



Examining Research and Measurement Ethics in Today's Transparent World: Establishing Standards for Today's Communications

Don W. Stacks
University of Miami
IPR Measurement Commission
IPR Research Fellow

What Is a Standard?

“An idea or thing used as a measure , norm, or model in comparative evaluations.”*

- Why standards are important
 - Professionalism
 - Comparative evaluation
 - Provides a stronger argument for inclusion at the “managerial table”

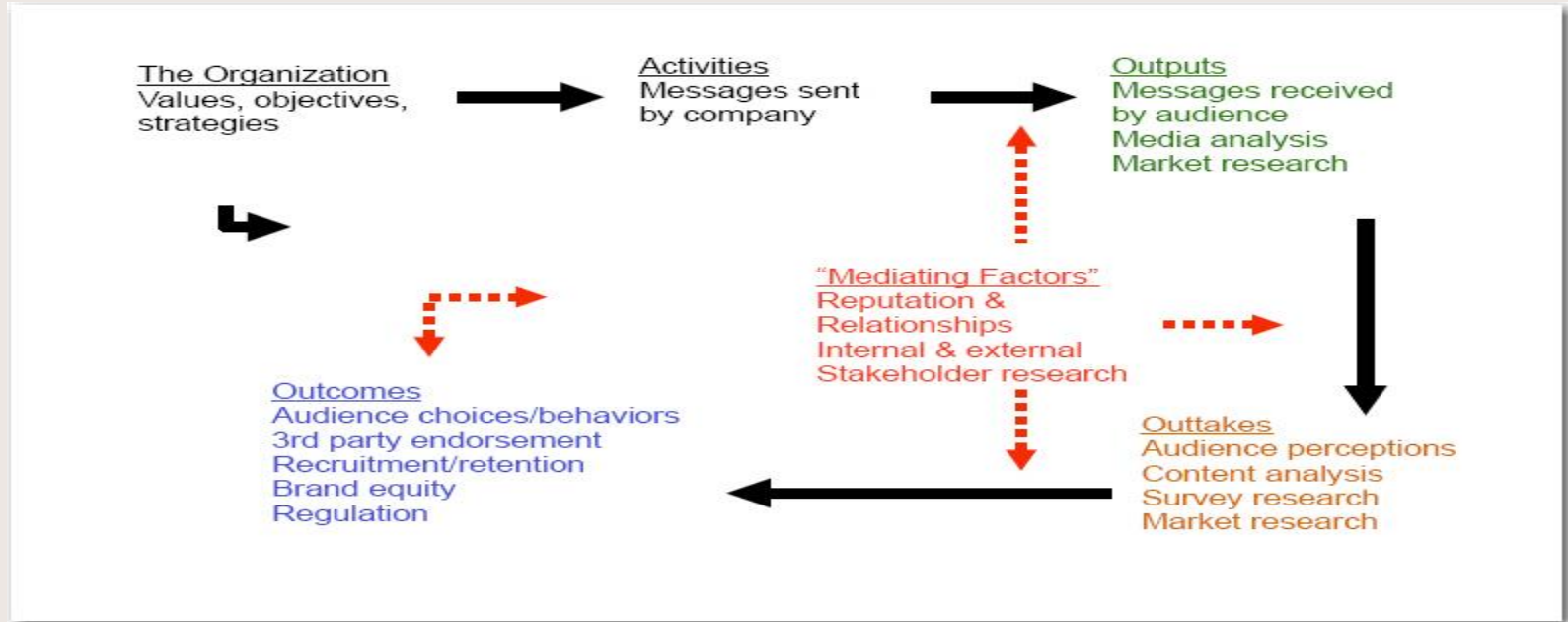
*Source: *Oxford English Dictionary*

©Don W. Stacks 2014

Standards versus Best Practices

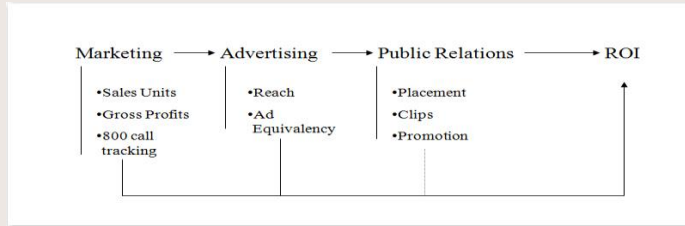
- Standards define and determine **WHAT** needs to be measured
- Best practices illustrate **HOW** to best meet the objectives of the standard

