UNLOCKING BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Communications research and analytics in action

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Don is a member of the Measurement Commission of the Institute for Public Relations, and serves as Vice Chair of AMEC’s Social Media Measurement Group. He was 2011 PR Analyst of the Year Runner-up (PRNews Awards). Don is a frequent speaker on public relations and social media measurement and ROI. Recent speaking engagements include PRSA Barcelona Principles webinar series, PRNews’ Measurement Conference, BlogWorld Expo, North American Summit on Public Relations Measurement, Best Practices in Corporate Communications, Business Marketing Association, PRSA, PRSSA, Austin Software Council, the American Gas Association, The Branding Institute and the University of Texas.

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Social Media and the Need for an Affordable Model

Creating a Framework for Metrics and Measurement
Unlike the proposed standards coming from The Coalition (PR) and The Conclave (social media), the model and frameworks we are about to share are not meant to be standards per se, but are recommended approaches and tools to help you use the standard metrics to produce rigorous social media measurement. So, standard metrics fit into the framework, but the framework is not intended to be a standard.

When we use the word model, we are referring to a representation of a system, in this case social media. A model should reflect your view or belief of how the system ‘works’. In the original Valid Metrics Framework, the model used was the traditional sales funnel.

A framework adds additional dimensions to the model and is operationalized with metrics. In the Valid Metrics Framework the additional dimensions are the phases – activities, intermediary effects and target audience effects.
Models and frameworks play a key role in going from standard social media definitions and metrics to robust social media measurement. Here is a five-step social media measurement process that describes how we’ll bring everything together:

1. Just like with a PR program, proper social media measurement starts with measurable objectives that are aligned with desired business outcomes and KPIs.
2. We then define the specific metrics necessary to assess performance against our measurable social media objectives. A necessary and important step is setting performance targets for each metric.
3. In step three we populate our social media model with the metrics within the framework selected. We’ll be sharing two alternative frameworks to you later in this presentation.
4. Having defined our measurement approach we then gather and analyse the data. We evaluate the performance against the objectives and targets.
5. Finally, we regularly report results, often on dashboards, to our stakeholders and interested parties.
Here is the Valid Metrics Framework. You will note the two major components of the framework, the model and the phases. The model used in this case was the marketing sales funnel. The phases cover PR activities, intermediary effect, also called effect on the media, and the target audience effect.

Some of the most positive aspects of the Valid Metrics Framework are that it:
- Provides a mechanism to link activities to outputs to outcomes
- Tracks through the familiar sales funnel
- The framework is flexible and comprehends several PR use-cases – media relations, reputation, internal communications to name three.
- Helps create a focus on outcomes and business impact.

Another of the applications of the Valid Metrics Framework was for use with social media programs. Two potential issues were surfaced by early adopters of the framework in social programs. Let’s take a look at those next.
And those two issues are:

- The intermediary effect, which in traditional public relations is the impact on the media, seemed at odds with the social world of direct interaction between consumers and brands, and consumers with each other.
- And use of the marketing sales funnel, while familiar, was only relevant in a percentage of social media use-cases and perhaps not the best way to model common uses of social media like customer relations and building relationships with stakeholder groups.

Also, thought leaders like Forrester Research and McKinsey & Company had noted the traditional communications funnel was not necessarily funnel-shaped in social media. They described the discovery process that occurs when investigating companies and brands that often cause the consideration set to expand rather than be reduced, and the fact that a lot of engagement around brands happens post-conversion event.

For all of these reasons our task was to develop and recommend a better framework and approach for social media.
We studied and evaluated about fifteen different social media and communications models. A couple of common patterns emerged.

Several of the models, including Forrester’s Customer Lifecycle and McKinsey’s Customer Journey showed a post-purchase engagement/experience step.
You will also notice that Engagement and Influence are concepts that exist in several of the models we studied.

The concept of economic value or worth was also noted in more than one approach.

Also, the concept of post conversion event advocacy was present in more than one model.
When we set out to recommend a new model for our social media valid framework, there were several consideration we took into account.

We know that no one model fits all, but we attempted to develop one that may fit most applications and use-cases.

Post-purchase engagement and advocacy recognized in several of the models studied. We judged this important to include in our recommended approach.

And we considered the importance of Engagement and Influence, as two key concepts in social media marketing and measurement, and decided to try to make these two elements explicit in our model as well.

We also gave some thought to how well the various models describe how social media ‘works’.

And we want our new framework to be flexible enough to accommodate multiple social media use-cases.
The model we developed is derivative of the categories chosen by The Conclave (Note: Richard Bagnall and I also participate in The Conclave) to organize social media metrics and definitions.

We took a slightly different perspective on the front end of the model and reordered the back-end to create this model for our new framework. The descriptions use the definitions from the smmstandards.org work wherever possible.

You will note Engagement includes both interactions with owned social channels as well as earned social conversation of people talking about you in social channels.

