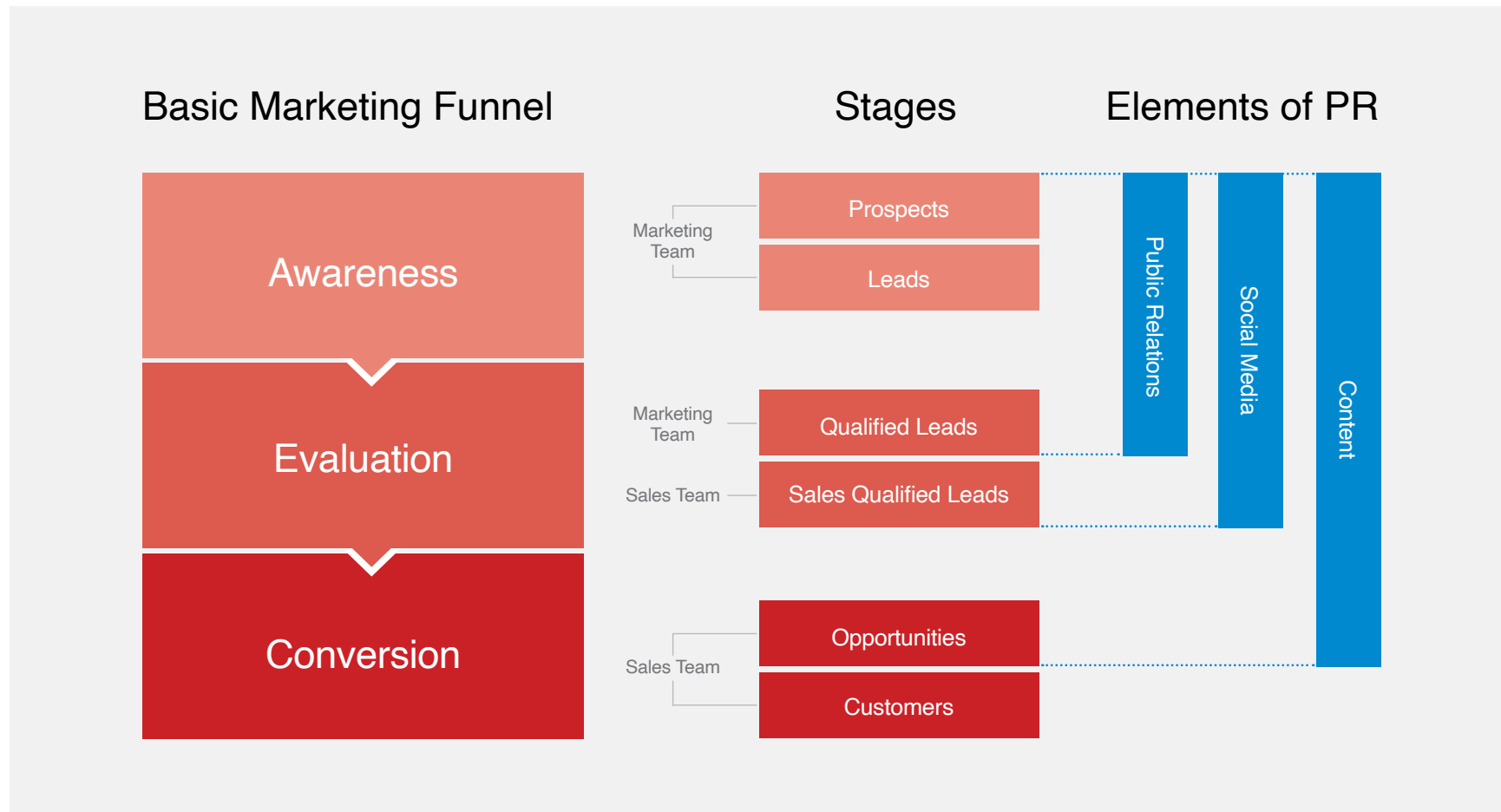
Yet there remains a persistent belief that because awareness is intangible, its impact is unmeasurable. As marketing teams continue to drive toward increasingly sophisticated methods for measuring business impact, it is critical that the tools and approaches to measuring PR adapt accordingly. In particular, today's savvy practitioners are implementing new ways to measure PR's ability to increase website traffic, establish domain authority, drive engagement and improve search results.

