



DESTINATIONS
INTERNATIONAL

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Public Relations Measurement Guidelines Handbook

for Destination Organizations

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Introduction

Dear Member,

Destinations International is committed to providing its members with the tools they need to excel. With a renewed focus on public relations and communications professionals within our industry, the newly established [Public Relations and Communications Task Force](#) has taken on the challenge of establishing best practices.

The Public Relations and Communications Task Force has combined efforts with [AMEC](#), the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication, which is the world's largest media intelligence and insights professional body, to collaborate on establishing public relations and communications measurement guidelines for destination organizations.

Measuring public relations efforts has changed since 2011 when Destinations International first included PR measurement guidelines in the [Data Handbook for Destination Organizations](#). Public relations has evolved to be more than just media relations; public relations professionals are the vessel of information for communities and provide an overall reputation management for an organization. Therefore, it is critical that the efforts of PR professionals are not evaluated with the age-old system of advertising value. Utilizing the systems and processes put in place by the world's association for communication evaluation, Destinations International is proud to present the new guidelines for measuring public relations.



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Executive Summary

In 2011, Destinations International released its Baseline Research Study, which had two pages dedicated to public relations measurement.

To engage public relations professionals within the destination organization sector and implement tools and best practices for communications professionals, Destinations International implemented the Public Relations and Communications Task Force. The task force decided unanimously that the industry needs guidelines for measuring public relations efforts.

In 2021, the task force launched a survey to over 900 of the association's public relations and marketing practitioners, including destination organizations and agencies that support them, to receive baseline data on how destination organizations measure their public relations efforts and received 111 responses (we asked that only one representative from each organization take the survey). The survey showed that PR professionals across the association's membership believed that public relations guidelines tailored specifically for destination organizations would be helpful.

The task force believes the sector should move away from measuring public relations efforts by AVE (advertising value equivalency) and instead adopt

AMEC's Barcelona Principles when measuring their public relations efforts.

The majority of public relations professionals surveyed agreed that measurement standards specifically tailored for destination organizations would be helpful.

Global communication trade associations AMEC, IPR (Institute for Public Relations), PRSA (Public Relations Society of America), PRCA (Public Relations and Communications Association), the Global Alliance and ICCO (International Communications Consultancy Organization) all agree that AVEs are not a valid metric. There is no singular formula or database for AVE numbers. Anyone providing an AVE does so through their own formula, their own pricing assumptions and whatever data to which they have access. In short, AVEs across vendors and companies do not match. Advertising value equivalents are misnamed and confuse "cost" with "value." Part of the appeal of AVEs is that they are mistakenly used as a metric to show the value of a public relations campaign. Cost and value often bear no relation to each other. Have you ever placed an advertisement somewhere which cost money but received no response? Where was the value in that?

Destinations International Public Relations and Communications Task Force

The Public Relations and Communications Task Force is comprised of communications leaders from across the industry and focuses on advocating for and advancing issues as they relate to the profession across the travel and tourism sector. The task force is responsible for spearheading important public relations and communications initiatives. Their work includes, but is not limited to, establishing an industry-wide standard for measuring media impact for destination organizations and curating public relations/communications professional development content for Destinations International events and educational opportunities.

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Public relations efforts are at the core of many destination marketing budgets because through earned media outreach and influencer relations, third-party endorsements for a destination are published. Properly measuring public relations is critical because of the invaluable impact these efforts have on awareness, consideration, and because these efforts are more powerful with credentialing and driving word-of-mouth as it comes with an intrinsic recommendation and/or approval from a third party. It's promising to see more and more destinations include proper public relations measurement as part of their marketing mix.



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What is Public Relations?

According to the [Public Relations Society of America \(PRSA\)](#), public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.

At its core, public relations is about influencing, engaging and building a relationship with key stakeholders across numerous platforms in order to shape and frame the public perception of an organization. Some of the main goals of public relations are to create, maintain and protect the organization's reputation, enhance its prestige and present a favorable image.

Many times in the travel and tourism industry, however, there is a misconception that public relations is simply media relations – getting stories/coverage written. While developing strong, lasting relationships with travel (and other sector) journalists is a vital part of our role as public relations professionals, the reality is much different and much more diverse.

Below are some of the disciplines/functions within public relations:

- Brand journalism
- Content creation
- Corporate communications
- Crisis and issue management communications
- Events
- Executive communications
- Government relations
- Integrated marketing/integrated marketing communications
- Internal communications
- Investor relations communications
- Marketing communications
- Media relations
- Multimedia content creation
- Public affairs
- Reputation and brand management
- Social media
- Speechwriting and copy editing

As you can see from the definition and examples above, public relations is more than media relations; it is actually a complex, strategic profession entwined in many facets of the organization's overall reputation management efforts. Therefore, public relations professionals and their efforts should be measured by more than just the number of media hits an article receives. Throughout this handbook, we will share some guidelines on the future of measuring public relations efforts.

Introduction to the Barcelona Principles

The Barcelona Principles are a set of seven principles that provide the first overarching framework for effective public relations and communication measurement. The principles were originally adopted by about 200 delegates from more than 30 countries at the 2nd Annual European Summit on Measurement in Barcelona, Spain in 2010, convened by AMEC. The principles were developed with, and supported by AMEC, the Global Alliance, the Institute for Public Relations, the International Communications Consultancy Organization, the Public Relations Consultants Association and the Public Relations Society of America.

