



# Proposed Interim Standards for Metrics in Traditional Media Analysis

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Discussion document

Version 1.0

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## **Preface**

These proposed interim standards for metrics in traditional media analysis were developed by Marianne Eisenmann, with contributions from David Geddes, Katie Paine, Ruth Pestana, Frank Walton, and Mark Weiner, all members of the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) Measurement Commission. Also participating in this and other standards-setting efforts are representatives of the Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communications, the Council of Public Relations Firms, the Global Alliance and the Public Relations Society of America .

These proposed interim standards are only the beginning and start with a narrow list of technical definitions and standards. This statement was approved by the IPR Measurement Commission on June 7, 2012.

This is a discussion document for review and comment by the professional community, eventually leading to published validated standards.

## **About the Author**

Marianne Eisenmann leads the research arm of the Chandler Chicco Companies, providing strategic support for public relations program planning and measurement for leading global companies. Eisenmann and her team of specialists produce award-winning work, receiving the 2011 Golden Ruler Silver Merit Award from the Institute for Public Relations Commission on Measurement for their efforts in the development of an innovative model measuring progress in coalition and relationship building. Her career in communications and public relations has had an international focus, including positions in Washington, D.C.; Beijing, China; Hong Kong and New York. She is a member of the IPR Commission on Measurement and Evaluation, the IPRA United Nations Department of Information Advisory Group and the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC).

## **Purpose of the Paper**

This document began as a response to client organizations facing a pressing internal need to compare the results of multiple public relations campaigns across brands, business units and geographies. In the absence of an industry-wide methodology for data collection and analysis, in-house communication teams and their PR agencies use inconsistent definitions and calculations for results reporting. This frustrates management and puts budgets and resources at risk. To gain or keep their seat at the table, senior communication leaders want transparent, replicable metrics - similar to those presented by their counterparts in marketing or finance - to demonstrate their results.

Therefore, practitioners are asking for guidelines to ensure that all their PR efforts are measured using the same methodology. In some cases, communications teams have already established their own guidelines and pushed them out to their agency partners.

This paper offers recommendations for how to calculate some of the most commonly debated data points in traditional media analysis that are core to PR measurement and evaluation. The suggestions reflect the collective experience of professionals from the IPR Commission on Measurement and Evaluation. The measures addressed here intentionally basic, representing just the very beginning of what needs to be addressed in standards. The purpose is to provide suggestions on other essential media metrics as a continuation of this document.

## **Introduction**

Organizations engage in traditional media relations for many reasons and their objectives for analyzing the media coverage may be similarly varied. Media coverage can serve as a proxy for public perception and is relatively inexpensive and accessible. Public relations professionals apply media analysis to help demonstrate the value of PR, provide insights to make better decisions, improve performance, understand issues and anticipate change. To accomplish these objectives, a methodology is developed to support the analysis. Many practitioners have observed that some of the common measures used in media analysis are

sourced inconsistently. Hence, the IPR Measurement Commission proposes the following standards for consideration. The overall recommendation seeks to ensure that measures used in analysis are well-formulated and implemented by (i) gaining agreement from the start among all relevant parties, (ii) offering transparency about the methodology used in the analysis and, (iii) remaining consistent throughout the analysis and any subsequent studies.

## Definitions

**Item for media analysis** — includes any of the following: an article in print media (e.g. *New York Times*), an article in the online version of print media (e.g. NYTimes.com), an article in an online publication (huffingtonpost.com), a broadcast segment (TV or radio), a news item on the web site of a broadcast channel or station, a blog post (e.g. WSJ health blog), or analyst reports. This document does not cover other forms of earned media such as comments on Facebook or Twitter.