A Best Practices Approach

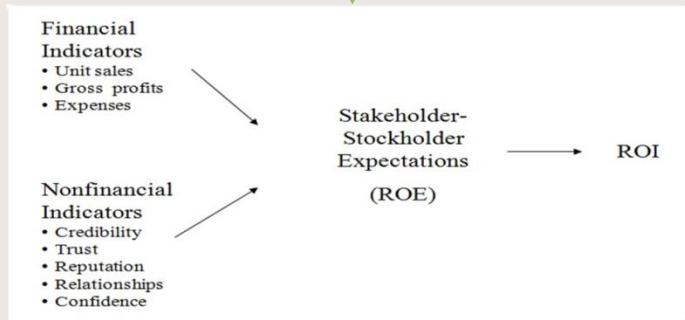


Source: Michaelson, D., & MacLeod, S. (2007). The application of “best practices” in public relations measurement and evaluation systems. *Public Relations Journal*, 1(1), 1-14

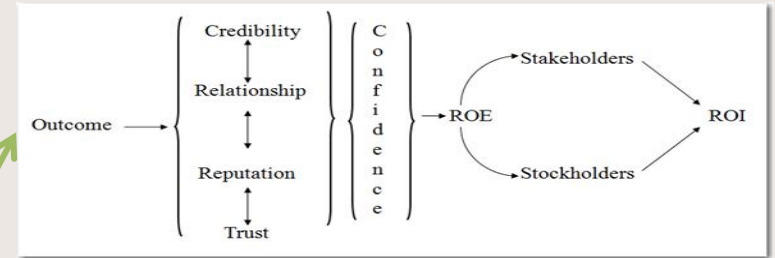
Movement toward Standardization



Traditional



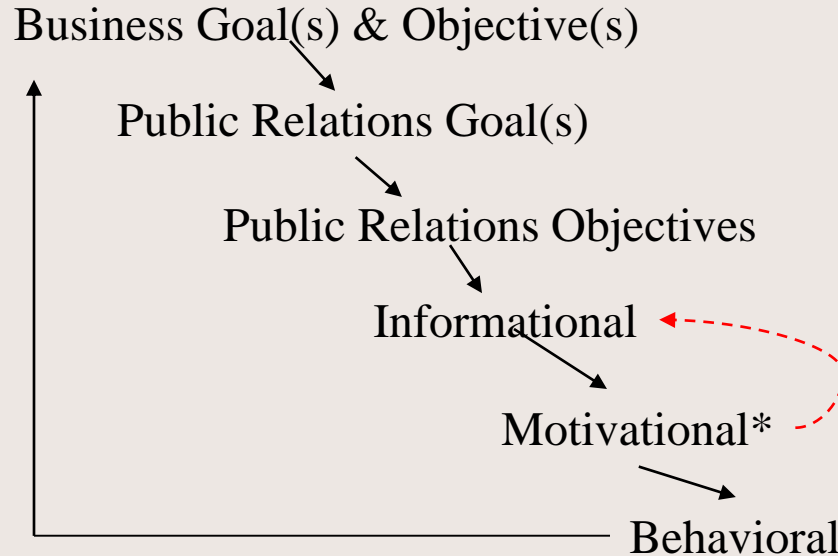
Contemporary



Standard Nonfinancial Measures

From: *Primer of Public Relations Research, Second Edition*, by Don W. Stacks. Copyright 2011 by The Guilford Press. All rights reserved.