The Barcelona Principles outline the basic principles of public relations and communication measurement and represent an industry-wide consensus on this topic. They are intended to not only demonstrate proof of performance, but also how to foster continuous improvement. The Principles serve as a guide for practitioners to incorporate the ever-expanding media landscape into a transparent, reliable and consistent framework. They are considered foundational in that specific measurement programs with clearly stated goals can be developed from them.

The Barcelona Principles identify the importance of goal setting, the need

for outcomes, instead of outputs-based measurement of public relations campaigns, the exclusion of ad value equivalency metrics, the validity of quantitative and qualitative measurements, the value of social media and a holistic approach to measurement and evaluation. Each Principle highlights many of the quantitative and/or qualitative approaches practitioners can follow and also accepted methodologies to put these principles into practice.

The Principles are relevant to

The Barcelona Principles outline the basic principles of public relations and communication measurement and represent an industry-wide consensus on this topic.

organizations, governments, companies and brands globally. While initially adopted in June 2010, they have now been updated to reflect changes in the communication field with input from a wide array of organizations and individuals.

As next steps, the destination organization industry needs to support the continued adoption of the principles and help professionals understand how to apply them.



PRINCIPLE 1

Setting goals is an absolute prerequisite to communications planning, measurement and evaluation. The founding principle of SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and time-bound) goals as a foundation for communications planning has been promoted to an essential prerequisite. It pushes measurement and evaluation as a core component of the planning process, articulating target outcomes and how progress towards these will be assessed.

AVE stands for Ad Value Equivalency



PRINCIPLE 2

Measurement and evaluation should identify outputs, outcomes and potential impact. Previously, the Principles recommended measuring outcomes, rather than simply counting outputs. The updated principles extend this to consider the longer term impact of communications strategy. This means thinking about “the channels we are impacting and change we would like to see through campaigns, events and activations.”



PRINCIPLE 3

Outcomes and impact should be identified for stakeholders, society and the organization. We recommend embracing a more holistic view of performance rather than focusing on business metrics such as sales and revenue. It allows the model to be more inclusive of a broader range of organizations and communications roles that are not necessarily profit-driven.



PRINCIPLE 4

Communication measurement and evaluation should include both qualitative and quantitative analysis. To understand the full impact of your work, it is crucial that you use the full suite of methods to measure those outcomes. It is important to not just quantify but also understand how messages are being received, believed and interpreted.



PRINCIPLE 5

AVEs are not the value of communication. The message remains consistent and clear; “we continue to believe that AVEs do not demonstrate the value of our work.” It is important that communications measurement and evaluation employs a richer, more nuanced and multi-faceted approach to understand the impact of communications.



PRINCIPLE 6

Holistic communication measurement and evaluation includes all relevant online and offline channels. Our founding principle that social media can and should be measured is so obvious today. Social communications' capabilities, opportunities and influence, such that all relevant online and offline channels should be measured and evaluated equally. The AMEC measurement framework promotes clarity across earned, owned, shared and paid channels to ensure consistency in approach towards a common goal.



PRINCIPLE 7

Communication measurement and evaluation are rooted in integrity and transparency to drive learning and insights. Sound, consistent and sustained measurement calls for integrity and transparency in recognition of today's attention to data privacy and stewardship as organizations comply with new regulations, such as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This is also a statement that measurement isn't simply about data collection and tracking, but about learning from evaluation and applying insight back into communications planning. It recognizes the need to be transparent about the context in which programs are run and being aware of any bias that may exist in the tools, methodologies and interpretations applied.

More detailed breakdowns are available in the [Barcelona Principles 3.0 presentation](#).



Understanding the impact of PR and comms activities is a non-negotiable skill for today's PR professional. This handbook provides business critical guidance and practical advice on how to plan, develop, and execute effective measurement programs. It shows how all organizations can put AMEC's Barcelona Principles and Integrated Evaluation Framework into action.



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At a Glance: Getting Started with Public Relations Measurement



STEP 1

Review the Destinations International Public Relations Measurement Guidelines Handbook and any additional guidelines provided by AMEC.



STEP 2

After educating yourself and your department of these new measurement guidelines, start to set goals with your organization's leadership and other departments.



STEP 3

Set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).



STEP 4

Develop scoring system based on the Barcelona Principles (see examples provided in the Scoring Systems section in this handbook).



STEP 5

Review scoring system with your team and leadership and understand that the first year is your benchmark. As you start this new form of measurement, you may need to make adjustments.



STEP 6

Understand that you need to review internally on a regular basis (quarterly or annually). AMEC is consistently making updates to measurement guidelines as the public relations industry evolves.

Key Performance Indicators to Consider in Measurement Planning



The beauty of Barcelona Principles is that they are flexible to meet an individual organization’s needs. In the appendix, you will find examples of how destination organizations are currently using Barcelona Principles have set up their scoring. This will give you an idea of the different ways you can approach measurement.

Going Deeper into Barcelona Principles: Planning and Goal Setting

In this section, you will be introduced to organizational goal setting and proper strategic planning.