**Impressions** — the number of people having the opportunity for exposure to a media story; also known as “opportunity to see” (OTS); usually refers to the total audited circulation of a publication or the verified audience-reach of a broadcast vehicle or viewers of an online news story.<sup>1</sup>

**Mention** — reference to a topic, company, product, spokesperson or issue that is the focus (or one of the focal points) of the media analysis. One article might mention a product, a spokesperson, a key issue or a company, all of which are intended to be coded as part of the analysis. A single item may contain a single mention or 100 mentions each of which may be measured as part of the analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> See “impressions” in Don Stacks, *Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research* (Gainesville, Florida: Institute for Public Relations, 2006), ): 9, retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/dictionary-measurement-research/>

**Tone** — measures how a target audience is likely to feel about the individual, company, product or topic after reading/viewing/listening to the item; typically defined as positive, neutral/balanced, or negative.<sup>2</sup>

## **Standard #1 – How to Calculate Impressions**

At the very least, professional media analysis offers transparency in any reporting, clearly noting the basis for impressions determination as well as consistency and agreement (i) among internal and external teams preparing these measures and (ii) about the sources used to calculate numbers over time.

For print media, circulation is the “number of copies of a publication as distributed (as opposed to read)” through paid and free distribution. Impressions (as opposed to raw circulation) should be based on figures such as those provided by the publication, or through resources such as the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) or Nielsen. The ABC and Nielsen figures account for “pass-along” readership where there are multiple readers of a magazine or newspaper.<sup>3</sup>

Multipliers to account for a hypothetical higher credibility of earned media over paid media are not recommended for calculating impressions.<sup>4</sup>

- Some organizations use multipliers to account for the greater credibility of earned media coverage vs. paid media coverage. However, unless there is a client-specific study to prove the impact of earned vs. paid, the use of multipliers is not justified.

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<sup>2</sup> See “tone” in Don Stacks, *Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research* (Gainesville, Florida: Institute for Public Relations, 2006): 22, retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/dictionary-measurement-research/>

<sup>3</sup> See “circulation” and “impressions” in Don Stacks, *Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research* (Gainesville, Florida: Institute for Public Relations, 2006): 2 and 9, retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/dictionary-measurement-research/>

<sup>4</sup> Don Bartholomew and Mark Weiner, *Dispelling the Myth of PR Multipliers and Other Inflationary Audience Measures* (Gainesville, Florida: Institute for Public Relations, 2006), retrieved from [http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/Dispelling\\_Myth\\_of\\_PR\\_Multiplier.pdf](http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/Dispelling_Myth_of_PR_Multiplier.pdf).

- Note that this is different from the use of multipliers used to calculate impressions to reflect pass-along readership, as described above.
- If organizations must use multipliers because they have been used historically and/or are part of their performance targets or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), they should be applied consistently using a predetermined factor with a documented methodology. When possible, a transition plan should be developed to eliminate the use of multipliers.

For online media – impressions should be calculated by dividing the number of unique visitors per month by the number of days in the month to get the number of daily views. Impressions should be based on the unique URL or sub-domain for the item (e.g., www.yahoo.com vs. finance.Yahoo.com). Unique visitors per month can be sourced through several services, such as Compete.com or Nielsen NetRatings.

For broadcast – organizations are advised to use the numbers distributed by the broadcast monitoring service provider, i.e. usually Nielsen. Again, consistency is key. For example, a monitoring report for a single clip typically includes the following: Time: 9:30am, Aired On: NBC, Show: Today (6/8), Estimated Audience Number: 5,358,181

For wire services (AP, Bloomberg, Reuters, and so forth) – no impressions are assigned to stories simply carried by wires services; only to the stories that they generate in other media. Stories attributed to wire sources can be aggregated separately if that information is useful.

NOTE: Impressions do not equal awareness. "Awareness" exists only in people's minds and must be measured using other research tools. Impressions are indicative of the opportunity to see (OTS). Organizations may want to consider OTS as an alternative nomenclature to better clarify what "impressions" mean – potential to see/read and a potential precursor to "awareness."

Depending on the nature of the work, organizations may want to consider using "volume of articles" only and eliminate "impressions" completely. This is useful in a scenario where top-

tier media titles are the focus of the analysis and thus impressions are irrelevant since the publication reaches a highly targeted audience as opposed to broad consumer media.

## **Standard #2 – Items for Analysis – What Counts as a Media “Hit”**

Guidance in this area would be: a story counts only if it has passed through some form of “editorial filter,” i.e. a person has made a decision to run or not run the story. Editorial or journalistic imprimatur is considered one of PR’s unique positive differentiators as a form of validated information as opposed to simple “assertion.”