Standardizing Goals and Objectives*

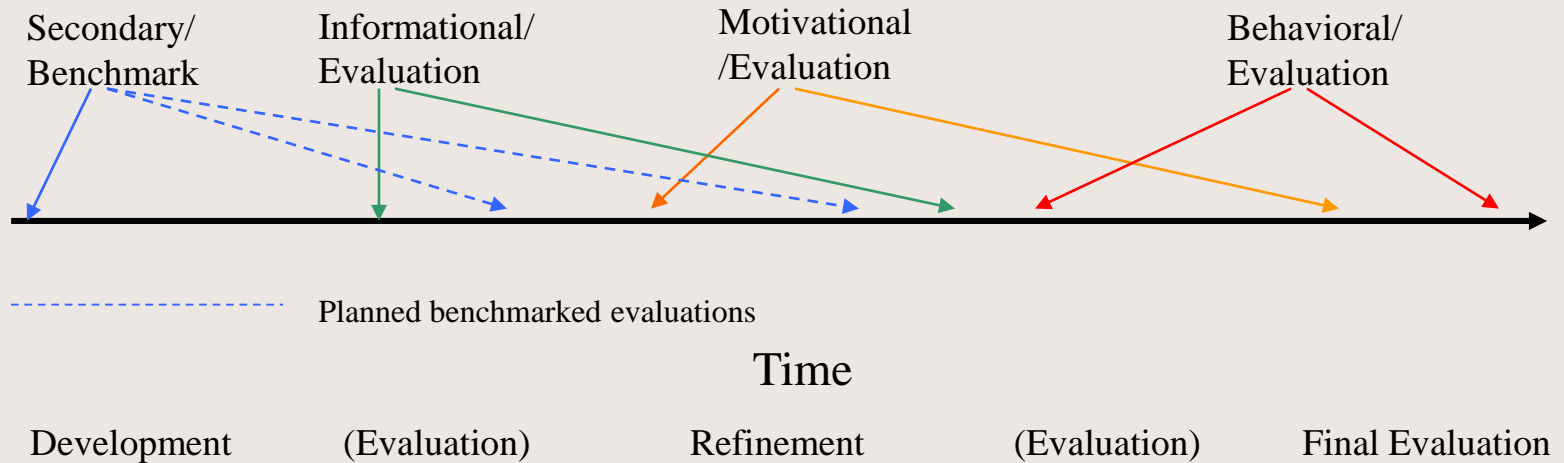


* - - - indicates benchmarks not being met and informational strategies need to be reframed or refocused.

From: Stacks, D.W. (2011). *Primer of Public Relations Research* (2nd Ed.) New York: The Guilford Press. All rights reserved.

©Don W. Stacks 2014

Toward a Program Excellence Standard



From: Stacks, D.W. (2011). *Primer of Public Relations Research* (2nd Ed.) New York: The Guilford Press. All rights reserved.

©Don W. Stacks 2014

Ethics as Best Practices

Issues managers must identify potential problems, research must be conducted, and both problems and potential solutions must be defined in an ethical manner. Therefore, **ethics** can be defined for public relations as *how we ought to decide, manage, and communicate* [Emphasis original].

Bowen, S. A., Rawlins, B., & Martin, T. (2010). *An overview of the public relations function*. New York: Business Expert Press, p. 130.

IPR Measurement Commission Research Ethics Statement*

The duty of professionals engaged in research, measurement, and evaluation for public relations is to advance the highest ethical standards and ideals for research. All research should abide by the **principles of intellectual honesty, fairness, dignity, disclosure, and respect for all stakeholders involved**, namely clients (both internal and external), colleagues, research participants, the public relations profession, and the researchers themselves.

*<http://www.instituteforpr.org/research/commissions/measurement/ethics-statement/>

Core Ethical Values*

- Autonomy
- Respondent Rights
- Fairness
- Balance
- Duty
- Lack of Bias
- Not Using Misleading Data
- Full Disclosure
- Discretion
- Judgment
- Protection of Proprietary Data
- Public Responsibility
- Intellectual Integrity
- Good Intention
- Reflexivity
- Moral Courage and Objectivity

*<http://www.instituteforpr.org/research/commissions/measurement/ethics-statement/>

Ethical Tests*

- Kant's ethical "forms"[†]
 - **Duty:** Decisions and actions should be universal and reversible.
 - **Dignity and respect:** Decisions and actions must take into account other people and not one's own selfish self-interests.
 - **Intention:** Decisions and actions should demonstrate good-will over all other interests.

[†]The best (normative) ethics requires all 3 tests to be passed for a good decision. In the practical sense, 2 of 3 is not bad, but the most stringent philosophers say all 3 should be passed to be truly ethical.

*Bowen, S.A., & Stacks, D.W. (2013). Toward the establishment of ethical standardization in public relations research, measurement and evaluation. *Public Relations Journal*, 7(3), 1-28.

Research Questions

“How do professional associations that deal with public relations research, both academic and professional, express codes of ethics, statements, or conduct regarding the ethical practice of research?”

“If they have an ethics guideline, what principles or values are espoused?”

Associations

The professional associations included the

- American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR),
- American Marketing Association (AMA),
- Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO),
- Institute for Public Relations Measurement Commission (IPRMC)
- International Association of Business Communicators (IABC),
- International Chamber of Commerce (ICC),
- International Public Relations Association (IPRA)
- Marketing Research Association (MRA),
- Promotional Marketers Association (PMA),
- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), and
- Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA).

The educational associations included the

- Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC),
- International Communication Association (ICA), and
- National Communication Association (NCA).