The most important part of any strategy, plan or campaign is to define your goals. It can also be the most difficult. Defining goals and utilizing data and research during the planning stage is key to success – and it is very often overlooked. This next section is modified copyrighted content taken from the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework website with limited permission. This section is available at amecorg.com/amecframework/home/supporting-material/planning.



GETTING STARTED WITH PLANNING

Recognize what planning isn't: Planning is not agreeing on the number of media releases, pitches, events, influencer visits or other pieces of content. These are important, but as identified in the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework (IEF),

they are activities or tactics. Without the other steps in the process—namely the objectives and the input, or the “so what”—activity may not always equal productivity, outcome or impact. While this can be the hardest part, don't worry! The next few tips will help.

Budget for it: Make room for planning time in your budget and get the approvals and buy-in you need to do so. If all of a project's funds get assigned to other things, planning is often treated as administration time that ends up getting squeezed out. Remember, this does not need to be a massive investment. Feel free to scale up or down depending on the specific needs of your organization. But make sure to bake in some time for pre-project strategizing, intra-project brainstorming and post-project analysis. We know this is not always easy. We recommend discussing with your boss/manager/client early. Help them understand how critical it is to your success.

Schedule it: When you build your timeline, schedule in time for planning and protect it on you/your team's calendars.

Involve the right people: Ensure that the most important voices are in the room at the very beginning and that everyone knows what the overarching

business objectives are. If you are at an agency, this may be at the RFP (request for proposal)/SOW (scope of work) meeting. If you work at a destination organization, you can kick this conversation off at a team meeting. Collaboration is key. It is important to involve your marketing, sales, services and executive leadership teams in these conversations. By having all the important players attend, you are more likely to look at the challenge from multiple viewpoints, ask the right questions and come up with a plan with fewer blind spots.

Step back: Planning is about taking time to stop and ask the right questions. No set of meetings, even with all the right people in the room, will set you up for success if it lacks this crucial element. As natural problem-solvers, we are often in a rush to start ideating. We want to deliver the solution or great idea or to come up with the brilliant creative campaign. But we can't craft the right key without fully understanding the lock we have to open. Allow yourself the space and time to think about the problem as much as necessary before diving into solutions. It is critical to take a step back and ask the right questions.

Align: As much as possible, make sure everyone is on the same page about what change you want to happen as a result of your campaign, what is keeping that situation from happening already and how you will nudge your target audience to overcome them. When using the framework, this will include aligning on things like business

and communication objectives, target audiences, the core problem to be solved—the first two boxes in the Integrated Evaluation Framework (IEF). The best ideas come from the intersection of audience, landscape and a brand solution. Without that alignment, you are simply executing a task. Use the Integrated Evaluation Framework (IEF) to create a brief or document that the entire team can align on and refer back to as needed.

Time, budget, confusion and even excitement can all be planning enemies if you let them. But they do not need to be. To set yourself up for success, be clear about the value you want planning to add to your process, create time and budget for it and align with the right people to get all your questions answered. We promise that even adding one of these steps to your process will help.



SEGMENTING AUDIENCES: STARTING WITH THE WHO, NOT THE GOAL

Why are audiences so critical when it comes to planning?

As you can see in our guide, planning with the Integrated Evaluation Framework, the “who” behind your

campaign exists across multiple steps. You need to gain clarity of your target audience(s). Not only to consider the correct channels and tactics that will resonate most with them but develop the human insight that will drive campaign/program results.

The audience is also a frequent stumbling block when it comes to planning, particularly in communications where broader approaches were historically used. In today's data-driven world, we can be much more thoughtful about how we segment and target. So, our approach to defining our audiences needs to be updated as such.

Your audience(s) is not defined solely by its demographic. By using labels of age and gender alone, you risk relying on stereotypes and assumptions: the avocado-loving millennial, the wealthy boomer, the sports-loving, beer drinking man.

That's not to say demographics do not have their value. Your audience may need to be working in a particular field, have a certain level of disposable income or be a parent to a young child to qualify as a genuine customer; but these things alone do not define them.

In most cases, once you've gotten past the demographic data, the most effective starting point to building better audiences is identifying psychographics: attitudes, opinions and behaviors. These can be particularly powerful as they help to hone your audience based on the things they care about and the way they

think about the world. Your millennial audience may love avocados, but what else do you know they care about? Are they more uncomfortable leaving the house without their phone than their wallet? What motivates them? Are they knowledge, experience or "Instagram picture" hungry? Is a brand's impact on the environment an important factor when purchasing?

Once you've gotten past the demographic data, the most effective starting point to building better audiences is identifying psychographics: attitudes, opinions and behaviors.

Once you have this detailed audience definition, you'll be targeting a smaller group - but one that is much more likely to actually find your brand and content relevant to them. You can use this defined audience for your activation as well, to best understand the channels they're likely to consume and the types of content most likely to resonate.

It's also a jumping off point for the next step in your planning. Think deeper: why does that person need your product or service? What problem of theirs does it solve? What are their motivations and how can you match them?

By following this route, you'll find that your target audience is not one big group of people. They'll divide into a

number of segments, each defined by these attitudinal and behavioral aspects.

It's up to you, as a planner, to identify where you'll have the most impact: where does the destination/ brand's positioning resonate the most? Identify that segment (two segments, at most) and obsess over them for the next 12 months. And because you have a deep knowledge of them, you'll be saving time, money and creating more impact with your work.

