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8-10 June 2011, Lisbon
3rd European Summit on Measurement

Barcelona Principle No. 2

Measuring the Effect of Outcomes is Preferred to Measuring Outputs

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About the Speakers

- Dr. Donald K. Wright is the Harold Burson Professor and Chair in Public Relations in the College of Communication of Boston University in the United States
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 - Special thanks also to thoughts and opinions of members of the Commission on Public Relations Measurement & Evaluation of the Institute for Public Relations that have been incorporated into this presentation.

Definition of Terms

- Output
 - What is generated as a result of a PR program or campaign. Includes – but not necessarily limited to – newspaper/magazine clips, broadcast news stories, blog/internet mentions, etc.
- Outgrowth
 - The culminating effect of all communication programs and products on the positioning of an organization in the minds of its stakeholders or publics.
- Outtake
 - Measurement of what audiences understand about a a PR or communication message. Includes attitudes, beliefs and perceptions audiences have about the message.
- Outcomes
 - Quantifiable changes in awareness, knowledge, attitude, opinion and behaviour that occurs as a result of a PR program or campaign.
 - Source: Don W. Stacks, Primer of Public Relations Research, 2nd Ed., p. 341.

Overview of the Public Relations Process

- Research Stage
 - Answers the question, “What is the problem?”
- Strategic Planning Stage
 - Answers the question, “What should we do about the problem?”
- Communication or Action Stage
 - Provides the communication for the public relations campaign.
- Evaluation Stage
 - Answers the question, “How did we do?”
 - Source: S. Cutlip, A. Center & G. Broom, Effective Public Relations, 10th Ed.

Let's Not Dismiss the Importance of Outputs

- Unfortunately, sometimes the debate about using Output measures vis-à-vis Outcome measures has turned into an “either/or” debate.
- Some have argued in favour of the importance of Outcome measures at the expense of Output measures.
 - Outcomes can be correlated to business/client ROI while Outputs cannot.
 - Outcome measures demonstrate “real value” while Output measures do not.
 - Measuring Outcomes offers a concrete way to show how public relations programs have contributed to organizational effectiveness.
 - Some believe it is preferable to measure Outcomes rather than Outputs because business objectives are Outcomes.
 - Some will say that Output measures are only a proxy for the “real thing” – Outcome measures.
 - Measuring Outcomes offers a concrete way to determine how the public relations function contributes to the strategy and overall effectiveness of the organization.

Let's Not Dismiss the Importance of Outputs

- Lately, however, some research experts have pointed-out that Output measures are AS IMPORTANT as Outcome measures.
- Output measures are important because:
 - They can provide measures of productivity.
 - They can lead to measures of efficiency and cost effectiveness.
 - e.g., comparing one communication channel to another; comparing a communication activity or product to another
- You can't effectively move measurement to the Outcome level without a thorough understanding of the Output situation.
- Getting to the Outcome stage in measurement virtually demands an understanding of what happened during the Output stage.
- Since organisations will have different priorities for Outcome and Output measurement from time to time, measurement programmes need to be flexible enough to accommodate these real world dynamics.

Why Outcome Measures Are Important

- As Stacks and Michaelson point out, “research needs to do more than measure communications importance. It also needs to provide insight into the communication objectives of target audiences. Consequently, the research needs to offer direction for public relations programs and their content and identify corrective strategies so the programs achieve their goals. Measurement in this instance is not an end in itself. Rather it is a diagnostic, feedback-oriented tool.
 - Source: Don W. Stacks and David Michaelson, *A Practitioner’s Guide to Public Relations Research, Measurement and Evaluation*, p. 171.

Why Outcome Measures Are Important

- Outcome measures can be correlated to ROI.
- These measures permit the public relations function to be able to show its contribution to the objectives of other organisational functions.
- If you walk into an Executive Leadership Team meeting and only talk about Outputs and then people from other departments (Marketing, HR, Manufacturing, etc.) come and discuss Outcomes those people will get raises and you'll be lucky to keep your job.