Formal Ethics and Ethical Principles Statements

Association	Formal Research Ethics Statement?	Intellectual Honesty	Fairness	Dignity	Disclosure	Respect for All Involved	
AAPOR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AEJMC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AMA	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
CASRO	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IABC	No	--	--	--	--	--	--
ICA	No	--	--	--	--	--	--
ICC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IPRMC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IPRA	No	--	--	--	--	--	--
MRA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NCA	No	--	--	--	--	--	--
PMA	No	--	--	--	--	--	--
PRSA	No	--	--	--	--	--	--
QRCA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
%	Yes 57.1 No 42.9	Yes 75.0 No 25.0	Yes 100.0 No 0.0	Yes 75.0 No 25.0	Yes 87.5 No 12.5	Yes 100.0 No 0.0	

Note: Principle columns percentages reflect only those associations who have a stated formal research ethics statement.

Appendix: Research Ethics Standardization Grid¹

Association ²	Principles ³				Core Values ⁴																											
	Have a Formal Ethics Statement?	Code of Conduct?	Stated Positively or Negatively?	Emphasized Statement?	Formal Reasoned Ethics Statement?	Intellectual Honesty	Honesty	Dignity	Disclosure	Respect for all involved	Autonomy	Respect for Rights	Honesty	Balance	Duty	Lack of Bias	Honesty	Not using misleading data	Full Disclosure	Caution	Judgment	Protection of proprietary data	Public responsiveness	Intellectual Integrity	Good intention	Value Ethics based on the numbers	Reflexivity	Model courage	Objectivity	Other		
[P] American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)	Yes	No	Positive	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes		
[P] American Marketing Association (AMA)	Yes	No	Positive	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes		
[A] Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication (AJMC)	Yes	No	Positive	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes		
[P] Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO)	Yes	Yes	Positive	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
[P] ICPSI/SOAR International Code on International Social Research	Yes	Yes	Negative	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	
[P] Institute for Public Relations Measurement Commission (IPRMC)	Yes	No	Positive	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
[P] International Association for Business Communications (IABC)	Yes	Yes	Positive	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
[A] International Communication Association (ICA)	Yes	No	Positive	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No		
[P] International Public Relations Association (IPRA)	Yes	Yes	Negative	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	
[P] International Research Association (IRA)	Yes	No	Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	
[A] National Communication Association (NCA)	Yes	No	Positive	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
[P] Professional Marketing Association (PMA)	Yes	No	Positive	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	
[P] Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)	Yes	Yes	Positive	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
[P] Quantitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA)	Yes	No	Positive	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

Notes:

1. Association is chosen that deal primarily with public relations/corporate communications
 2. Principles are checked if included in ethics statements
 3. Determine if code of positively or negatively stated based on being at least 50% of the terms
 4. Core values are expressed in terms analogous to those listed
- Yes = Found in research-specific statements
 Yes = Found in general ethics statements
 [P] = Professional Association; [A] = Academic Association
 - = No specific comprehensive code of conduct or practice.

Bowen's Social Media Guidelines*

TABLE 1
Ethical Guidelines for Using Social Media

#	Guideline	Rationale/Implementation*
1	Be fair and prudent	Consider fairness, justice, access. Consider right to know.
2	Avoid deception	If it is deceptive, even arguably, simply do not do it.
3	Maintain dignity and respect	Ensure that the communication maintains the dignity and respect of the involved publics.
4	Eschew secrecy	Barring trade/competition secrets, if an initiative warrants secrecy, something needs ethical examination.
5	Is it reversible?	How would you feel on the receiving end of the message? Is it still ethical then?
6	Be transparent	Paid speech should be transparently identified as such by "(Endorsement)" "(PaidMsg)" or similar phrasing.
7	Clearly identify	Personal speech and opinion versus speech as a representative of the organization should be identified.
8	Rational analysis	Examine messages from all sides; how would it look to other publics; how could it potentially be misconstrued?
9	Emphasize clarity	Even if the source or sponsorship is clear . . . make it clearer.
10	Disclose	Transparency in message creation and facts/data needed for an informed decision.
11	Verify sources and data	Be consistently credible; do not use rumor or speculation.
12	Establish responsibility	Does the message maintain your responsibility to do what is right?
13	Examine intention	Is your decision made with good will alone?
14	Encourage the good	Does your message help to build connectedness, engagement, and community?
15	Consistency builds trust	Consistency allows publics to know and understand you, and you can meet their expectations.

*Note. The level of analysis can be changed by using the words "campaign" or "initiative" instead of "message," which is used here for simplicity.

*Bowen, S.A. (2012). Using classic social media cases to distill ethical guidelines for digital engagement. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 28, 119-113.

An Ethical Research Standard

Research should be autonomous and abide by the principles of a universalizeable and reversible duty to the truth, dignity and respect for all involved publics and stakeholders, and have a morally good will or intention to gather, analyze, interpret, and report data with veracity.



Examining Research and Measurement Ethics in Today's Transparent World: Establishing Standards for Today's Communications

Don W. Stacks
University of Miami