So, the next time you see an audience defined only by their demographic, ask why, ask why again and again. That's where the gold is.

SMART(ER) OBJECTIVES

THE IMPORTANCE OF SMART(ER) OBJECTIVES

They're key to everything we do in measurement and evaluation, yet even the most seasoned monitoring and evaluation practitioner or communications and public relations professionals can struggle to write objectives that are SMART let alone SMARTER.

To be clear, SMART objectives have been around for 40 years since George Doran, Arthur Miller and James

Cunningham in their 1981 article, "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management goals and objectives". Yet even now, SMART objectives remain a source of confusion, fear or avoidance for many communications and public relations professionals.

In four decades, their meaning has remained largely the same while their importance as anchors for effective strategy has grown. The SMART basics are:

Specific: Targeting a specific area for improvement

Measurable: Quantifying, or at least suggesting, an indicator of progress

Attainable: Specifying who will do it

Realistic: Stating what results can realistically be achieved given available resources

Timely: Specifying when the result can be achieved

Other common definitions are:

- **S** - Simple, sensible, significant
- **M** - Meaningful, motivating
- **A** - Agreed
- **R** - Reasonable, resourced, result-based
- **T** - Time-based, time-limited, time/cost-limited, time-sensitive

To be even SMARTER, two additional criteria have been added:

Evaluated: assessing the extent to which your objective has been achieved. “E” also represents “ethical” objectives that are aligned with your personal or organizational values and ethics, as well as valid methods of data gathering and analysis.

Reviewed: reflecting and adjusting your approach or behavior to reach your objective. “R” also can be adapted to mean “recorded”, “rewarded” or “recognized.”

Meaningful, reasonable and quantifiable objectives lie at the heart of PR’s value, according to The Institute for Public Relations. Their “why” for setting measurable public relations objectives is compelling and includes:

Linking the public relations objective to the business objective(s) by:

- Creating successful programs
- Driving performance and efficiency
- Creating a structure for prioritization
- Making it easier to exceed expectations
- Reducing disputes

When it comes to effectively **evaluating** a communication campaign, strategy or program, SMARTER communication objectives are the ideal place to start and AMEC’s Integrated Evaluation Framework endorses that approach.

And, when it comes to **planning**, the framework works equally well to help design your communication objectives by starting at the end and thinking about the underlying reason for your plan or strategy.

A clever technique for understanding the problem you need to solve or opportunity you want to address is “five whys” analysis.

A clever technique for understanding the problem you need to solve or opportunity you want to address is “five whys” analysis. By repeating the question “Why?” after the initial problem or opportunity statement, each answer forms the basis of the next question, leading to a deeper understanding of the root cause.

With these insights and clarity on your purpose and audiences, next think about what you’re going to measure. There are four forms of PR measurement. To recap:

- **Outputs** are what is being pushed externally/publicly and reach your target audiences.
- **Outtakes** are what audiences do with and take out of your communication. They are shorter-term and focus on your audiences’ initial responses in terms of attention, awareness, understanding, learning, interest, engagement and consideration.

Out-takes are achieved as a result of outputs.

- **Outcomes** are the effects that your communication has on audiences. They are longer-term and are recognized widely in the form of attitude change, satisfaction, trust, preference, intention and advocacy. Outcomes are achieved as a result of out-takes.
- **Impacts** are the results that are caused, in full or in part, by your communication. They are recognized as effects that make a direct contribution toward the organization's goals and objectives. They relate to what happens as a result of outputs, out-takes and outcomes.

Not surprisingly, communication objectives come in lots of different shapes and forms which explains why they can be a challenge to write. Yet the steps are really quite simple by answering the following questions:

- **What:** Determine a desired output, outcome or impact
- **Who:** Specify one or several target audiences
- **How much:** Explain how much the metric should change
- **When:** Decide a time frame in which the objective is to be achieved

There are multiple approaches and ways to explain how to write SMARTER objectives. Ideally, you are looking to showcase a behavior change, a perception change or an action shift. Here are some other sentence structures for objectives:

- [Who] will do [what] resulting in [measure] by [when].
- By [when], [who] will do [what] resulting in [measure].
- By [when], [measure - includes who and what].
- [Measure - includes who and what] by [when].



EXAMPLES

- **Output:** To develop an instructive worksheet to enable use of the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework as a planning tool by members and communication professionals to coincide with the AMEC Virtual Summit in May 2021
- **Outtake:** To create awareness among all AMEC members of the “AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework” as a planning tool by Dec. 31, 2021

- **Outcome:** To build confidence among all AMEC members in their ability to use the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework as a planning tool by Dec. 31, 2022
- **Impact:** To enhance AMEC's reputation as the global leader in communication measurement and evaluation (as evaluated by members of AMEC) by Dec. 31, 2022

Clearly defined communication objectives are every communicator's most effective tool for proving our value – providing focus, motivation and driving performance and accountability.

To embrace a SMARTER approach to designing your next communications campaign, plan or strategy, learn more by reading “Planning with the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework” and try out the SMART objective builder for communicators.



