



Resources for Public Relations Educators for Teaching Research, Measurement, and Evaluation

IPR White Papers for Teaching Research,
Measurement, and Evaluation

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Demands for accountability for public relations activity have fueled the development and usage of sophisticated research, measurement and evaluation approaches and tools in public relations practice. Numerous digital metrics exist to measure and evaluate the digital behavior of strategic publics. Not only are public relations practitioners conducting qualitative and quantitative research in the formative stages of campaigns, but also practitioners are developing measurement and evaluation programs to assess efficiency, effectiveness, and the ability of public relations programming to meet organizational objectives. For example, practitioners assess whether positive media coverage correlates to increased sales. Others analyze digital conversations to measure influence and conversion to action. Some isolate the contribution of public relations to sales relative to other communication functions.

Ensuring that public relations students are familiar and proficient with the growing number of measurement and evaluations tools and approaches can be daunting. Whereas some public relations programs have a stand-alone measurement and evaluation course in addition to a required research methods class, some programs may be trying to teach research, measurement, and evaluation in one stand-alone research methods class. Some programs don't have a research methods course solely devoted to public relations students; instead, these programs may offer a combined advertising/public relations research methods course or a research methods course designed for all majors within a communication department. Yet other programs are embedding measurement and evaluation tools and approaches in digital media or new media courses and/or campaigns courses.

This paper serves as a road map to the collection of books and white papers on public relations research, measurement, and evaluation. Members of the Institute for Public Relations Commission on Measurement and Evaluation, a nonprofit group that researches

and disseminate public relations research and evaluation best practices, authored the books and papers highlighted here. Commission members represent four pillars of the public relations profession: (i) corporate public relations practitioners, (ii) academic researchers, (iii) public relations agencies and consulting firms, and (iv) research organizations.

The white papers, available at no cost, make excellent case studies that professors can use to illustrate a particular methodological approach in the classroom.¹ An educator might incorporate a concept from a white paper in a teaching presentation or ask students to read the entire article to use as a basis for a class discussion. This paper begins by describing and organizing the white papers by topic area. The second part of this paper briefly describes the books that could be used in a class on research, measurement and evaluation, digital media, and campaigns.

1.1 Getting Started with PR Research, Measurement, and Evaluation

Public relations practitioners who work in public relations research, measurement, and evaluation need to talk in the same professional language. The [“Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research”](#) prepared, edited, and periodically updated by Prof. Don Stacks is a useful resource and primer.

Dr. Walter Lindenmann describes, in [“Public Relations Research for Planning and Evaluation,”](#) the various tools and techniques that public relations practitioners ought to consider when designing and carrying out research projects for public relations planning and for public relations measurement and evaluation purposes.

Dr. Walter Lindenmann describes cost-effective ways to create and implement research and measurement and evaluation programs in [“Research Doesn’t Have to Put You in the Poor House.”](#)

In his presentation titled, [“Setting Best Practices in Public Relations Research,”](#) Dr. David Michaelson describes best practices in public relations research methods and data analysis.

¹ The white papers are available at www.instituteforpr.org/research/commissions/measurement

In ["Using Public Relations Research to Drive Business Results,"](#) Katie Paine, Pauline Draper and Angela Jeffrey examine how a variety of organizations have used PR measurement systems to demonstrate the business outcomes of their efforts.

A key step in PR planning is identifying and prioritizing key stakeholder audiences. Prof. Brad Rawlins outlines a four-step process to accomplish this important task in ["Prioritizing Stakeholders for Public Relations,"](#) and also provides insights on stakeholder management.

PR measurement and evaluation will never be successful without a clear set of measurable objectives. ["Guidelines for Setting Measurable Public Relations Objectives: An Update"](#) by Forrest Anderson, Linda Hadley, Dr. David Rockland and Mark Weiner updates a 1999 classic, one that should always be at hand when PR practitioners and researchers start the account planning process. The best measurement is built in at the start of a program, not bolted on at the end.

1.2 Teaching Students How to Conceptualize and Operationalize: Contemporary Measurement Concepts

Public relations students may better understand how to conceptualize and operationalize research concepts and constructs if they read or study measurement case studies that illustrate this process. Organization-public relationships and trust are both constructs that future public relations professionals will need to know how to measure.

In ["Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations"](#) Profs. Linda Childers Hon and James Gruing explain how they developed a valid and reliable instrument to measure the quality of an organization-public relationship. Prof Samsup Jo provides validation of Hon and Grunig's approach in his paper, ["Measurement of Organization-Public Relationships: Validation of Measurement Using a Manufacturer-Retailer Relationship."](#)

Prof. Trent Seltzer provides a different approach on how to measure organization-public relationships in his paper titled, ["Measuring the Impact of Public Relations: Using a Coorientational Approach to Analyze the Organization-Public Relationship."](#) Seltzer

incorporates a coorientational methodology with the relationship dimensions provided by Hon and Grunig in his recommended measurement approach.