Additional Thoughts

- Some clients still prefer Output measures.
- Generally speaking, Output measures are less expensive to perform (and purchase) than Outcome measures.
- Since Outcome measures require more methodological knowledge than Output measures now everyone currently working in the communication measurement industry has the ability to conduct them.
- Some view the entire measurement picture as one resembling three stair-steps:
 - Outputs
 - Outcomes (meaning communication outcomes)
 - Business results

Brief Examples of Outcome Measurement

- Coca-Cola throwing out impression numbers and demanding Outcome measures.
- Procter & Gamble measuring the ROI of public relations vis-à-vis advertising.
- Sodexo using social media for recruitment and ending up saving \$300K-US out of its recruitment budget.
- Raytheon switching from AVE-based public relations metrics around its trade shows to demonstrate travel cost savings.
- SLM Corporation (aka, Sallie Mae) marketers demonstrating a 55% increase in new accounts and a 5% lift in loan applications when PR was present vs. efforts without any PR support.
- Good Will Industries' measuring the impact of its social media and PR outreach by tracking in-store traffic and sales.
- Shell's effective use of outcome measures in concert with output measures.

How Shell International Uses Measurement

- Our annual communications programme has a series of campaigns, driving strategic messaging and mitigating issues.
 - Fuelling the conversations around our company positively.
 - Reducing the critical and negative conversations about the company.
- If we are successful, we will see that behaviours of key influencers and customers will change outcomes . . . And that is our part of creating business value.
- But before we reach that stage we want to see whether our messages are actually being picked-up.
 - So media analysis looking at outputs and NGOs reducing energy levels around us or the industry as a whole.
 - And, whether we see that opinions among what we call special publics are changing which is the measure of whether our efforts have an impact on outtakes.
- In other words, all levels of measurement are useful – the ultimate impact is in the outcome, but we'll need the other stages as well to check if our efforts are picked up and resonate.

Sources & Bibliography

- Don W. Stacks, *Primer of Public Relations Research*, 2nd Ed., New York: Guilford Press, 2011.
- Don W. Stacks & David Michaelson, *A Practitioner's Guide to Public Relations Research, Measurement and Evaluation*, New York: Business Expert Press, 2010.
- Tom Watson and Paul Noble, *Evaluating Public Relations: A Best Practice Guide to Public Relations Planning, Research and Evaluation*, 2nd Ed., London: Kogan Page, 2007.
- Mark Weiner, *Unleashing the Power of PR: A Contrarian's Guide to Marketing and Communication*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006.
- Katie Delahaye Paine, *Measure What Matters*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
- Various works available via www.instituteforpr.org including papers by Katie Delahaye Paine, Mark Weiner and Sean Williams.

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Case study: Union of European Football Associations



- UEFA has 53 members – National Associations (NAs) and plays an important role in their development
- The Knowledge and Information Sharing Scenario programme (KISS) aims to enhance professionalism amongst NAs through communications and information
- KISS targets NA middle management and includes activities such as workshops, an online platform and specific assistance
- KISS is not a classic external communications programme – but nor is it an internal communications programme

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Case study: Union of European Football Associations