MISGUIDED COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

If you can't measure it, it's not an objective. Here are some common,

misguided objectives and how to turn them into something meaningful:

1. A thought leader in “travel innovation”

There is no way to measure the nebulous concept of becoming a “thought leader.” You need to have hit either a certain number of your target audience, or more than last year, with the right messages such as:

Reach XX% target audience with at least two innovation-led key messages over the next three months

If you're conducting social media activity too, you can also measure the positive engagement around the relevant posts such as:

XX% increase in positive engagement on innovation-related social posts over the next three months

And search too, how many people are searching for your brand in relation to innovation?

XX% increase in innovation-led branded search volume

But, most importantly, you need to be measuring the long-term perception change. Ask a representative sample of your audience directly, what do they think of your brand? Look for the answers that are relevant to “innovation,” get your benchmark and then decide on an achievable increase in that figure when you repeat the survey, such as:

XX% increase in “innovation” inclusions within brand perception survey over the next six months

2. Enhance reputation

Another ambiguous concept, a company’s reputation: how do you measure that? There are plenty of ways, but three core areas of reputation are:

- **Trust:** Does your audience trust your brand?
- **Perception:** What traits and attributes do they associate with your brand?
- **Advocacy:** How likely are they to recommend you? (Typically covered by a Net Promoter Score, which measures customer experience and predicts business growth).

Maybe just one of these is the key factor, maybe all of them are, there may even be other aspects to reputation that need covering, but the point is “reputation” has to be broken down into distinct, measurable concepts. Concepts that, really, can only be measured by asking a representative sample of your target audience.

3. Drive sales or bookings

Unless your campaign includes performance marketing, public relations should not be tied to the number of short-term sales.

Yes, it’s important context to know that’s the end goal to feature in the

organizational objectives, but how that translates to your communication objectives is quite different.

It’s the job of the public relations professional to build mental availability (or brand recognition). In other words, to make sure the target audience thinks of your brand first at the time of purchase. But that’s not just the job of public relations, it’s a marketing objective too, so you need to ladder your objectives to prove that you’re reaching the right people with the right messages first.

- Reach the target audience XX times with, on average, two key messages.

And then prove those messages are having an impact, by surveying a representative sample of your audience on:

- Unaided and aided brand awareness: Does your audience recall your brand without being prompted? And when they’re prompted?
- Mental availability: Does your brand come to mind at the time of purchase? And across what contexts? (i.e., a snack that’s healthy, a snack that’s convenient, a snack that’s tasty)

4. Create buzz

What is buzz? Something you can feel? An atmosphere of excitement? Well, yes, but how do you measure

that? Buzz suggests you're launching a big campaign. So, in this case, you'll want to be conducting pre and post surveys on some of the concepts we've discussed above. Unaided and aided brand awareness, brand consideration, preference and mental availability, they'll be the most important (and longer term) effects of "creating buzz."

Less important than these concepts, but interesting for benchmarking "buzz," is to include questions that measure word-of-mouth around your brand before and after the campaign too.

Additionally, in the shorter-term, you could also benchmark and measure:

- Positive share of voice among target media
- Branded social media conversation (posts, sentiment, engagement)
- Positive social media share of voice (against a competitor set or across a topic)
- Branded searches
- Website traffic

Significant increases in these would qualify as "buzz."

But remember the things that really count are those survey results from your audience, particularly mental availability, or if you've seen that significant uplift in sales. Otherwise, you may have created "buzz," but its effects have not lasted into anything meaningful.

5. Increase ROI

Approach with extreme caution. The common usage of ROI (return on investment) is to compare the amount spent on the campaign with the amount of money that's returned as a result, typically measuring that return shortly after the campaign's end.

It's just plain wrong to measure a communication campaign with such a blunt instrument like ROI.

And therein lies the problem. Communication is in the long-term business, changing reputations, behavior and – when sales focused – ensuring the target audience thinks of your brand first at the moment of purchase (otherwise known as brand recognition). Therefore, it's just plain wrong to measure a communication campaign with such a blunt instrument like ROI.

So, does ROI even have a place?

If you're running performance marketing tactics alongside your communications (i.e., paid search or conversion-focused social media advertisements), then they should have their own ROI targets. Equally, on a marketing level, you can measure the price sensitivity over time: How much is your audience willing to pay for your product/service?

But the irony is, if you want a good return on investment for communication

When measuring anything, your objectives need to be SMART (which is an acronym, and not someone shouting the word “smart”).

(or your marketing as a whole) **you do not use ROI.**

ROI is a financial metric and does not illustrate the value of communications; instead think of brand perception, reputation, mental availability. They're all proven to drive greater profitability than pure ROI, so you'll be doing both your team and your company a service by changing those internal attitudes.

In conclusion, when measuring anything, your objectives need to be SMART (which is an acronym, and not someone shouting the word “smart”). It's a simple process to follow, and you may have heard of the acronym before, but it's so often ignored.



Evolved PR measurement has a number of benefits. A critical benefit is it allows us to understanding the impact that we are having on business outcomes – we not only get a seat at the table but also better showcase the business value of investing in this function. Better measurement helps to professionalize the industry beyond pure media relations to critical business driver. If the core of PR is all about building meaningful relationships and relevance with our various stakeholders, how do we manage those relationships without measuring them.



Mary Elizabeth Germaine

Partner/Managing Director, Ketchum Analytics

Case Studies on How Destination Organizations Have or Are Working Toward New Public Relations Measurement Principles

These organizations have restructured their measurement by utilizing the Barcelona Principles. Here are their stories of how they redefined the way they measure the impact of public relations.

