

# Module 9

This module will cover:

- how to evaluate or measure whether your campaign has met the initial objectives
- how to ensure whether your initial objectives are SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely
- tools currently used to measure campaign effectiveness in media including AVE's (what are these?)
- determining whether your message reached its intended audience(s)

## Evaluating the PR Strategy

Evaluating any public relations strategy remains a problematic issue within the industry. PR practitioners and academics are still unable to agree on ways to provide evidence of PR's contribution to results. Effective evaluation is about putting systems in place to measure the strategy from the very beginning.

PR practitioners claim the barriers preventing them from using a range of evaluation methods include:

- lack of time, personnel and budget
- lack of knowledge and experience in using research techniques
- fear of proving strategy ineffective.

A prerequisite for evaluating a public relations strategy is to establish a set of measurable objectives. Without setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) objectives, it is not feasible to measure and assess if these objectives were achieved.

It must be emphasized evaluative research must not only be conducted after the end of the campaign. Evaluation is meant to be continuous and needs to be conducted throughout the planning and implementation phase of the campaign. Tactics and plans should be frequently measured, and if required, activities, tools and plans need to be reconsidered and modified.

The PR campaign is only successful if it meets your specific and required objectives. If you are using more than one communication tool you will need to individually assess each activity. For example, if you held an event you could measure how many people attended and review feedback from the event or if you distributed a media release you can measure the number of responses and number of requests for further information.

Start by revisiting your objectives. Look at the target audience - did your messages reach them? What response did you receive?

Did you achieve your objectives?

Are there other options you could have or should have explored?

What can you do next time to improve?

From a hypothetical perspective, answer the questions in a bid to highlight your perceived weaknesses.

## Cost

Measurement does not need to cost a lot. Even a cheap/free online mechanism or dissemination/collection of feedback forms at an event/speaking engagement can provide insights as well as useful quantitative benchmarking information. Similarly, you can get access to your web statistics. It's amazing how many small clubs or organizations don't know how many people are clicking through to their site and from where. This is such a vital step when it comes to planning and evaluating an online PR campaign.

So, what are some of the different ways of determining what you will measure?

There are a number of methods to evaluate the success of a PR campaign.

## Layered approach

As a sporting club or organisation you could choose to adopt a simple, three tiered approach to evaluation. The first basic level measures outputs, such as media placements. The second intermediate level judges the number of messages received by the target audience. The third and most advanced measurement analyses outcomes, such as attitude changes.

## Research

The most effective (and probably most expensive) evaluation tool is through research. This research would need to be conducted prior to the campaign and after the campaign to effectively measure responses, change of opinions, awareness and call to action.

### Tips for Measuring your campaign:

Campaigns need to be monitored and evaluated throughout, not just when complete

PR is only successful if it meets your objectives

Establish SMART objectives at the beginning of the process

Measure your campaign using a layered approach

It is better to undertake some basic measurement even "in-house" rather than none at all.



There is a much stronger focus on the value of qualitative research these days than there was five years ago. Qualitative research is important in probing below the surface to understand what drives and motivates behaviour. Intelligent application of this research can generate invaluable insights for PR campaigns. Qualitative research such as in depth interviews or focus groups can also be undertaken professionally or in-house as long as the questions are well thought out.

Quantitative research is still incredibly valuable, and it works best hand in hand with qualitative research. It is conducted using scientific methods and is invaluable for collecting empirical data. Statistics can be collected through questionnaires (on-line or off-line) to provide good feedback in the PR arena.

## **Media Coverage**

This can be measured simply by assessing what has been achieved or output. However some PR practitioners undertake a more thorough evaluation using a method based on Advertising Value Equivalents (or AVEs). This method is controversial and most industry bodies oppose its usage. AVEs are a very subjective measurement tool and their use is not endorsed by the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA). Most practitioners still use this method to substantiate the work they have achieved.

AVEs involve measuring each piece of coverage based on what the equivalent advertising cost would be then multiplying it by a figure to allow for the 'third party endorsement' gained through editorial. The range of figures used for this varies from two to seven.

A simple assessment method for evaluating coverage is as follows:

### **Television and Radio**

Use the 30 sec advertising rate for that timeslot and multiply it by the time achieved in coverage, then multiply that by your third party figure.

For example: 2 minutes (coverage time) x \$1000 (30 sec rate) x 3 (third party rate) = \$12,000

### **Newspapers**

Number of column widths multiplied by height of the article multiplied by the advertising rate for that newspaper edition then multiplied by the third party rate.

For example: 2 columns (column widths) x 10 cm (height of article) x \$15.50 (advertising rate) x3=\$930

## Magazines

Use the advertising page rate and divide this by the size of the article then multiply by the third party rate.

For example: \$10000 (page rate) / \$2500 (size of article is 1/4 page) x 3 = \$7,500

**EXERCISE NINE:** Choose a strategy which involves one or more communication tools.

Review your objectives and target audience and how you will reach them. Now consider whether it worked or what you overlooked in your planning?

Which strategies are effective and why?