



Conquering the bane of public relations

The bane of PR practitioners has always involved the measurement of results. How do you convey the benefits of increased visibility and reputation to CEOs when they often do not translate directly into ROI or lead generation?

While traditional public relations continues to struggle with techniques such as measuring clips or column inches, online PR offers a slew of useful measurements for your clients.

Measuring engagement

One powerful set of KPIs (key performance indicators) you can emphasize involves the amount of engagement between your clients and their audience.

Engagement with visitors to your clients' websites can be measured by installing Google Analytics. It will let you chart the average amount of time they stay on the site and the number of page views per visit. Google Analytics also supplies useful overall statistics such as unique visitors per month.

For Twitter and Facebook, Klout (<http://klout.com>) evaluates activity on a scale of 1 to 100, and is affected by

engagement statistics such as the average number of retweets and comments per client entry. It is planning to add LinkedIn to its calculations soon.

Klout is actually a lot of fun because it is consistent and responds to minor changes in your behavior. Social media professionals will ask each other what their Klout score is in the same way that others might ask what you do for a living.

General measurements

For websites, the most famous measurement is Google's PageRank, an evaluation on a logarithmic scale of 1 to 10. While many SEO experts boast a PageRank of 4 or 5, building up your client to a 3 is a very respectable goal.

Hubspot and Search Engine News both provide a series of useful statistics to evaluate your clients' sites including a percentile rank and the overall number of inbound links. Go to www.websitegrader.com and www.searchengineneeds.com/ssitool and input your clients' URL. You can also engage in opposition research by reviewing competitor sites.

Finally, you can best determine the results of an e-mail marketing campaign

by the open rate, the percentage of people clicking on your email in their inbox. If this metric exceeds 30 percent, you should consider the transmission a success.

Measurement literacy

Due to the constant evolution of online PR, it's important to be able to evaluate new benchmarks as well as knowing the standard ones. The best benchmarks should be consistent – do they provide the same result when you run them twice in a row and approximately the same range on a month-by-month basis? Secondly, do they react in a logical and sensitive way to changes in your behavior, e.g., does increasing the number of your daily tweets show up in your Klout score?

With measurement literacy, a talent developed with time and study, you will be able to tailor a spreadsheet of benchmarks that make sense for each of your clients based on the customized PR program you are conducting.

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