- Reprints or syndication of an article. These count as distinct media hits because they appear in unique, individual media titles with different readership. For example, a PC World story on facial recognition appearing of May 29, 2012 was syndicated through IDG News and also featured in InfoWorld.com, PCAdvisor.co.uk. All three placements count as three separate articles each of which generates its own OTS.
- Wire story pick-up. Each media outlet running the story counts as a separate ‘hit’ because it has different readership. For example, an Associated Press story on New York City’s proposed ban on the sale of oversized sodas on May 31, 2012 appeared on USAToday.com, BusinessWeek.com and CBSNews.com to name only a few. Each of these placements counts as a “hit” for analysis.
- Same story updated on the wire or online media multiple times in one day. If these are counted only once in a 24-hour period, organizations are advised to use the latest, most updated version for analysis, not multiple versions appearing on the same day.
- NOTE: News aggregation systems such as Factiva, LexisNexis and Google News may manage syndicated stories and wire service updates in different ways as a result of copyright and intellectual property laws.<sup>5</sup> For example, services such as Factiva do not typically provide copies of syndicated or wire stories appearing in publications aside

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<sup>5</sup> See D.A. Weaver and Bruce Bimber, “Finding news stories: a comparison of searches using LexisNexis and Google News” *Journalism and Mass Communications Quarterly* (2008) 85(3): 517-532.

from the original. Consequently, if it is important the organization includes a copy of every appearance in its analysis, it may need to use a traditional clipping service. If an organization is just seeking a representative sample of coverage, aggregators or web searches should be adequate.

- Article appearing in both the online and print version of media. Both articles should be counted because the readership is different for each channel. Note that some news vehicles may combine circulation numbers.
- Bylined "thought leadership" features by company and brand executives. These should be counted as an item for analysis assuming they represent planned communication, even if they offer no company or brand-specific messaging other than what appears on the by-line.
- Press release pickups generated from 'controlled vehicles' such as posting a story on PR Newswire, Business Newswire and other commercial wire services. These should not count as a "hit" unless it appears in media sections that are generally accessible to the public. While these services provide valuable services and help their clients meet certain reporting requirements with mainstream media pick-up, they also distribute content automatically posted on websites that cannot be sourced independently via common search tools or the news outlet itself. In these cases, where the content does not qualify as "editorially validated," these placements are not "earned." Instead, their placement is paid via the Newswire service and thus do not qualify as news content. If for any reason organizations must count "controlled vehicles" as hits, they should be prepared to provide separate numbers for original stories and controlled stories although actual OTS for commercially distributed content will be very difficult to quantify.



### Standard #3 – How to Calculate Tone or Sentiment

The consistency and transparency principles hold true here, too. Whatever process is defined and applied, the methodology must earn acceptance by the client from the beginning and must be consistently applied throughout any analysis.

There are several approaches for judging sentiment of media coverage and many organizations have developed their own systems. One common practice is known as “latent analysis,” which is to look at the entire article or mention and judge the item as a whole based on the overall tone. A second approach is called “manifest analysis.” It looks at an item as a series of sentences or paragraphs, judges each one on its sentiment and then adds up the total number of positives and negatives to obtain an overall score. A third approach is to avoid assessing tone based on the whole story and make the evaluation on the basis of pre-determined positive and negative messages present in the article. There are pros and cons to each approach. The important point is to be consistent.

If a scale is used (i.e. 5 point scale - very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative and very negative) it must be established and defined with examples. A category for balanced coverage – i.e. both positive and negative sentiment occurs in the same story – is recommended. Typical definitions are:

Tone	Description
<b>Positive</b>	An item leaves the reader more likely to support, recommend, and/or work or do business with the brand.
<b>Neutral</b>	An item contains no sentiment at all, just reports the facts. If the news is negative, an article can be neutral if it just reports the facts, without any editorial commentary. In an unfavorable environment, neutral may be the best that can be achieved. Coding should be based on whether or not the clip makes people more or less likely to do business with an organization.

