



Media Relations: Introduction to Media Monitoring and Evaluation

Media monitoring and evaluation are fundamental PR activities. This guide gives a brief explanation of what's involved and highlights the key points to bear in mind when undertaking them.

Why monitor your media coverage?

Media monitoring is essential for the PR professional. Awareness of what the media is saying about your organisation, your sector and your competitors is vital in enabling you to assess your communications challenges and the effectiveness of your communications strategy.

This could be in relation to how the media have picked up and responded to PR activity around a campaign or launch, the need for immediate awareness of breaking news coverage in a crisis scenario or simply in tracking what the media are reporting on a day to day basis.

Monitoring the media offers organizations a range of key insights, including

- Awareness of what the media is saying about your company/organization
- An understanding of what specific sources and journalists are writing, so that you can target your engagement with the media
- Awareness of how negative issues are unfolding in the media
- An assessment of how the media is responding to your campaigns

Effective media monitoring, requires this information to be comprehensive, accurate, reliable and promptly received.

How do I monitor the media?

Almost all organisations, large and small, outsource this activity to specialist media intelligence agencies that have the technical resources required to source and identify relevant media coverage across a range of media including:

- TV and radio stations
- Newswires and online news sites
- Social media sources
- National newspapers
- Regional newspapers
- Consumer and business magazines

These agencies will work to your brief - providing you and any colleagues and stakeholders with the coverage you require, in an appropriate format for your purposes and in an agreed timeframe. You will work with your chosen agency to agree your brief in advance of the service commencing.

How do I select an agency?

Most agencies will offer a free trial of their service before you commit. This is an excellent way for you to assess which agency best meets your needs. The agency will help you understand and refine your requirements through this trial process.

The agency you select should also be able to provide you with expert advice on which sources to monitor, how to ensure that only relevant coverage is provided, how best to deliver your coverage in terms of format and timing and how they will manage their costs within your budget.

Reputable agencies will be able to back-up their service claims through endorsements from existing clients and professional bodies, so ask to see references.

How is coverage provided?

Agencies will offer a range of service options such as:

- Early morning delivery of national press coverage
- Relevant breaking news alerts from newswires, TV and radio, online sources
- Updates from regional and magazine sources

You should expect to receive coverage in the form of 'clippings' – ie. digital/hard copies of the articles featuring the mentions/key words, etc from your brief, and related source data – source name, date the article was featured, circulation and so on.

You should also be able to specify a requirement for summaries, to provide an overview or lead-in to coverage – so that you can make a quick assessment of the content at a glance.

There will typically be a range of delivery options which will include:

- Digital delivery via email, client portal, RSS/XML – these should all be BlackBerry/PDA compliant
- Hard copy delivery via courier, fax and post

Leading agencies offer portal delivery – an online system where clients login to access their coverage and can view and review, edit and forward coverage, search a historical archive, chart and export analysis reports and in some cases, access forward planning data - future news and events information to further assist with communications planning.

You should expect good client support with access to both office-based and senior support staff, 24/7, to assist you with your day-to-day as well as any out of hours requirements.

Why evaluate your coverage?

Evaluation of coverage is becoming an increasingly key requirement for PR professionals. Having commissioned a media monitoring agency and received your coverage, you now want to interpret it, understand what's being said about your organisation and what that means. A range of insights can be derived from high quality evaluation including the following:

Informing key PR activities

- Assess what audience your messaging is reaching
- Identify opportunities to enhance message reach
- Assess how the media is portraying your organisation and benchmark with competitors
- Which journalists do I need to be engaging with

Impact and value of PR

- Assess how PR is positively influencing your coverage
- Demonstrate the value and ROI of PR to your organisation
- Assess how PR and media coverage is impacting your audience perceptions
- Assess how PR and media coverage is generating behavioural change in the target audience

Reputation impact of the media

- Contrast your reputation with competitors
- Identify how journalists are portraying your organisation

Another essential requirement is for media evaluation to be delivered in a timeframe that enables you to act on the insights highlighted. The most powerful evaluation services provide insight on the day/within a few days of the media coverage.

How does it work?

Analysis of the media involves specialist analysts reading your coverage (and your competitors') and scoring each article with a range of metrics. These include:

- Coverage drivers
- Message pick up
- Sentiment (tone) of the article
- Spokespeople quoted

- Journalist and media outlet
- Topic/story/issues
- Prominence of mention
- Reach of coverage
- Value of coverage
- Impact of coverage

Once the coverage is assessed, a report will be written to illustrate how the organisation and its competitors are being portrayed in the media. The best regarded reports have a mix of intelligent commentary and easy to understand graphical analysis to convey the key points.

Evaluation reports are delivered on a cycle that best suits the needs of the organisation and ranges from daily through to quarterly, with weekly and monthly reporting representing the most common delivery cycles.

Whilst evaluation is a separate activity to media monitoring, they are inextricably linked. The main agencies can carry out both elements and there are obvious advantages in them being able to do this.

A series of best practice case studies on this topic can be found in the information centre along with other skills guides.

By Precise

Precise is a media intelligence company providing media monitoring, analysis and forward planning services to support PR and external communications activity. We work with organisations of every size and across all sectors, including public relations, corporate and financial, consumer, government and not-for-profit. Based in the City, our business operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and we employ 400 specialist researchers, editors and analysts to deliver our unique range of services.

For further information, contact Marcus Gault on (0)20 3301 4490 or visit www.precise.co.uk

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