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Fun things to do with measurement

First of all, lets get my views right out in the open. Here are the WORST things people have done with a measurement report:

1. Threaten an editor or publisher
2. Fire someone
3. Use it as a coaster
4. Justify a program that may look good but doesn't deliver business value
5. File it away
6. Line the litter box

Now you get the idea. The point of measurement and evaluation is to help you make better, more informed decisions. A measurement report should help your business first, enhance your career second, and justify your existence third. If you focus on the first goal - improving your business, you will always get funding for the next research program.

Here are 10 things that some of the country's best-known companies have done with the help of a measurement program (for a full list of 89 more see.

1. 1. Find a reason for flagging sales

In the early days of Delahaye, one of our clients called us to double check some of our results for their media analysis. It seemed that a product manager had come to her in distress saying, "We need more PR, the product isn't selling." As frequently happens, when something doesn't work, he was looking to publicity and communications for the answer. The problem was that our report showed that his product had gotten more and better press coverage over the last year than any other product the company had. I double-checked all our numbers, and the results were the same. His launch had outstripped all others by a factor of four. So why wasn't his product selling? Turns out that it was a Macintosh based software program, and none of the sales offices or sales reps even had a Macintosh in their offices. Once there the sales reps had Mac's with which to demo the product, the product took off.

2. 2. Put a halt to market share slippage

A leading manufacturer in the consumer electronics field came to us because they were concerned that their market share among small business and home office users (SOHO) was declining. Delahaye analyzed media coverage in the top 25 publications most frequently read by SOHO buyers. As it turns out that of all the coverage of consumer electronics in those key publications, our client was mentioned in about

half of it. Not bad, and very much in line for what you would expect for a company with 60% market share. However, when we looked at just the negative press, our client received 89% of all the negative coverage. And when the press recommended products, or wrote favorable about these products, our client was only capturing about 30% -- leaving two out of every three articles recommending a competing product. Separate research had shown that trade press coverage was a major influence on purchasing decisions, so we knew this was a critical weakness for our client. We also knew that the factors most likely to influence purchasing were things like "being rated best in class" "being rated a good buy/value" "being the best technology." When we looked at how the media positioned our client on those specific issues, our client was frequently second or third after the competition by a significant margin. The only positioning that our client clearly owned was "market leader" a positioning that testing had shown had little impact on buying decisions for this category.
By refocusing their messages, the client was able to regain their lost market share.

1. 3. Turn around a company

A major health insurance company approached Delahaye to conduct its first ever-competitive positioning analysis. Our technique was to interview both subscribers and business decision makers who actually made the final decision on which health insurance company to go with. We first asked them what was most important to them when it came to making a decision. We then asked them how our client ranked on those issues. We also asked them what came to mind when they heard the name of our client, and the competition. The results were dreadful. Our client came in dead last on every important issue except choice of physician. Of all the "words" used to describe the various companies, 66% of the ones describing our client were negative, compared to 30% or less for the competition. With some trepidation (as a messenger I've been shot many times) I walked them through the results. After quite a lot of blustering and defensiveness, the CEO said, "all I can offer is more excuses." Shortly thereafter the company revamped its entire marketing program, and brought a marketing expert on to their board of directors. They reworked their ad campaign to focus on choice (even using Choice in the name of a new products) By the end of the year, for the first time in five years, the company had stopped losing market share and was finally gaining on the competition.

2. 4. Making better decisions, and saving some shrimp (and money) along the way

I actually started Delahaye as a result of one chart. While I was director of corporate communications at Lotus Development, a product manager came to me and said " I want to launch my product with the same kind of party that you had for "Manuscript:" (a launch so successful, that few people today have ever heard of the product). I asked him why, and he said, "everyone was there, and the shrimp were great." I knew that most of the people in attendance were employees of Lotus, and that in fact it was a loll a huge waste of time and money. But it wasn't until I pulled out a chart that showed him how the media covered a variety of different launches that he actually got it. My chart showed that for the manuscript launch, half of all coverage completely miss-positioned the product and only one in four said anything we wanted to say about the product. The chart had similar statistics for the other ten launches we had done, and I pointed to the one for "One Source." One Source was launched with a press tour, total cost of which was somewhere around $15,000. The difference in cost per message communicated was a factor of 10!

5. Help the board make better decisions

At a major insurance firm, they had been using Advertising Value Equivalency as a standard measure for their PR program for some time. It showed that every month they received a little more coverage and that meant an increase in the "Ad Value". In order to better understand what was really happening, the company asked Delahaye to do a complete competitive analysis of their media image. The results found that in fact, most of the increase in coverage was negative, resulting from a number of lawsuits brought on by angry customers.   The communications group took the information to the Board of Directors and for the first time could clearly show the impact their decisions were having on the company's reputation. Furthermore, the study showed that by sponsoring a major community relationship program, the competition had outstripped them on the "market leader" and "responsible corporate citizen" positioning. The board began making better decisions immediately.