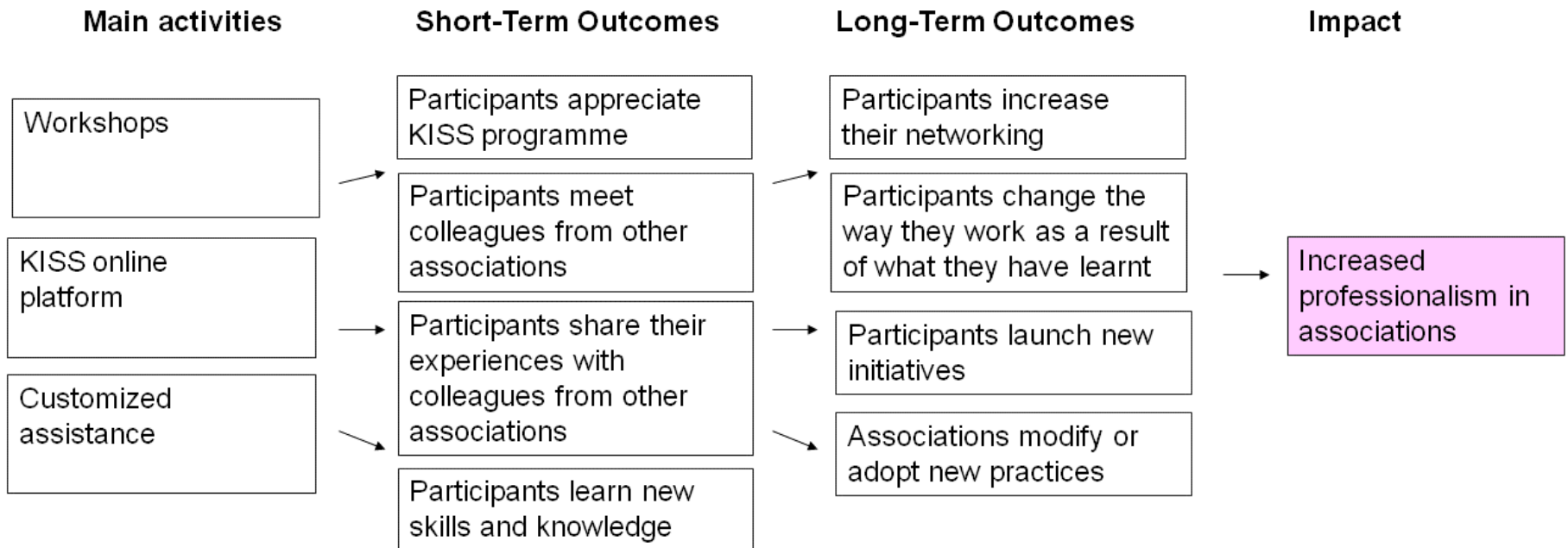
- Traditionally measurement focused on outputs:
 - How many/type of activities?
 - How many people reached and participating?
 - Do people appreciate the programme?
- This proved to be interesting for UEFA but not sufficient to improve the programme nor justify its continuation
- Therefore, an initiative was taken to increase measurement of outcomes to provide more in-depth information on the results of the programme

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Intervention logic



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Focus on outcomes meant use of different tools for monitoring and evaluation:

- Analysis of data already collected (e.g. feedback surveys)
- Interviews with staff and management of NAs
- Online survey of NAs
- User statistics from the KISS online platform