This eBook will explore some of the PR measurement challenges organizations face, the role PR best plays in the marketing funnel, and provide examples of how different programs are measuring success today.



PR's Role in the Marketing Funnel

Public relations can bolt on to various stages of the marketing funnel.



Measuring PR's Impact

Statistics show that judging PR's impact on business is historically challenging.

There was a time when ad value equivalency and impressions were the go-to metrics for judging PR success. But as digital has passed print and broadcast in importance, marketing is under increasing pressure to show meaningful digital metrics for every dollar spent. As a result, organizations need to adjust how they measure success when it comes to coverage, content and social.

Yet despite this new reality, PR has remained stubbornly analog and unmeasurable. In part this is because teams don't know what to ask for, and when they do, there are roadblocks to getting the requisite data. For instance, PR teams often have limited (or no) access to site or lead data. Additionally, the tools needed to track and measure engagement, share of voice and similar metrics are expensive, and often fall outside the budgets allocated for PR programs. Finally, unlike the advertising world, media outlets are often unwilling to provide the necessary linking to track a page view to a lead. Without this insightful context to provide meaning, organizations often settle for proxy metrics – such as sentiment – just so they can measure something.

Given these conflicting realities, when it comes to PR measurement there is generally no one-size-fits-all answer. As a result, it is critical that PR professionals (both internal and agency) work to understand the organization's marketing KPIs and build success metrics accordingly.



3 Common Measurement Personas

In our experience, measurement requests typically align with three primary personas:

Where an organization falls in this spectrum depends on a number of factors: budget, marketing sophistication, tools, data accessibility, etc. That said, there are common metrics to choose from.



The Fundamentalist

“I just want the basics. Give me some circulation numbers and clip counts that I can throw into a spreadsheet or ppt.”



The Numerologist

“I measure marketing success in website traffic and conversions. If the PR program can't fit into this measurement approach – and show value – then we're going to spend money elsewhere.”



The Aspirationalist

“I need to show quantitative results, and it can't just be clip counts. What can we do to show the PR value we're producing?”



5 Metrics for Assessing PR Impact

While not an exhaustive list, the following are five common elements that can be used independently or combined to assess the success – and ideally impact – of a PR program.

Let's dive into each in more detail.

1

Coverage and Output

2

Impact Scoring

3

Site Traffic

4

Keyword Ownership and SEO

5

Content Engagement

• Coverage and Output

This is the classic measurement model.

Coverage

Metrics

Publications

Many organizations rely on tracking coverage and counting clips (via tools like Meltwater, Cision, Google, etc.) combined with metrics like circulation, sentiment and perhaps share of voice. It can also include other basic outputs like volume of blog posts, press releases, social posts, award or speaking submissions, etc.

This is a simple, low cost, quantitative approach to understanding the impact of PR on driving general awareness across select publications/outlets. The positive is that it provides marketers with simple KPIs that can be reported up the management chain. The downside is that it lacks meaningful insight into the impact this awareness has on business objectives.

We see clients most often using this basic approach when measuring programs for thought-leadership, media relations, awards and speaking.

Coverage & Outputs Metrics Samples

October									
Date	Publication	DA	Title	Reporter	Link	Visits/Month	Referral Link	Follow/ No-Follow	
10/17/19	DZone	78	A Personal Look Back at 25 Years on Software Testing in Silicon Valley	Michael Hackett	www.dzone.com/articles/a-personal-look-back-at-25-years-in-software-testi	13.5M	www.lgige.com	No-follow	
September									
Date	Publication	DA	Title	Reporter	Link	Visits/Month	Referral Link	Follow/ No-Follow	
9/9/19	The ModernCTO	27	#124 Hans Buwalda - CTO at LogiGear	Joel Beasley	www.moderncto.io/124-hans-buwalda-cto-at-logigear/	70K	www.lgige.com	N/A	
September									
Date	Publication	DA	Title	Reporter	Link	Visits/Month	Referral Link	Follow/ No-Follow	
8/15/19	DZone	78	Major Impediments to Continuous Testing	Veronika Chizh	www.dzone.com/articles/major-impediments-to-continuous-testing	13.5M	www.lgige.com	No-follow	
8/14/19	Insurance Innovation Reporter	41	Software Test Automation Helps Insurers Reach their Digital Destination Faster	Do Nguyen	www.iireporter.com/software-test-automation-helps-insurers-reach-their-digital-destination-faster/	10K	N/A	N/A	