KAY MAGHAN | Public Relations Manager
Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism



“Our organization is very data driven and we knew that the public relations function needed to adjust how we were looking at determining ‘success.’ Previously, we just reported total number of stories resulting from our efforts, total circulation for those, our role in those stories (pitch, press release, media assist, media visit) and a few others. Developing a measurement and scoring system using Barcelona Principles allows us to place a score on each earned media placement so we can see how each article performs according to our KPIs and how our total media coverage scores year over year. We had to tweak our initial Barcelona plan because we realized it had glitches we had not considered; but that is the beauty of Barcelona ... you can adjust and adapt as needed. We set our KPIs across six categories - Key Messages, Target Markets, Additional Assets (photos/video in story), Type of Mention (feature story, round up, etc.), Source (pitch, press trip, etc.) and Industry Partner Mention. Our total scoring system is based on a 0-100 point scale. We will soon be evaluating our system against Barcelona 3.0 to ensure we are continuing to measure and report according to best practices.”

JOE HELLER | Sr. VP of Marketing and Communications
Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau



“Since learning about this task force, we’ve been excited to be involved in the process of establishing a new measurement system for our public relations efforts focusing

on meetings, conventions, events and overseas leisure tourism in Philadelphia. Having just concluded our 2021 annual report, the timing for introducing a new way of tracking KPIs comes at a good time for us as we hope to have a more robust and data-rich report for 2022 when it comes to defining our PR efforts beyond the tracking of total placements and media hosted. We look forward to having our Marcom team who collectively tracks our earned, owned and paid media strategy adopt this plan this year.”

SCOTT PEACOCK | Director of Tourism Marketing

Visit NC



“I’ve been a fan of the Barcelona Principles since they were first introduced in 2010. I’ve been able to implement them at four destination organizations since that time, all with great success. It’s a strategic shift that requires trust and buy-in from the top down, but the payoff is well worth it. In the end your communications efforts will be more directly tied to the organization’s overall objectives and goals, integrate more with your marketing efforts and drive more meaningful results through your earned media. When these three things are accomplished, it gives you a larger share of voice, influence and respect within the organization and from there the sky’s the limit to what you can achieve. I’ve found that making the argument to change has been easy once you follow AMEC’s guidelines and show how much more strategic and targeted your efforts will become in doing so.”

RACHEL DINBOKOWTIZ | Public Relations Manager

Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau



“Over the last few years, it was evident that measuring public relations through advertising value equivalency (AVE) and impressions was not telling our story or helping us shape our strategy. Having to measure public relations success with vanity numbers didn’t reflect what was important to us – from stories placed in meeting publications to coverage in direct flight markets and drive markets that ultimately had smaller AVE numbers and impressions compared to national coverage. Plus, media monitoring databases drastically report different numbers on these two traditional forms of measurement. These variables made our organization take a deeper look at what made an earned media story a PR-win for our destination. We leaned on the Barcelona Principles methodology and customized what mattered most to us – Audience Reach, Key Message Inclusion, Prominence and Assets (including a call to

action). Through this new way of looking at what defines public relations success, we can better measure target publications (no matter their size) that will make an impact for visitor awareness and visitation, as well as highlight the key messages that each story tells our stakeholders. In turn, this creates a more strategic and integrated marketing and communications program.”

MACKENZIE COMERER | Sr. Media Relations Manager

Visit St. Pete/Clearwater



“Since joining the DI PR and Communications Task Force, I’ve been pleasantly surprised to know my colleagues are equally as passionate about finding a more effective PR measurement tool. After following traditional PR reporting standards which rely on advertising values and impressions for more than a decade, I’ve been searching for a strategy that takes into account a variety of factors and aligns with our data driven marketing approach. There’s always room to evolve and this handbook will ultimately allow DMOs to grow together and better evaluate media coverage from both an earned and paid perspective.”

Do you have a case study to share? Please email Caitlyn Blizzard, Vice President of Communications at Destinations International at: cblizzard@destinationsinternational.org.

Conclusion and Next Steps

As next steps, the industry needs to support the continued adoption of the principles and help professionals understand how to apply them. We recommend taking a deeper dive into the Tools for Success that are outlined at the end of this handbook. Public relations measurement is an ever-evolving topic and the Destinations International Public Relations and Communications Task Force looks forward to your feedback and insights on measurement to further this work for our industry. If you have any feedback or comments, please email Caitlyn Blizzard, Vice President of Communications at Destinations International at cblizzard@destinationsinternational.org.



Communicators need to know how to measure the outcome of their work instead of relying on vanity metrics that could encourage teams to do the wrong job. The Barcelona Principles are the foundations for solid impactful analysis and should be the go-to approach for everyone in our industry.



Jonny Bentwood

Global Head of Data & Analytics, GOLIN

Glossary of Terms

AMEC: The International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication is the global trade body and professional institute for agencies and practitioners who provide media measurement, evaluation and communication research.

AUDIENCE/TARGET AUDIENCE: A specified group within a defined public targeted for influence.

AVE: Advertising value equivalence; a discredited approach to gauging the value of public relations (or media relations more precisely). See Barcelona Principles.