6. Save a program that works

Country Music Television (CMT) had initiated a program of a traveling country music show that could be transported in an 18-wheeler and quickly set up in a parking lot. The goal was to encourage people to call up their local cable providers and say, "I want my CMT" to get more cable operators to carry the program. They had teamed up with Wal-Mart to secure the parking lots, and had done one seasons worth of shows. The problem was they didn't' know whether they should continue with the program or not. The only gauge of success was the word of the truck drivers, whose reports were considered with some skepticism because of the inherent biases. Delahaye conducted surveys of attendees to determine the degree to which attendees were influenced by the shows. A stunning 90% of all attendees said that they would contact the cable companies. Another xx% said that they would encourage a friend to do the same ting. What made the research even more valuable was factoring in costs. They could tell on a location-by-location basis, which sites persuaded more people for less money - a calculation we called "Cost per persuasion." Going forward that helped them make better decisions relative to how many trucks to lease and how many cites to plan for. They could use the "Cost per persuasion" in conjunction with demographic and population data to determine where the return on investment would be the greatest.

1. 7. Help establish leadership positioning

Long before most athletes had even begun to step up their training for the 1992 Olympics, a major technology company had signed on as a sponsor and was starting to leverage their investment. With almost a year to go before the date, their PR staff and their agency began to seed the press with stories positioning the company as a leader in high technology. To check their progress, a monthly media positioning study was done to compare the number of times our client had been mentioned in key media as a "technology leader" compared to the two other technology sponsors. Each month, in reviewing the report, the staff and agency would sit down and evaluate their progress, determining which editors and reporters were missing the message, which ones hadn't covered the topic at all, and what groups of media should be targeted going forward. As a result, the client's positioning as a technology leader increased steadily each month, easily trumping the competition by a factor of two and occasionally three. While other sponsors received scant mentioned before the games actually opened, our client had amassed some 500 articles all of which positioned the company as a technology leader by the time the games began.

2. 8. More effectively allocate resources

For years, AT & T has been spending a fortune in advertising getting us to believe that the company is good to do business with. In fact, they've been doing it for so long, they can predict how many people they'll persuade before they even place a single ad. The trouble is that they're not always right. In fact, when managers at AT&T were recently going over some numbers, they discovered a significant gap between predicted behavior and actual behavior. While they were scratching their heads looking for a reason, someone noticed that the times when customer loyalty was lower than predicted happened to coincide with times when they were getting pummeled in the media for "slamming" [1[1]]. Conversely, loyalty numbers were significantly higher when their CEO was featured prominently and positively for his role on the President's council on volunteerism. After integrating all the consumer and PR data, trends studies showed that in fact, they could dial back their advertising significantly during times of heavy favorable press coverage. They also found out that when negative press fills the pages, there's absolutely no point in trying to promote your products, it just makes people madder. The money the saved on Advertising could more than cover the cost of the research.

[1[1]] Switching a person's long distance carrier without their permission

3. 9. Manage your agencies better

An international company was just getting its marketing efforts off the ground in Europe. It had just moved and cut the ribbon on a beautiful new office facility in Germany, so it gathered its four European agencies around the table and showed them the results of the latest media analysis. While coverage was steadily increasing in all countries, the percentage of articles that contained a key message was minimal. The agencies were clearly told: "go forth and communicate messages, for this is how you will be measured." Six months later the same agencies gathered around the same table to review the latest results. Message communication had increased 300% and overall coverage had doubled. By far the greatest gains were in Spain. Even more interesting, the greatest sales increase, as well s the largest increases in market share was also in Spain.

10. Getting to say " I told you so"

My client at a major semiconductor company is much too polity to say "neiner, neiner, neiner" when she's delivering a research report, but she will confess to *thinking* it once or twice. She understands that measuring things that don't work is far more valuable than measuring the stuff that does work. Especially when some other department has railroaded PR into changing the timing of a major launch or when budgets have forced odd bedfellows to be announced in a joint event. More than once she has been able to clearly demonstrate the down side of such actions. Downsides like: fewer messages communicated, less positive press, and incorrect positioning.

In fact several clients have compared the results of different launches. One launch was conducted via press tour; one was a major press conference at corporate headquarters. Delahaye research showed that the press tour yielded nearly twice as much positive press and communicated twice as many company messages.

Another client was able to demonstrate that when a launch was moved forward by a week due to an unforeseen leak, 30% fewer messages were communicated than in a normally handled release. Additionally, press coverage was significantly less than for other releases. All of which studies gave the clients plenty of practice in "I told you so."