

# Simple Yet Smart PR Measurement for the Rest of Us



## A FIVE STEP PLAN

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## THATWONT BREAK THEBANK

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# Simple Yet Smart PR Measurement for The Rest of Us:

*A five-step plan that won't break the bank*

Whether you have a small budget or endless access to fancy dashboards, one thing holds true for business communicators of all stripes - public relations strategy and measurement go hand in hand. You cannot be successful in one without the other.

This guide will help you **measure the success** of any public relations program or campaign - even if you're on a budget - to ensure that your PR spend yields high returns.

*Before the Do's, here are some [Don'ts](#)...*

- *Don't get caught up in shiny new measurement tools. Keep your focus on your desired outcomes and select the tools accordingly.*
- *Don't get stuck only counting Twitter followers, Facebook fans, media impressions, etc.*
- *Don't confuse "ROI" (return on investment) with social media activity. ROI is a financial formula that should only be used in that context. So, for example, don't try to calculate the value of "likes" on Facebook. Instead, look at whether or not social media activity is resulting in the kinds of outcomes your business needs to succeed.*
- *Don't measure the influence of your customers (or potential customers) in terms of scores. Rather than reaching out only to "influencers," focus on growing business through "initiators" as well.*
- *Don't go crazy trying to find the one-size-fits-all measurement solution. It doesn't exist. Every business is different, so what holds true for one company might not for you.*

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*“There are two important points to grasp in public relations. First, you’re accountable for every PR dollar spent. Second, your PR efforts are meaningless to a business, if you don’t have a good measurement program in place. Practicing the Do’s, avoiding the Don’ts and following the 5 Simple Steps presented in this ebook is a sure way to prove the value of PR.”*

*-Deirdre Breakenridge, Author, Speaker & CEO of Pure Performance Communications*

Now that you’ve read the Don’ts, here are the [five Do’s](#) to set up a really solid measurement program.

### 1. Identify *what* the business objectives are for your campaign.

Your business objectives are the top-level goals that should be supported by your marketing campaigns. Think carefully about these (if you’re a business owner, for example), or talk to your executive team about what they are. Then consider what must happen in order to achieve them. They are the foundation of any good measurement program.

Let’s take a common objective that most businesses have at one point or another: **increase sales**. If this is your main objective, you will either need your current customers to buy more of your product/service, or new customers to buy it (or a combination of both).

And while increasing sales is a common example, your B.O. (not body odor!) could be anything depending on your unique situation. For a nonprofit organization, for example, it might be to increase membership of an online community. Why? Because those are the people to eventually convert into members/donors.

That last bit is what’s most important. *It’s **what you’re going to work backwards from***. While all roads may not lead to Rome, they should eventually lead to that primary business objective.

*Your business objective(s) should be at the core of your measurement program. Before you do anything else, figure them out.*



## 2. Identify *how* you will measure the success or failure of these objectives.

Once you've set up your overarching objectives, it's time to get more specific about the details. You will need to figure out which metrics you'll use to determine whether or not you've been successful, and exactly what specific numbers you want to reach.

For example, if your objective is to increase sales, **by what percentage** do you want your sales to increase? Within what time frame are you looking to achieve that increase? Are you looking to increase sales online or offline? Or both?



*Get as specific as you possibly can. This means not just quantifying what you're trying to achieve, but identifying the timeframe within which you're going to try to do this.*

If your objective is to grow your email list (because that is where you convert the most prospects into customers), how many new subscribers are you looking for? Within how many days, weeks, or months? How many of those would you like to convert into sales?

By asking yourself these questions in advance and considering realistic numbers and timeframes, you are challenging your team to think critically about what success really means and how you will assess whether or not you've achieved it.

## 3. Now: decide what tools you'll use, based on your *strategy and tactics*.

The most important thing to remember about communication strategy is this: don't put yourself in the awkward position of trying to develop it **before** asking - and answering - some critical questions about your business objectives and how your communication strategy will support them. So if people are pushing you to do that, push back! Remind your executives that you need to build your communication plan based on what will be most beneficial for the business in the long-term... which means **you must know what those are**.

Here are some suggested questions to get your creative juices flowing:

- What is it we're trying to achieve... on a business level?
- How do we define success w.r.t. communication (or PR)? (It's really important to get consensus on this!)
- Why? (w.r.t Q2 above) How do these results help our business move closer to "success"?
- Do we have enough resources to embark on \_\_\_\_\_?

*You don't have to be everywhere all the time. Be where it makes the most sense.*



- Will we be able to sustain our plan over the long haul?

See what I mean? If you ask these questions - and they're not always easy to answer - both you and your executive team will have a shared understanding of what it is you're trying to achieve, and do a better job in working together to achieve it.

Use these questions as a basis for drawing up your communication strategy and, accordingly, the tactics you will put in place. And then decide what tool(s) will be best suited for the job.