BARCELONA PRINCIPLES: A series of statements to guide best practice in public relations measurement that were endorsed after a vote of global delegates at the AMEC European Measurement Summit in 2010:

Goal setting and measurement are fundamental aspects of any public relations programs: Media measurement requires quantity and quality – media coverage clips in themselves are not enough. Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) do not measure the value of PR and do not inform future activity. Social media can and should be measured. Measuring outcomes is preferred to measuring media results. Business results can and should be measured where possible. Transparency and Replicability are paramount to sound measurement.

CPRS: Canadian Public Relations Society.

EARNED MEDIA: Third-party media coverage secured through a relationship or newsworthy event, rather than paid-for advertising or other means of securing media. Includes on- and off-line media. Often used synonymously with public relations, but public relations is not defined by media.

FREQUENCY: The number of times that an event or story mention occurs. Often used in conjunction with reach (see Reach and Frequency).

ICCO: International Communications Consultancy Association.

IMPACT: Commonly used when analyzing how much visual presence and “wow factor” a piece of content carries. Is often measured in several different ways by different companies and commonly results in the use of a scoring system. Component impact measures might include size of headline, font, article, presence of imagery, position in publication etc.

IMPRESSIONS: The aggregated published or acknowledged readership numbers for all content in which a brand or organization receives earned content (eyeballs and opportunities to see). For web content, an impression is counted as each time some content is loaded into a browser.

INFLUENCE: You have been influenced when you think in a way you wouldn't otherwise have thought or do something you wouldn't otherwise have done. There is currently no scalable facility to ascertain or infer who or what caused someone to change their mind or behavior. Metrics often presented as measuring influence (e.g., Klout) do not measure influence, rather the propensity for an individual's social media contributions to be shared, and the reach of that sharing, and this idea is increasingly being rechristened social capital.

KPIS: Key performance indicator(s); define a set of values against which to measure success. KPIs must be defined to reflect objectives and strategy and will be sufficiently robust for the measurement to be repeatable. Quantitative KPIs can be presented as a number, ratio or percentage. KPIs tend to be:

- Quantitative indicators which can be presented as a number
- Practical indicators that interface with existing company processes
- Directional indicators specifying whether organizational performance is improving or not
- Actionable indicators need to be sufficiently in an organization's control to effect change
- Financial indicators used in performance measurement and when looking at an operating index.

MEASUREMENT: The action of measuring something; ascertaining the size, amount or degree of something by using an instrument or device; assessing the importance, effect or value of something.

MEDIA HITS: An item or piece of content to be counted or measured.

MEDIA RELATIONS: A component of public relations focused on journalists and bloggers as intermediaries to the audience you wish to reach.

METRIC: A system or standard of measurement; (in business) a set of figures or statistics that measure results.

OUTPUT: In PR terms, the material and activity that the PR professional generates such as a press release, email, events etc., as well as the ensuing media coverage that is generated. Outputs will also include proactive communication by an organization on its owned media channels and properties.

OWNED MEDIA: Media channels that are owned by or in the control of an organization or a brand. Typically, these will include websites, company blogs, newsletters and brand accounts in social media.

PAID MEDIA: Content that has been generated because of a purchase such as an advertisement or an advertorial.

PRSA: The Public Relations Society of America is the world's largest organization of public relations professionals with more than 21,000 members across the United States.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: A management function that focuses on two-way communication and fostering of mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics. Public relations is often defined in terms of earned media, but all approaches to media are valid.

REACH: A disaggregated number of people (or percentage of an audience) that have been exposed to content. "Reach" differs from impressions, opportunities to see and eyeballs in that it counts the actual number of people exposed to coverage rather than the number of "opportunities" to see the coverage. It is a widely misused term in the industry and should only be used when readership data has been disaggregated to take account of cross readership patterns.

REACH AND FREQUENCY: A common metric quantifying campaign success predominantly used and accepted in advertising. It couples the reach metric with frequency which is the average number of times that each person has been reached, or exposed, to the content.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI): A performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment or to compare the efficiency of several different investments. To calculate ROI, the benefit (return) of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment; the result is expressed as a percentage or a ratio. For the avoidance of doubt, there is no such thing as “non-financial ROI.” If this phrase is invoked, it may be to convey the importance of non-financial metrics and their vital role in business performance management.

SENTIMENT: Often used interchangeably with tone, but more precisely refers to the feelings the author is trying to convey.

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS: A subtopic of semantic analysis; computationally trying to determine the author’s emotional regard for or attitude towards something from the text alone; usually expressed on a 3- or 5-point ordinal scale (i.e., very unfavorable, unfavorable, neutral, favorable, very favorable).

VANITY METRICS: A set of metrics that stakeholders (such as a board of directors) want to see. These are metrics you can track along with our recommended tracking measures mentioned throughout this handbook. These are the common vanity metrics some use to accompany other measurement successes. Using them alone is not recommended.