KPI	Measure	Owner	JOP (YR)	NA	JAN	FEB	MAR
PR Original Mentions	Total 48/4 per month	Smith	48	Plan	4	4	4
			54	Actual	100%	113%	108%
PR New Product Intros (NPI) Original Mentions	14 key hits for As, 11 for Bs	Smith	New	Plan	2	14	19
			130	Actual	450%	138%	123%
Analyst Briefings Held	4/quarter	Smith	27	Plan	1	1	2
			35	Actual	400%	250%	200%
Case Studies	2/month through Sept, then 1	Smith	23	Plan	2	2	2
			16	Actual	100%	75%	67%
Followers on LI	185/month	Smith	2,220	Plan	185	185	185
			6,985	Actual	439%	336%	273%
Engagement on LI	# of Replies, Retweets, CTR / # of Followers X10 = % engagement	Smith	12%	Plan	14	14	14
			14%	Actual	-0.6	13	-0.6

This coverage tracker includes key information used to evaluate quality.

This tracker captures key performance indicators and the progress toward goals.

Impact Scoring

Some organizations prefer a more detailed analysis of media coverage to better assess the quality – and hence the impact – of coverage.

Quality Metrics

Media Coverage

Impact Scoring is a combined metric that incorporates multiple attributes of each piece of coverage, weighted by importance to the client. Those elements could include tracking of message pick up, article dominance, quote inclusion and more. To do this effectively, teams should correlate coverage with domain or page authority (essentially, how important a domain/page is to your target audience) available through sources like Moz.

Impact Scoring can be tracked over time in a matrix to show trends and progress against key goals. It also provides companies with a highly detailed format to measure traditional changes in coverage quality (for example, shift from negative to positive sentiment), as well as more modern assessments such as message pull-through, authority and more. It can be an effective way to look at the quality of the coverage produced, and to see if your PR team is effective in conveying key messages and managing the process.

As Impact Scoring is focused entirely on media coverage, most clients use this option to measure contributed article campaigns, media relations or news announcements, proactive pitching, etc.

Impact Score Matrix Sample

PR Coverage Impact Matrix

Outlet	Coverage	URL	DA	Tier	Sentiment	Exclusive	Quotes	Total (12 Best)
NWW	Client Launches X	www.networkworld.com/launchingxtest	89 (4)	1 (3)	Positive (3)	No (0)	Yes (1)	11
Converge Network Digest	Client Wins X	www.convergenetworkdigest.com/winx	45 (2)	3 (1)	Positive (3)	Yes (1)	No (0)	7

Weighted Key

DA	75-100 = 4	50-75 = 3	25-50 = 2	0-25 = 1
Tier	1 = 3	2 = 2	3 = 1	1 (3)
Sentiment	Positive = 3	Negative = 0		
Exclusive	Yes = 1	No = 0		
Quotes	Yes = 1	No = 0		

An impact matrix enables the marketing team to customize how coverage goals are evaluated.

Site Traffic

Many marketers want to measure more than just basic awareness, and seek to correlate PR's impact to site traffic (and, when possible, leads).

Site Traffic

Attributions

Engagement

The first step in understanding the relationship between PR and site traffic is ideally to define a value list of domains (based on domain and page authority from sources like Moz, etc.) for the simple reason that not all site traffic is equal; while a content farm could provide a substantial volume of low-value traffic, you ideally want to direct your PR efforts at outlets that matter to your desired audience.

Teams then measure inbound site traffic from backlinks used in traditional PR activities (i.e., articles, awards, press releases). Using follow-links and UTM codes for attribution to PR, a team can also measure and even create Google Analytics goals that tie to and track conversions (like leads, events, revenue, email subs, form fills, etc.).

Overall, this allows the team to a) rank the value of online sources by domain and page authority, b) measure coverage impact on website traffic, c) evaluate the ability of outlet site traffic to impact lead generation, and d) show more tangible PR cost-to-value (i.e., traffic or leads).