Prof. Marcia Watson reviews past ways to measure trust and provides suggestions for measuring trust in public relations in ["Can There Be Just One Trust? A Cross-Disciplinary Identification of Trust Definitions and Measurement."](#) In ["Guidelines for Measuring Trust in Organizations,"](#) Katie Paine and Profs. Linda Hon and James Grunig provide guidelines for measuring trust of corporations.

1.3 Teaching Students How to Conduct Content Analyses in Public Relations

Educators can tie ways to measure the effectiveness of media relations to conversations and lectures on content analysis. The following papers make excellent case studies or examples of applied content analysis.

In ["A New Model for Media Content Analysis,"](#) Dr. David Michaelson and Toni Griffin explain the limitations of traditional content analysis programs used to measure media relations. They provide two case studies to explain a more effective approach to using content analysis, one of which measures correct information, incorrect information, misleading information and omitted information.

In their papers ["Exploring the Link Between Volume of Media Coverage and Business Outcomes"](#) and ["Exploring the Link between Share of Media Coverage and Business outcomes"](#) authors Angela Jeffrey, Dr. David Michaelson, and Prof. Don Stacks make the case for using competitive media content analysis to see stronger correlations to business results.

Public relations practitioners sometimes use multipliers when factoring circulation or audience figures when calculating impressions. In ["Dispelling the Myth of PR Multipliers and Other Inflationary Audience Measures,"](#) Mark Weiner and Don Bartholomew argue that the facts do not support the use of multipliers, and their use may actually hurt the credibility of the profession.

Everyone likes to talk about return on investment, but what does it really mean, and how can we apply it in public relations? In ["Perspectives on the ROI of Media Relations Publicity Efforts"](#) Fraser Likely, Dr. David Rockland, and Mark Weiner discuss several different approaches to deriving a Return-on-Investment (ROI) for the support provided by media relations publicity efforts within a marketing campaign.

In ["Isolating the Effects of Media-Based Public Relations on Sales: Optimization through Marketing Mix Modeling,"](#) Mark Weiner, Liney Arnorsdottir, Rainer Lang, and Prof. Brian Smith, define marketing mix modeling, share approaches for incorporating public relations results into the model – primarily through media content analysis – and provide a case study. The featured case study confirms what PR professionals believe to be true: PR is a most powerful marketing agent. What is more, public relations consistently surpasses the return-on-investment and relative selling power of other MARCOM activities within the marketing mix, including those which command much larger budgets.

1.4 Demonstrating the Relevance of Experimental Design to Public Relations

Professors can enhance understanding of the mechanics of experimental design by using an illustrative case study. In ["Exploring the Comparative Communications Effectiveness of Advertising and Media Placement"](#) Dr. David Michaelson and Prof. Don Stacks describe an experimental design that examines the effectiveness of an advertisement compared to public relations placement in generating consumer interest in a newly launched product.

1.5 Explaining How Statistics Can Be Used in Public Relations

Educators can use contemporary case studies about the impact of public relations on business functions in lectures and discussions of inferential statistics.

For example, professors can reference the papers ["Exploring the Link Between Volume of Media Coverage and Business Outcomes"](#) and ["Exploring the Link between Share of Media Coverage and Business Outcomes"](#) by authors Angela Jeffrey, Dr. David Michaelson, and Prof. Don W. Stacks, to teach students when it is necessary to use the correlation statistic.

In ["Perspectives on the ROI of Media Relations Publicity Efforts,"](#) Fraser Likely, Dr. David Rockland and Mark Weiner illustrate the utility of multiple regression analysis. The authors propose a model to predict sales based upon communication function, among other variables. In ["Isolating the Effects of Media-Based Public Relations on Sales: Optimization through Marketing Mix Modeling"](#) Mark Weiner, Liney Arnorsdottir, Rainer Lang, and Prof. Brian Smith explain how to use marketing mix modeling, which uses multiple regression analysis.

1.6 Explaining Longitudinal Research

Although PR practitioners frequently tout the value of longitudinal data, finding good examples is not easy. In ["Tracking Organization-Public Relationships Over Time: A Framework for Longitudinal Research,"](#) Elizabeth Dougall explains a comprehensive longitudinal study that tracks the quality of the relationship between three Australian banks and their key publics.