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Examples of results

Participants learnt
new skills and
knowledge

91%

Participants
increase their
networking

90%

Participants launch
new initiatives

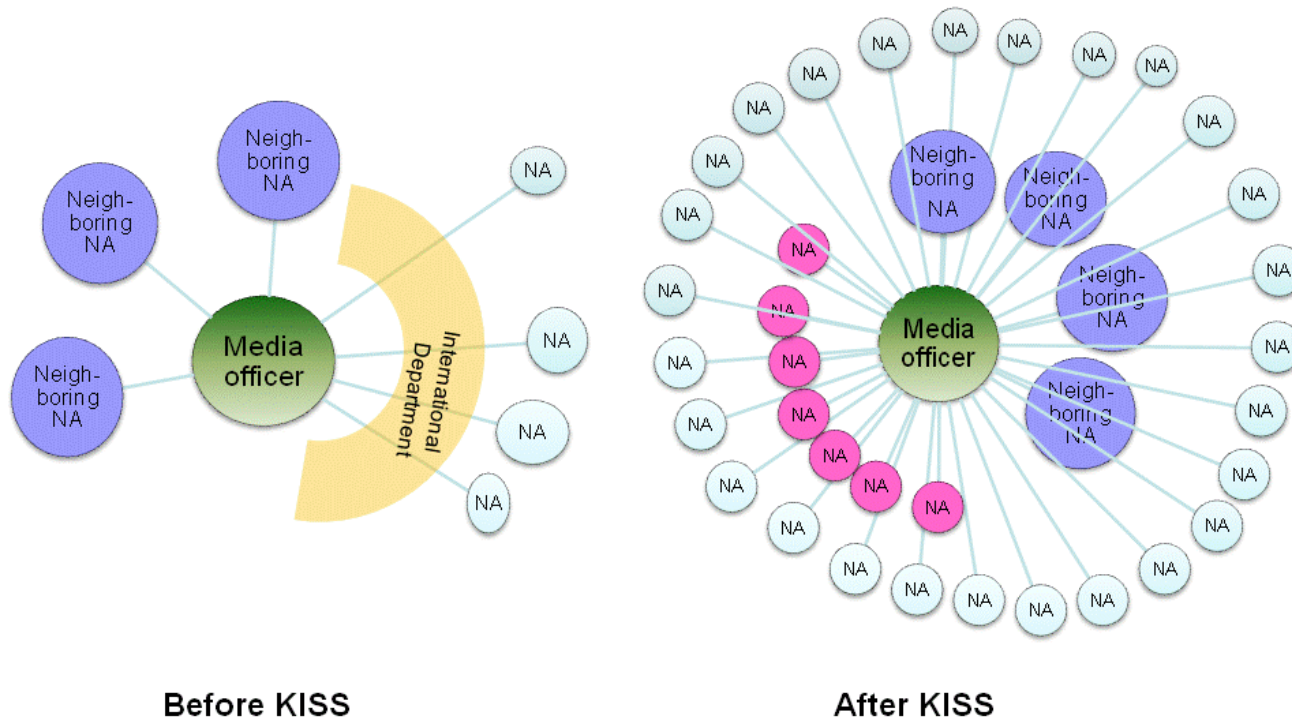
40%

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Examples of results - networking



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Examples of results – new initiatives

New initiatives seen in:

- Media and communications
- Digital media
- Marketing
- Planning and development
- Legal
- Stadia and security

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Return on investment?

- NAs indentified tangible and non-tangible benefits of the programme
- Some NAs were able to put a monetary value on new initiatives from thousands to millions of Euros

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- The limitation of attributing outcomes to the programme was in isolating the programme effect on the changes seen - thus the importance to identify other potential influences
- The focus on outcomes provided the programme with important feedback also for improving the programme which the outputs could not give, in addition to illustrating its results for management and stakeholders

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Case study: UN Human Rights

- UN body to promote and monitor human rights
- The organisation introduced a strategic management plan in 2008 that highlighted increasing awareness and responsiveness on human rights as a priority
- The contribution of the Communications Unit was being *assessed* on the following:
 - Number of press releases issued and press conferences, interviews and briefings given by the organisation
 - Number of mentions of the organisation in the media

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Case study: UN Human Rights

- The Communications Unit wanted to expand upon the measurement of its activities from these two output measures
- This led the Unit to reflect further on how they contribute to the organization's goal on awareness and responsiveness on human rights
- Questions they had to ask themselves:
 - What are we trying to achieve?
 - Who are the audiences?
 - What are the messages?

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Case study: UN Human Rights

Three objectives for the Communications Unit:

1. Increase awareness of the High Commissioner, UN human rights programme and HR issues amongst the international community.
2. Increase dissemination at national level of HR messages by civil society, National HR bodies, educators and UN agencies.
3. Increase action on human rights issues by national-level policy makers

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Case study: UN Human Rights

Objective 1: Increase awareness of the High Commissioner, UN human rights programme and HR issues amongst the international community.

Outputs:

- Number and type of actions by Unit
- level and type of media coverage in top tier media

Outcomes:

- Level of awareness amongst the “international community”

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Case study: UN Human Rights

Objective 2: Increase dissemination at national level of HR messages by civil society, National HR bodies, educators and UN agencies.

Outputs:

- Number and type of actions by Unit to support national level
- Number and type of partnerships at national level

Outcomes:

- Level of awareness amongst people reached in select countries
- Instances/examples of initiatives of national partners

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Case study: UN Human Rights

Objective 3: Increase action on human rights issues by national-level policy makers

Outputs:

- Number and type of actions by Unit to support national-level policy makers by thematic area

Outcomes:

- Changes to policies, practices and activities of national governments
- Instances/examples of initiatives of national governments

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Case study: UN Human Rights

- Positively, the Communications Unit was able to show that they have an impact in much more than simple media visibility
- Limitations were seen in resources they could put into measurement
- Focus was put on priority countries and themes with challenges seen in assessing the contribution of the Unit and the organisation to the changes seen in the human rights area

Measuring the Effect of Outcomes vs Measuring Outputs

Questions?

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