Voxus clients use this approach to measure the engagement of thought-leadership articles, general coverage success, industry awards, news or product launches, blog campaigns, social media and more.

Site Traffic Metric Samples

Publication	Audience	Monthly Reach	Domain Authority	Follow Backlinks?	Story Angles
Tech Target	Developers, architects and executives	14.4M visitor/month	89	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software testing techniques • "Autonomous" testing • Software testing role • Automated testing
InfoQ	Software engineers	2.1M visitor/month	85	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test automation & AI/ML • Dev Ops • State of testing
Information Week	IT decision makers	220K visitor/month	84	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agile • Developer Skills • Best practices
IT PRO Today	IT Management, Executives, LOB, Management, Consultants/System Integrators, Engineering	1.2M visitor/month	79	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software testing strategies • Software testing best practices • Myths of software testing • Continuous testing
JAXenter	Enterprise developers	936K visitor/month	59	Yes, in bio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test automation • Dev Ops • The developer role
DevOps Digest	Approximately 90% are end-users responsible for IT operations, 10% are vendors, analysts, resellers	37K-46K visitor/month (20K-28K unique visitors/months)	40	Yes, in 'Related Links' section at the bottom of the article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selenium testing • Developer role • Continuous delivery • Agile • Test automation

← Building a "Top Tier" list around sites that matter most to your brand allow you to better track their impact on your website.

Utilizing a UTM Tracker (such as this one) allows you to track PR work in campaign form.

Description	Date	Campaign Medium*	Source*	Campaign Name*	Keyword	Destination URL	Campaign-Tagged UTM URL	Click Count
WatchGuard Most Wanted Infographic	7/15/19	Social	LinkedIn	Infographic	hacker	www.watchguard.com/mostwanted	www.watchguard.com/mostwanted?utm_campaign=infographic&utm_medium=social&utm_source=linkedin	890
WatchGuard Firebox Launch	7/1/19	PR	PR	Firebox	malware	www.watchguard.com/firebox	www.watchguard.com/firebox?utm_campaign=firebox&utm_medium=PR&utm_source=PR	165
WatchGuard Security Survey	6/25/19	PR	PR	SecSurvey	cloud security	www.watchguard.com/secsurvey	www.watchguard.com/secsurvey?utm_campaign=secsurvey&utm_medium=PR&utm_source=PR	165

Keyword Ownership and SEO

PR can have a tremendous impact on search, and this is obviously something that organizations can track.

Keywords

Activity Impact

SEO Tracking

Start with an SEO audit (perhaps via Google Analytics tools, SEMRush, etc.) to establish a relevant measurement baseline, and include a defined and prioritized list of valued keywords and phrases.

PR teams then work to incorporate these keywords/phrases into earned and owned media (and include other search best practices like inserting do-follow links) as well as other search-related tactics. For example, we often create non-duplicate content (like an accompanying blog post with 7-12 keyword references), develop keyword-heavy thought leadership assets, or craft content for pillar landing pages.

Teams should then measure the impact of activities against keyword movement in organic search, as well as tracking increases in site traffic driven by search.

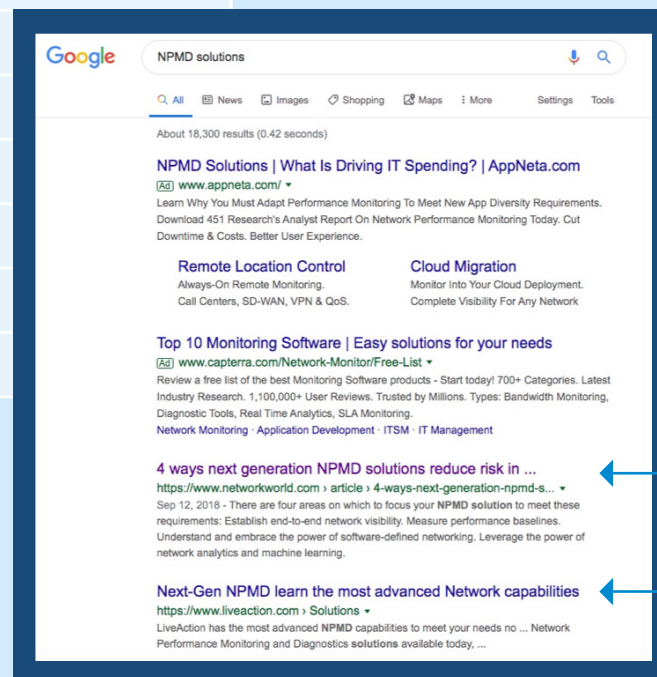
We most typically see keyword and SEO tracking across clients that have programs for contributed articles, content marketing, blogs and social media.