1.7 Describing the Use of a Delphi Panel

Prof. Alexander Laskin describes a Delphi panel study that demonstrates how the investor relations function provides value to organizations in ["The Value of Investor Relations: A Delphi Panel Investigation."](#)

1.8 Measuring Social Media

Measurement in social media changes frequently. In ["How to Measure Social Media Relations: The More Things Change, the More They Remain the Same"](#) and ["How to Set Benchmarks in Social Media: Exploratory Research for Social Media, Lessons Learned"](#) Katie Paine outlines the structure of social media measurement programs.

1.9 Books about Research, Measurement, and Evaluation

In addition to the Institute for Public Relations resources, there are several excellent books that belong on the shelf of public relations practitioners as well as those specifically involved in the public relations research, measurement, and evaluation function.

Evaluating Public Relations: A Best Practices Guide to Public Relations Planning, Research and Evaluation by Tom Watson and Paul Noble (2nd edition, 2007).

This comprehensive book covers the theory, importance, and approaches of public relations evaluation. Co-written by public relations academic Tom Watson and public relations practitioner Paul Noble, this book provides a wealth of examples and excerpts from global organizations, practitioners, and academics. The first part of the book covers relevant communication theories and how public relations practitioners from around the world conduct evaluation. The second part of the book reviews evaluation approaches, media evaluation systems, objective setting, measurement of relationships and crisis communication, online evaluation, and case studies. The book concludes with a chapter on future developments in evaluation. Although this book does not cover the mechanics of research methods per se, its comprehensive treatment of evaluation and theory makes it an outstanding option for a supplemental book in a research methods course.

A Practitioner's Guide to Public Relations Research, Measurement, and Evaluation by Don W. Stacks and Dr. David Michaelson (2010).

Co-written by public relations practitioner Dr. David Michaelson and public relations academic Prof. Don Stacks, this treatise adopts a best practices' approach to research. The authors seek to teach readers how and why research can be used in public relations and the impact of public relations on business outcomes. The treatise covers the business and practice of public relations, qualitative and quantitative methods, and best practices. The volume's inclusion of contemporary examples and emphasis on conducting actionable research to measure the effect of public relation on business reflect its best practices' philosophy. Students in a research, or measurement and evaluation, or campaigns course would likely appreciate the volume's straightforward and concise approach.

Primer of Public Relations Research by Don W. Stacks (2nd edition, 2011)

This practical and comprehensive book is an excellent primer on public relations research that could serve as the primary textbook in a research methods course. In the first section of the book, Prof. Don Stacks explains the role of research in public relations practice, including

how to measure, use computer programs, and uphold ethical standards in the research process. In the second section of the book, which consists of eight chapters, Stacks provides step-by-step guidelines and recommendations for conducting a myriad of qualitative and quantitative research methods and approaches. In the third section, Stacks describes how to write and evaluate research proposals and present final research reports. The book provides practical examples and review questions to elucidate research terminology and approaches.

Measuring Public Relationships: The Data-Driven Communicator's Guide to Success by Katie Delahaye Paine (2007).

Author Katie Paine draws upon her decades of measurement consulting to write this practical primer on public relations measurement. As implied by its title, the book's emphasis is on measuring relationships since author Paine advocates that enhanced relationships increase efficiencies, effectiveness and performance. Following its introduction to measurement and measurement tools, the book describes in step-by-step detail how to measure relationships with a variety of publics, such as the media, analysts and influencers, marketing disciplines, local community, internal publics, bloggers, sales people, and more. The straightforward explanations and multiple examples and case studies make this a good book with which to teach students to create and implement measurement programs.

Measure What Matters. Online Tools for Understanding Customers, Social Media, Engagement, and Key Relationships by Katie Delahaye Paine (2011)

Authored by Katie Paine, this book's focus is on social media measurement. Similar to *Measuring Public Relationships*, the book succinctly describes how to get started in measurement and how to measure public relationships with key strategic publics. Paine even includes examples of survey questions from the original 1999 Hon and Grunig Relationship Scale to aid the reader in designing relationships measurement programs. What differentiates this book from many others is its focus on measuring relationships created via digital media. Given the increasing emphasis on digital media in public relations curricula, this social media-oriented measurement book would make an excellent resource for a research methods, digital media, or campaigns course.

1.10 Summary

The list of white papers and books highlighted in this paper are not comprehensive; however, they are representative of some of the best research and thinking of members of the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) Measurement and Evaluation Commission. If you have ideas for additional teaching resources related to research, measurement, and evaluation, please contact the IPR for Measurement and Evaluation Commission at <http://www.instituteforpr.org/contact/>.