

# The role of public relations in measurement and board reporting

*Securing media intelligence to aid with business planning and the measurement of outcomes*



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Members of the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) include media monitoring companies, evaluation specialists, social listening providers, PR and marketing agencies and in-house communications departments.

Together, these organisations support SMEs, multinationals, government agencies, NGOs, CEOs and boards to make more informed communications and business decisions. Media intelligence, measurement and evaluation have a part to play in this decision-making process.

Strategies include:

- Looking beyond the organisation to anticipate risk
- Using stakeholder insight to inform organisational decisions or business development
- Articulating performance against objectives, demonstrating organisational outcomes
- Integrating internal and external data signals for a holistic view
- Comms teams using the language of the boardroom

With turbulent times ahead economically, politically, and socially, your organisation's PR function may hold the keys to the data and skill sets which could help inform and guide your organisation through choppy waters.

**Let's explore how you can adopt these strategies for success in your business**

**Looking beyond the organisation to anticipate risk**

An organisation which does not monitor media mentions is ignoring reputational risk. This can include earned media (newspapers, magazines, blogs, podcasts etc) and social media chatter (what your staff, suppliers, customers or adversaries might be saying about you). How people search for your organisation, product or cause online can also be an important indicator of awareness, interest and even sentiment. Search behaviour and social chatter can often be an early warning sign of a crisis.

It is important to look beyond your sphere of influence when anticipating and managing risk. What do you know of your competitors' activities? What legislation is looming which might impact future business performance? How are employee reviews impacting recruitment? Are consumers using slang or derogatory words about your products or services? Why does a particular reporter always take a negative stance when all our other media relationships are so fruitful?

Media monitoring and horizon scanning can help inform the organisation about:

- Mergers and acquisitions
- New product launches which may impact market share
- Key influencers involved in legislative or regulatory change
- Stakeholder attitudes and awareness – what they see (news and social content) and *think* (how they search or what they post on social networks)

**Using stakeholder insight to inform organisational decisions or business development**

Stakeholder insight has traditionally involved qualitative market research which can be both costly and slow. Media intelligence can provide business insight in a more cost effective and timely way and is increasingly being used to inform business decision making.

Mass media has changed. Journalists and publishers are no longer the gatekeepers to information dissemination. Brands can communicate with their audiences directly. On social media, some journalists have a stronger reach than the publications which they write for. Citizen journalism and individual activism can reputationally affect organisations. Media intelligence can offer insights on a range of stakeholders which can impact performance, productivity, and profitability:

These data are now available cost effectively and can provide unprompted audience insight at scale, sometimes in 'real time'.

Social media analysis for example can:

Organisations of all shapes and sizes use media intelligence to inform product development, launch into new markets or sectors, adjust communications strategies and manage crises.

- Explore consumer sentiment
- Reveal when localised content output may be needed to
- Match language or cultural sensitivities in international markets
- Identify emerging threats as they unfold – breaking news stories, issue contagion, ability to control the message

Channel	Reveals stakeholder attitudes of:
Print, online, broadcast news	Journalists, media owners, consumers
Financial analyst reports	Investor community
Social media, blogs, forums	Consumers, investors, media, activist groups
Online search	Consumers, local communities, specialised audiences

**Articulating performance against objectives and demonstrating organisational outcomes**

AMEC’s integrated evaluation framework encourages comms practitioners to pause, reflect, to ask themselves these questions:

What is the purpose of the organisation?	<b>Organisational objective</b>
What specific communications objective are we trying to achieve?	<b>Communications objective</b>
What information do we have about the topic / issue / objective before we start?	<b>Inputs</b> – market share data, customer or staff satisfaction, media share of voice, internet search activity
Who are we aiming to reach?	<b>Target audience</b> for the comms activity
What should we do to achieve these objectives?	<b>Activities</b> – press releases, paid advertising, social media posts, events, trade shows, political lobbying
What do people see, think and do as a result of our communications?	See – <b>outputs</b> – articles, webinars, blog posts, leaflets, video content  Think – <b>outtakes</b> – what message was conveyed, sentiment, net promoter score, what search terms did they use?  Do – <b>outcomes</b> – what happened next? Did the target audience click through to a website? Did they search? Did they like, comment, or share social content? Did they advocate for a product or service once they became a customer? Did they register for our event?
What impact did this activity have? Were business and communications objectives met?	<b>Impact</b> – could be sales, share price, market share, behaviour (e.g., recycling, blood donations, activity levels), policy change

Defining success, knowing what ‘normal’ looks like beforehand and focusing on the data points which benefit the organisation (outcomes and impact, rather than activities and outputs) can help to elevate conversations and decision making.

The taxonomy above is important, because the framework adopts the phraseology used in other business functions; we see these terms used in education, healthcare, and other forms of organisational evaluation.

***This ability to blend multiple inputs into a simple narrative is important for board decision making.*** “



### Integrating internal and external data signals for a holistic view

PR professionals are adept at synthesising complex processes and jargon and translating this into clear and simple information. This ability to blend multiple inputs into a simple narrative is important for board decision making. Media sentiment can impact share price and visa versa; weather patterns can affect sales of ice cream and alcoholic drinks (regardless of how impressive the TV ad campaign was); user reviews can guide travel destination decisions; social media chatter can impact TV ratings or box office takings.

A broad range of internal and external data are often already available across the business, it is important that these are shared with the PR team. The information may sit with different departments, such as investor relations, sales, or operations – but remember it will provide more value to your business if data is shared more widely across the organisation.

### Comms teams using the language of the boardroom

Returning to the taxonomy used in AMEC's integrated evaluation framework, the language used in measurement, evaluation and board reports can help to elevate the (perceived) value of this information.

The CIPR's State of the Profession 2022 report reveals that in four of the past five years, under representation of PR practitioners at board level has been among the top five main challenges facing the profession. By adopting the language of the boardroom and business more broadly, using terms such as inputs and outputs, objectives and outcomes, PR professionals can more easily earn themselves a seat at the boardroom table.

#### Five steps to take now:

- 1 **Make horizon scanning a core part of business operations**
- 2 **Ask your PR team to put media monitoring in place and report on this regularly**
- 3 **Ensure your communication objectives are clearly defined against your business objectives**
- 4 **Integrate internal and external data for a more holistic viewpoint**
- 5 **Ensure data from across the organisation is shared with your public relations department to inform their work and your decision making**

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