Keyword Ownership & SEO Samples

PR Keyword Tracker

Keyword	Organic Search Rank	Volume	# Results
NPMD	1 (and 2)	170	51.3K
Network Monitoring	71	2,900	
NPMD Tools	4	40	
Network Monitoring Best Practices	NR	40	
Network Performance Problems	2	10	
Network Data Types	1 (and 6)	20	
Cisco SD-WAN	12	2,400	

PR can play a big role in organic keyword success. Tracking this impact is critical to validating the work.



Google search for "NPMD solutions" showing results:

- NPMD Solutions | What Is Driving IT Spending? | AppNeta.com
- Remote Location Control
- Cloud Migration
- Top 10 Monitoring Software | Easy solutions for your needs
- 4 ways next generation NPMD solutions reduce risk in ...
- Next-Gen NPMD learn the most advanced Network capabilities

• Content Engagement

If you include content and social under your broader PR umbrella (we do), you have some unique measurement opportunities.

Engagement

Social Analytics

Metrics

You can track the primary awareness and education that comes from social and content marketing initiatives. You can also use these initiatives to amplify (and measure) success in more traditional PR endeavors, like reposting thought leadership, product reviews, etc.

While measuring social and content is a topic unto itself, in most cases, the key metric is engagement. Teams often evaluate and test success for the call-to-action (for example in blogs or landing pages) using UTM codes and building campaigns in Google Analytics (or some other tools). Other typical conversion metrics include form fills, downloads, and social analytics such as likes, shares, views, comments, etc.

Measuring engagement allows organizations to assess both audience targeting and content value, as well as better understand a prospect's journey from lead to customer. As importantly, it allows PR teams to apply these readily "measurable" engagements to assess audience interest in more traditional PR elements.

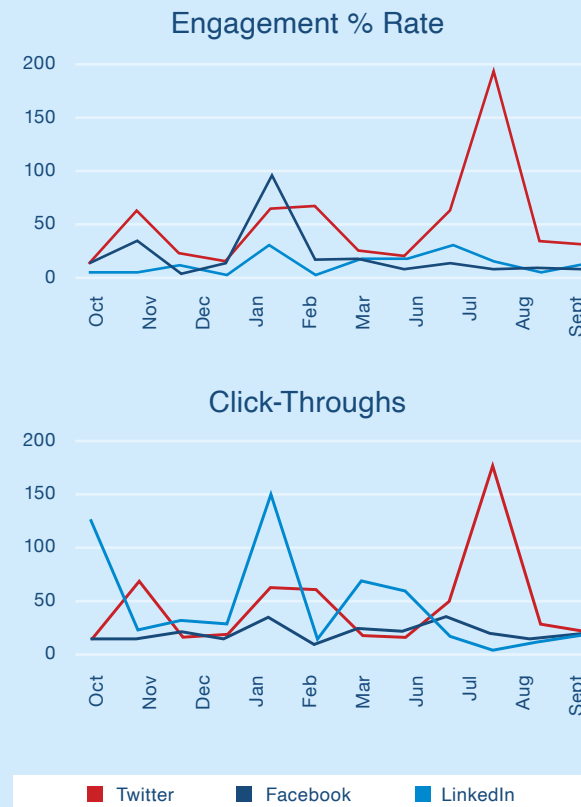
Clients use content engagement metrics most often around content marketing campaigns, social media and email marketing programs, paid media placements and more.

Content Engagement Metrics Samples

Vaporware PR/Social Campaign Metrics

Month	Total Clicks	Total Engagement	Reach	Audience
January	1,202	1,645	114,820	420
February	2,798	3,895	208,456	520
March	1,598	1,689	150,856	417
April	2,360	2,433	184,995	487
May	3,489	3,658	604,268	325
June	1,956	2,016	798,495	617
July	1,697	1,759	355,222	351
August	2,564	2,758	271,854	350
September	1,459	1,503	204,402	489
October	2,546	2,895	258,123	299
November	1,693	1,546	198,568	380
December	3,561	3,965	365,192	450
Total	26,921	29,762	3,715,251	5105

There are many tools available for measuring engagement, but context often matters. Be sure your team understands what metrics matter most to your client.