The definition of Influence is clear and concise, the result of a lot of discussion and prevailing clear thinking. The concept of Impact includes the outcomes of social initiatives as well as the Value those initiatives created. (I usually advise to always attempt to measure impact, and attribute value when it is feasible and makes sense.)

Advocacy includes a very helpful definition and conditions that must exist with advocacy.
To create the framework, we explored various ways to address the ‘phases’ of the Valid Metrics Framework. You will recall the previous phases included the Intermediary step which we concluded, while fine for PR, was awkward for use in social. Two ideas stood out:

- Use a simple structure that captures social media metrics from three key perspectives – programmatic-level, channel-specific and business.

- Use Paid, Owned, and Earned media metrics for integrated programs containing these elements.

There are certainly other ways to think about this (e.g. Business Performance Management) and we intend to possibly add others based on industry feedback and suggestions.
Programmatic metrics are those directly tied to social media program or campaign objectives.

Channel-specific metrics are just that, the metrics that are unique to specific social channels – tweets, RTs, Followers for Twitter, Likes and Talking About This for Facebook, Pins and Re-Pins for Pinterest, etc.

Business metrics are used to show the business impact of the campaign or initiative.

What we find today in a typical program is:

- Too much emphasis on channel-metrics because the data is easiest to get.
- With programmatic –level objectives the key issue is that the objectives as written are often not measurable. You’ll recall this is the key first step in any successful measurement program.
- And many programs today omit business-level metrics because their scope is too narrow or the research methodologies necessary to measure business impacts like increased purchase consideration require primary research which is deemed too expensive.
### Integrated Paid, Owned and Earned

- **Paid**
  Channels you pay to leverage – paid search, display ads, sponsored tweets.

- **Owned**
  Channels you own and control - website, Twitter, Facebook, blog

- **Earned**
  Customers become the channel – WOM, viral, proactive Influencer outreach.

Borrowing the definitions of Paid, Owned and Earned channels from Forrester Research:

- Paid are social channels you pay to leverage (e.g. promoted tweets, display ads)
- Owned are channels you own and control (e.g. website, Facebook page)
- Earned is where customers become the channel (e.g. WOM, viral)

There are some companies that use a slightly different framework – Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned where earned is conversation directly resulting from proactive social outreach (i.e. bloggers) and Shared (or Social) is conversation about the brand. It is perfectly acceptable to substitute the Paid/Earned/Shared/Owned model for Paid, Earned and Owned if you prefer.
Currently we have developed both of these versions with sample metrics (taken from the smmstandards.org work where applicable).

We are calling them The AMEC Social Media Valid Framework.

Here is the framework showing the proposed model and the Programmatic/Channel/Business construct.

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<th>EXPOSURE</th>
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<td>BUSINESS METRICS</td>
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Here is that same version with Program, Channel and Business Metrics shown. Where ever possible we used the just-published standard metrics emerging from the smmstandards.org/The Conclave effort.

Obviously it is a little difficult to show programmatic metrics since these will be more customized to individual situations than the other two classifications.

So this is your first alternative AMEC Social Media Valid Framework.

Let’s take a look at the other we are proposing.
Here is the second alternative. It uses the same model, but this time the phases are Paid, Owned and Earned. We believe this format may work best for integrated campaigns that contain elements from each of the three areas.

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Here is the Paid, Earned and Owned version with metrics shown. Again, we tried to use the standard metrics emerging from smmstandards.org. In some cases, primarily in Paid, we attempted to capture the most common metrics currently in use in the Paid/Advertising space.

There are two primary ways I use these frameworks:

1. In measurement planning to capture the totality of a measurement strategy and plan and ensure a proper balance of metrics across the model and phases. For example, assuring we have sufficient levels of programmatic and business-level metrics and don’t rely too heavily on the easier to capture channel-specific metrics.

2. The other use-case is in evaluating a current measurement program. Like many of you I’m sure, I get asked to critique measurement plans and make recommendations on how to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. The framework may be used very effectively to show the ‘before’ situation (plot current metrics in their proper place on the framework) and ‘after’ situation (show recommended metrics in place and contrast with ‘before’).
Next Steps

- Adopt use of the frameworks with your company/clients.
- Start using them for your next project.
- Help us promote them widely – blog posts, speaking engagements, whitepapers, other thought leadership venues.
- AMEC will make frameworks available (social media section of the website) in an easily downloadable format with a written summary of how to use them and a short video synopsis.
- We will collect feedback and amend as necessary:
  - Continuing to work on more specific models that might address concepts like BPM
  - Keep in lock-step with social media metrics standardization.

We encourage everyone to adopt the frameworks for use by your company or clients. Please begin using them for your next project or client engagement.

If you like them and find them useful, please help promote them widely. Post about them, tweet them or post about them on your thought leadership vehicle of choice.

Look for the completed frameworks on the AMEC website shortly. You will be able to download everything there in the social media section of the website.

And please provide your feedback on the proposed framework. We’ll listen for your feedback and suggestions and look forward to the dialogue.

Thank you very much for your time and attention!