**Remember:** don't settle on "shiny new" toys du jour just because So-and-So (competitor, mentor, screen idol, you get the picture) is using them. Far, far too many organizations do that without thinking strategically of what they are trying to achieve... and then they're disappointed with the results (or lack thereof).

#### 4. Figure out how you're going to track your efforts.

This part can be a lot of fun. With so many communications moving online, it's possible to track a lot of things. And when I say a lot, I mean a *lot!*

*Smart tracking lets you know what worked, instead of making you guess what worked.*



Be careful not to get stuck tracking nonsense numbers. Going back to our list of "don'ts" above - you might get an ego boost out of seeing your Twitter followers grow, but if that growth isn't helping you reach your business objectives, what's the point?

Tracking URLs have become commonplace. **Use them.** Get comfortable with [Google Analytics URL Builder](#), and Google Analytics itself (Google provides [several free courses](#)) On your website or blog, for example, start learning how to track your customers' click-through patterns to see who converts from where. You will be *amazed* at how much insight these tools give you, particularly when it comes to understanding what is driving actions, clicks, downloads, purchases, and sign-ups... or whatever it is you want people to do on your site (or blog).

By tracking each and every click, you will be able to use these insights to better inform your strategy. And you'll also learn what's not working, so that you can decide what needs to be fixed, and whether or not you have the resources to make the fixes.



*"Earned and paid media can be significant drivers of qualified search traffic. Understanding the correlation between them will help you optimize performance and drive business outcomes through PR."*

*-Lee Odden, CEO TopRank Online Marketing*

## 5. Correlate.

Even if you're not a statistician, you probably already know this principle. [Correlation](#) happens when one thing is related to another in a way as to have an effect on it.

For example, if you secure a news or media placement in an outlet that you know is popular with your target audience and you see the traffic to your website or desired landing page increase dramatically when that post runs, there is likely a correlation between the two.

Note that "correlation" and "causation" (where you can definitely identify the effect of X on Y) are two different things. But if you are isolating the various components of your PR strategy, and tracking consistently, you should be able to start seeing correlations, if and when they happen. So if you are part of a larger marketing department, or work with the sales team, make sure you're talking to them, so that you know everything that's going on.

*You should always keep track of everything anyway, so that you don't mistakenly draw a correlation where there isn't one.*



So, in order to gauge correlation, keep track of your outbound activities (e.g. new blog posts, news releases, e-mail campaigns, and so on) and watch what effect those have on your desired outcomes.

If you're on a shoestring budget and don't have access to a fancy reporting dashboard, here are some relatively pain-free ways to track correlations:

- Use an Excel or Google spreadsheet to track outputs and outcomes. Be sure to include dates, links, information about target audience, and specific traffic spikes and/or conversions.
- Make sure the timeframe within which you're tracking different things - traffic, downloads, purchases - is the same.
- Watch Google Analytics at the same time, and regularly look to see if there is a correlation between outputs and outcomes.

If you're keeping a close eye on everything you're putting out there while also looking at what's coming *in* as a result, pretty soon you'll be able to tell what's working and what's not. Then, you can adjust your strategy accordingly.

If you want to find the statistical correlation, [Excel even has a formula to help you out](#) (though working with someone who is really into statistics is best to make sure you understand what you're doing).



*"The most important part of the measurement process is sense-making. Now that you have your results and your metrics, it's time dig in and reflect. Don't just pat yourself on your back if you were successful. Also ask, why didn't you make your goal? What strategies were most effective and which ones were not? Your measurement report isn't a report card - it is a way to help you improve your results. But you can't just look at the numbers and hope that something magical happens. You have to make better decisions based on the data that leads to better results."*

*-Beth Kanter, Author, Trainer, and Speaker  
Beth's Blog*

**That's it.**

Put these five steps to work for yourself, your campaign, your business. Lather, rinse, repeat, and you'll have taken giant steps toward demystifying measurement... and putting in place a PR program your company can really be proud of.



# Resources



Dont's: [www.kimbermedia.com/guest-blog/three-measurement-nos-your-small-business-should-trash](http://www.kimbermedia.com/guest-blog/three-measurement-nos-your-small-business-should-trash)



Do's: <http://shonaliburke.com/2012/03/21/5-steps-to-set-up-your-measurement-program/>



Google Analytics URL Builder: <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033867?hl=en>



Free Courses with Google: [www.analyticsacademy.withgoogle.com/explorer](http://www.analyticsacademy.withgoogle.com/explorer)



Correlation: [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/correlation](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/correlation)



Statistical correlation formula for Excel:  
[www.office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel-help/correl-HP005209023.aspx](http://www.office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel-help/correl-HP005209023.aspx)



Measurement smarties you should follow on Twitter:  
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