7 Steps to Measurement Success



Educate

Share this Measurement That Matters approach and establish a baseline of what is – or isn't – possible for your program measurement.



Make Concrete Objectives a Priority

Early in the program, work to eliminate vague objectives such as “raising awareness.” Identify a limited number of concrete objectives and focus on metrics that correlate with those.



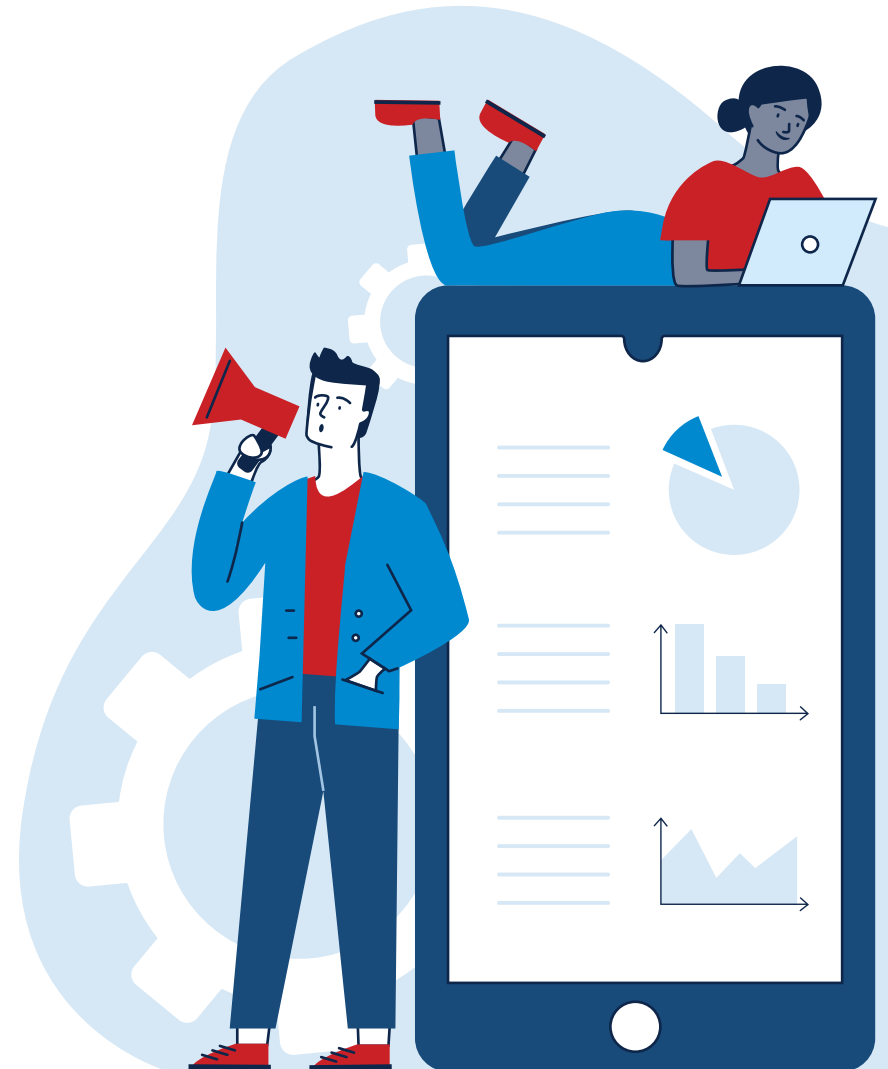
Incorporate Data

If you don't have the data from elsewhere in your organization, ask. In fact, get relevant data early, both to inform your goal-setting and to understand what's available. Then ensure you'll have continued access to that data as you track results.



Establish Baselines

Setting targets and goals without having a baseline is simply throwing random numbers up on a wall.



7 Steps to Measurement Success Cont.



Identify and Rank Outlets

Understanding where your audience goes to consume information is vital. Do they read blogs and magazines, or follow influencers on social media? Quantify those targets with data like domain authority, conduct surveys, etc.