<b>Negative</b>	An item leaves the reader less likely to support, and/work or do business with the brand.
<b>Balanced</b>	The resulting overall tone and perception of the reader is balanced.

Some approaches distinguish “journalistic” or “factual” coverage from “editorial,” where the story takes a position or expresses an opinion through third-party citations, for example. In these cases, a mention may be both negative and factual, representing both the nature of the reporting (factual) as well as the audience’s perception after consuming the content (negative e.g. revenue decrease).

Organizations must define for what or whom they want to determine sentiment. For example, they may seek to understand tone regarding an industry or sector, or sentiment around a specific product or service, an individual or an organization. A single article could mention all of these. As a result, it is necessary to define specifically what element(s) are being targeted for sentiment.

Organizations must define from whose perspective they are judging the sentiment. It could be the point of view of the general public; a specific stakeholder group such as investors, physicians, teachers or parents.

## **Standard #4 – Options for Assessing Quality Measures**

Measurement should not just be quantitative relying on volume or impressions. There should be some measure of quality included when analyzing each item. At least ONE of the following quality measures should be used:

- Visuals – percent of items including a photo, chart or logo in the article that will make the article more prominent for the reader.
- Placement – percent of items with preferred placement in the item i.e. front page, first page of a section or website landing page.

- Prominence – percent of items where your organization/program is mentioned in the headline, first paragraph or prominent side-bar.
- Message Penetration – percent of items that include one or more key message
  - Track the number of pick-ups for each message
  - Track the number of articles that have one message, two messages, and so forth.
  - Option: Message integrity – organizations may further analyze message pick up as full, partial, amplified, or incorrect/negative.
- Spokesperson – percent of items including a quote from an organization's spokesperson(s).
- Third party – percent of items including quotes from third parties endorsing a company's organization or program.
- Shared/sole mention (also referred to as dominance) – percent of items where an organization/program is the dominant subject of the item vs. mentions shared with competitors in the same space or a mere passing mention

Quality measures can be scored to allow comparisons among those being tracked. If some qualitative factors are more important than others, weighted values could be assigned to reflect this.

## **Standard #5 – Advertising Value Equivalency (AVEs) Should Not be Used as a Measure of Media**

AVE advocates contend that the value of a placement is equal to the cost of purchasing an equivalent amount of time or space and that a news story of a particular size or length has

equal impact to an advertisement of the same size. At this time, there is no known factual basis for this assumption, as no research exists to confirm whether this is true.<sup>6</sup>

The [Barcelona Principles](#), established by a consortium of PR industry trade groups in 2010, states that Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) do not measure the “value” or “return on investment” of public relations and do not inform future activity; they only measure the cost of media space (where even the “cost” of an advertisement may not derive value or ROI for the advertiser). As such, AVEs are rejected as an evaluation concept for public relations.

## **Operational Issues**

To ensure that these and other aspects of an organization’s analysis are understood and consistently executed by analysts, several steps should be taken based on the rules of transparency and consistency. The methodology should be clearly documented in written instructions. Details about proposed sources and search terms, systems for calculating impressions, qualifying “hits,” assessing sentiment, key messages, target media, key geographic markets, or opinion-leaders, and any other relevant instructions should be included. Analysts should be briefed, together if possible, and test articles representing each level of sentiment and a variety of topics/key messages should be coded and reviewed by all. It is vital to ensure these items are agreed with the decision-makers/clients before the real coding begins, though some tweaking may occur as the project evolves. To ensure inter-coder reliability, if a project is ongoing, it is best to use the same coders, methodology and software (or, if outsourced, use the same provider) on a regular basis. Encourage communications and dialog, so that if questions arise they can be discussed and resolved. It is recommended that a percent of articles coded be quality checked by a project manager.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper is to provide recommendations for how to calculate some of the most commonly debated data points that are core to PR measurement and evaluation.

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce Jeffries-Fox, Advertising Value Equivalency (Gainesville, Florida: Institute for Public Relations, 2006), retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/advertising-value-equivalency/>.

These guidelines are designed to be used in the interim pending industry feedback. The next steps are to expand these recommendations to encompass additional aspects of traditional media analysis.