Tools for Success

THE BARCELONA PRINCIPLES 3.0

The 2020 evolution of the globally trusted Barcelona Principles has sharpened the communications industry's focus on inclusion, impact and integrity.

amecorg.com/barcelona-principles-3-0-translations

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE: WHY AVES ARE INVALID

AMEC has launched a major global education initiative to help eradicate the declining demand for the much-derided AVE (Advertising Value Equivalent) metric. AVEs have long been the subject of intense criticism but because they claim to put a financial value equivalency on PR and Comms work, and are easy to produce, there is still a lingering demand from some in the communications profession.

amecorg.com/2017/06/the-definitive-guide-why-aves-are-invalid

AMEC GLOSSARY OF TERMS: DESCRIPTIONS OF MOST-USED PHRASES FROM AMEC

amecorg.com/glossary

AMEC PLANNING WORKSHEET

A guided tool for using the Integrated Evaluation Framework for communication planning.

amecorg.com/amecframework/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AMEC-Planning-Worksheet-2021.pdf

Example of Public Relations Measurement Score Sheet Using Barcelona Principles



PR Measurement of Media Coverage

Utilizing the Barcelona Principles Approach

Reporting:

- **Total number of stories**
- **Total circulation/reach**
 - After 2018, we will use just the straight reported circulation, UVM or viewership number; no more formulas for online website/blog stories vs. online news site stories or newspapers vs. magazines.
- **Key Messages** – 25 points max; 25% of total story score
- **Target Markets** – 25 points max; 25% of total story score
- **Additional Assets (photos, video, etc.)** – 20 points max; 20% of total story score
- **Type of Mention** – 10 points max; 10% of total story score
- **Source (press trip, pitch, etc.)** – 10 points max; 10% of total story score
- **IP Mention** – 10 points max; 10% of total story score

Scoring: 100 points total

- **Key Messages** – 25 points max; 25% of total story score
 - 5 points each for our main message areas (*mentioning 3 or more in one story = 25 points*)
 - 5 points – General leisure (beach, family travel)
 - 5 points – Culinary
 - 5 points – Events
 - 5 points – Outdoors/Nature/Sustainability (includes fishing and boating/water sports)
 - 5 points – Other (arts, economic impact, golf, history, meetings/sports, etc.)
- **Target Markets** – 25 points max; 25% of total story score
 - 25 points – Primary Drive Market (AL, MS, LA, AR, TN, KY, GA, FL)
 - 25 points – National print or TV outlet
 - 15 points – Secondary drive market (TX, OK, MO, IA, MN, WI, IL, IN, OH)
 - 10 points – International
 - 10 points – Extended U.S. markets (West of Mississippi River, except TX and OK; SC, NC, VA, MD, DC, DE, PA and northeast)
 - 5 points – Local

- **Additional Assets (photos, video, etc.)** – 20 points max; 20% of total story score (higher score means more types of assets were included)
 - 5 points – Photo(s) included in story
 - 5 points – Video(s) included in story
 - 5 points – Quote or interview with CVB representative
 - 5 points – GSOBT or IP website link/call to action
- **Type of Mention** – 10 points max; 10% of total story score
 - 10 points – Feature story about GSOB
 - 8 points – Roundup story with substantial content about GSOB
 - 6 points – Brief mention of GSOB (a few sentences)
 - 4 points – List that includes GSOB with little detail (calendar of events, etc.)
- **Source (press trip, pitch, etc.)** – 10 points max; 10% of total story score
 - 10 points – Press trip
 - 8 points – Pitch from PR staff or agency staff
 - 6 points – Press release
 - 4 points – Request for information, request for photos or assisting media in some other way
- **IP Mention** – 10 points max; 10% of total story score
 - 5 points – Lodging
 - 5 points – Attractions/Activities/Restaurants

Suggested Scoring Scale – Max points available is 100

90-100 = High Five (90% to 100%)

70-89 = High quality (70% to 89%)

50-69 = Average quality (50% to 69%)

30-49 = Below average (30% to 49%)

0-29 = We missed the mark (29% and below)

Example of Public Relations Measurement Score Sheet Using Barcelona Principles



Monterey County CVB

Quality-Based Scoring for Earned Media Measurement

This scoring matrix is based on a 20-point scale with a bonus point category that allows for up to 1 bonus point per element included in earned media coverage. The weighted scoring parameters emphasize audience and key message inclusion.

For a 20-point scale, MCCVB should try to obtain an average quality measurement score goal to be 15 out of 20 points.

Scoring Parameters
Audience Reach (6 possible points):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1: Top 100 list outlet (6 pts.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 2: National, meetings, short haul and regional outlets outside of Top 100 list (4 pts.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 4: Local Monterey County outlets (2 pts.)
Key Message Inclusion (6 possible points):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three or more messages included (6 pts.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two messages included (4 pts.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One message included (2 pts.)
Prominence (4 possible points):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feature story (4 pts.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roundup story (3 pts.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief mention (1 pts)
Assets (4 possible points):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image/video <u>and</u> CTA (4 pts.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image/video <u>or</u> CTA (2 pts.)
Bonus Points (1 point each):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is a jurisdiction name in the headline?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is a CVB representative quoted?

Key Message Inclusion Overview

Stories will be given points based on inclusion of one or more of the following factors. If a story has more than one pillar, it would still only be considered as one key message. If it includes a key pillar and destination attribute, it would be considered two key messages.

- Destination Attributes:** Scenic beauty; 99-miles of coastline; all-inspiring; diverse destination (more than one place to visit); world-class accommodations; transformative meetings
- PR Pillars:** Outdoor Adventure; Food & Wine; Luxury
- Responsible Travel** (Sustainability/Health & Safety)
- Campaign-Specific Messaging**



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