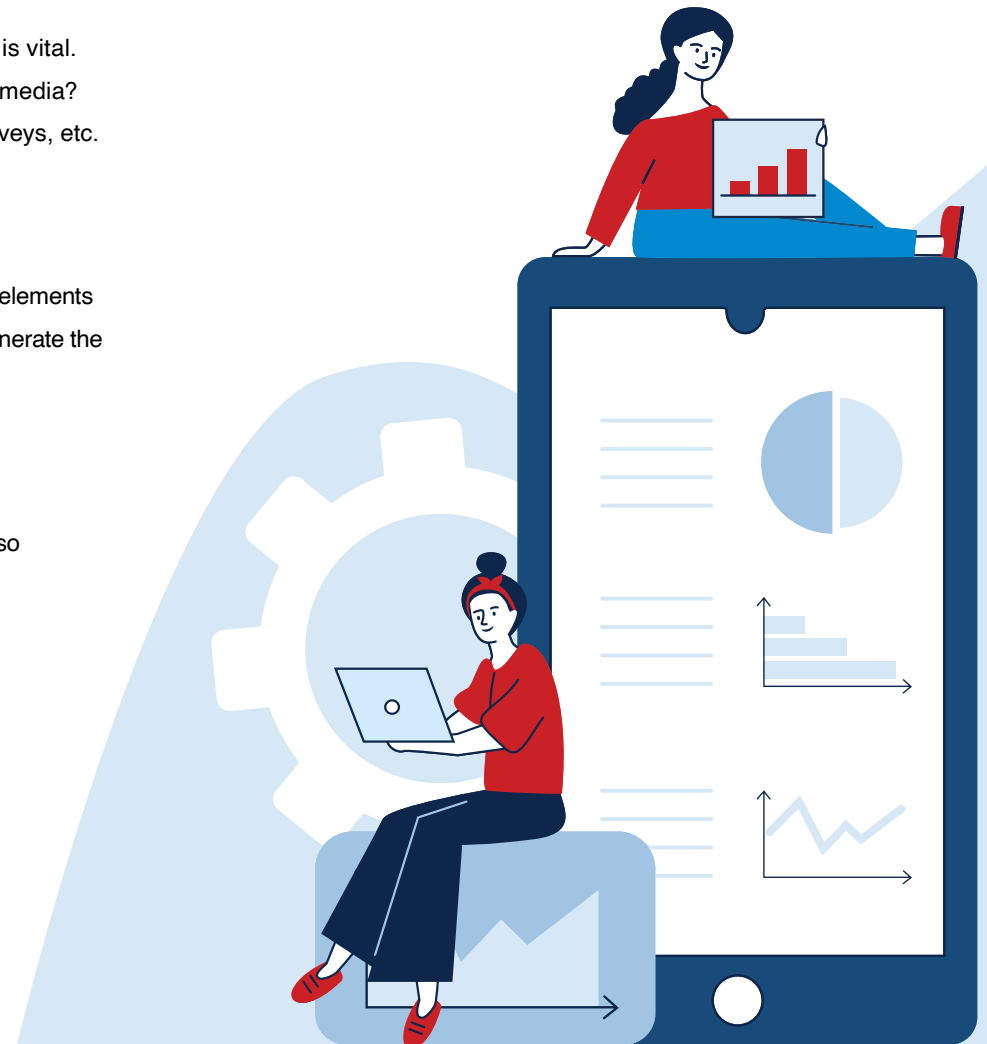
Measure the Impact

All PR outcomes are not equal. Define the value of different program elements or outcomes so you can apply the correct strategies and tactics to generate the desired result/outcome.



Evaluate & Adjust

The point of metrics/goals is to look at what's working and what's not so you can evolve the program. Learn from the data and make informed decisions to boost your program.





VOXUSPR

Want to discuss metrics, and whether your program is delivering? We're here to help.

We work hard. And smart.

We're always thinking about how to push our clients' marketing programs forward.

We enjoy telling stories – clearly, effectively, and in the simplest terms no matter how complex the ideas.

Most of all, we love delivering more (for less) for clients who value focused, nimble and high-touch PR, social media and content services.

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