THE ULTIMATE MEDIA MONITORING BUYER’S GUIDE
Introduction

PR and communications professionals have been monitoring the media for mentions of their brand for years. Even before the days of digital, there were sophisticated efforts to curate news clippings from across the world. “Clipping services” would literally clip articles out of newspapers for brands to use. But with the digital transformation of the media industry, there is now an endless trail of content for comms pros to monitor and report to their key stakeholders internally.

Gathering metrics, analyzing the data, tracking against competitors and measuring against business objectives can be more than a full-time job. That’s where a new age of media monitoring solutions can help. But just as there are many different channels to monitor, there are many different solutions from which to choose, and they vary widely in what they offer.

Before choosing a technology or service, it’s essential to have a clear idea of what your company’s needs are with monitoring media coverage as part of an overall communications program. While features can be tempting, the depth and sophistication of your monitoring may matter more — ensuring you never miss a piece of relevant content.

This guide will help you understand what you need to know in order to determine the media monitoring solution that works best for your organization.
**Understanding The Basics**

**Q1 WHAT IS MEDIA MONITORING?**

Media Monitoring is the process of reading, watching, or listening to media source content and utilizing the aggregate information to identify and analyze articles that contain specific keywords or topics on a continuous basis. PR and comms professionals can now monitor for print, broadcast, online, images and social. They can set up detailed searches (or have a software or service do it for them) to monitor for brand keywords, topics and even for competitors and their influence. PR pros can also measure marketplace sentiment about their brand, product or services, and understand whether their mentions are positive, negative or neutral. In this section, we’ll cover the main channels that brands should be monitoring, and introduce Boolean, the type of search that allows PR and comms teams to use terms and keywords to get the right results from their monitoring.

**Monitoring Online**

The growth of digital media and the ability to search content online gave media monitoring the opportunity to innovate from traditional media clipping services into software-based processes to aggregate and review online news sources. Most of the well-established online news monitoring services now deploy specialized software called web crawlers. These web crawlers systematically compile text of online news sources and indexes all the words in those articles and postings. Once the software has compiled the content, it identifies all news articles containing each client’s Boolean search terms (keywords or phrases) and then automatically pulls out and delivers the relevant articles to each client. Unlike human readers in old-fashioned press clipping services, software seldom misses valid articles because it reads the entire article word for word.

Online media monitoring services offer multiple advantages when compared to old-fashioned clipping services or in-house media monitoring by staff. Today, a good media monitoring service can monitor news media sources in all countries in virtually all languages.

For both mid-sized and enterprise brands, it’s important to allow customers to specify countries, languages and publications for monitoring, while also allowing software-based translations of foreign language news snippets, offered in near real-time delivery.
Monitoring Broadcast and Radio

While often a more manual process than scraping text on digital articles, broadcast and radio news remain vital sources for monitoring. They are best monitored through closed caption feeds or full audio/video recordings. This is done by monitoring the closed caption text and the audio/video of news programs on national broadcast networks and local broadcast stations across global markets. Most every major city also has a local broadcast monitor that records local news broadcasts. Most broadcast monitoring services offer streaming audio/video versions of news programs.

Networks and stations also sometimes convert the live news program into online articles that they post on their websites that can be found via online monitoring services. It’s important to note that this is not always the case, so online monitoring will not always capture broadcast mentions with 100 percent accuracy. It’s also important to note that writing the closed captioning script is often a human process, thus there is a room for error. Consider if your monitoring strings are set up for commonly misspelled keywords; it is an important thing to keep in mind if you’re consistently missing coverage!

TV and radio mentions have the ability to propel your brand visibility to millions of audiences. Ensuring you aren’t missing these opportunities, and more importantly, keeping tabs on competitors who may be garnering this visibility is essential in staying ahead.

Monitoring Social

Social media represents the pinnacle of change in the digital monitoring space. The internet has empowered individuals to make their voices heard, and ultimately have a business impact on what others think of your company or brand. Tracking what consumers and other organizations are saying on social media has become an imperative. In addition to monitoring the major social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, monitoring for word-of-mouth content remains vital on blogs and micro-blogs, review sites, forums, and video sharing sites like YouTube. It’s best to monitor all the different types of social media as widely as possible, since it’s close to impossible to predict where or when important market intelligence will appear or where it will be repeated.

It’s important to be able to differentiate the idea of “social media management” and “social listening” in these cases. There are a lot of vendors in the space that provide social media functions, but with a focus on posting and engaging, rather than monitoring. Services like Buffer and HootSuite allow users to post from multiple social handles at once and track engagement across the space, but don’t provide listening across blogs, forums, and social media channels outside of owned ones. If this is something your company needs, these are wonderful tools to incorporate. However, they do not provide a complete social monitoring solution, which is an important distinction. Those tools are publishing tools only.

Many of the more advanced news monitoring services also provide integrated social media monitoring with the communications and PR professional in mind. Cision Social Media Monitoring, for instance, provides comprehensive daily coverage of blogs, message boards, forums, review sites, and social networking channels like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter to go alongside your online, and broadcast coverage to ensure you are getting a holistic view of your news coverage.
Monitoring Print Media
While press clipping services have been overshadowed as digital media has taken over as the dominant channel in today’s landscape, monitoring for print publications still makes up a significant segment of the media monitoring landscape.

Free tools on the internet will not cover all of these mentions. Whether you are looking for a national or local community newspaper mention, a brief in a consumer magazine, or in a niche trade publication that covers your industry — specific mentions in these publications can’t always be found online. Missing a critical mention through one of these mediums can still have a big impact on your industry and even your brand. Other print publications include: newsletters, business journals, college/alumni publications, and international papers.

Cision’s print monitoring capabilities allow coverage for over 17,000 print publications through various global and national partnerships. Cision is able to provide digital context to print publications, ensuring that the print text from newspapers, trade journals, magazines and more are directly available within the comms cloud for users to view in unison with the rest of their digital content in one place!

Image Monitoring
As earned media becomes increasingly visual, the image-based content that communicators use to tell their story becomes even more valuable. Conventional monitoring methods rely on text and hashtag capture to track images and logos. But because the bulk of internet-based images are not associated with text or hashtags, conventional systems lack the ability to truly track and measure the impact of visual content. Through proprietary ImageIQ technology, Cision enables communicators to measure the history of an image or logo and its path forward. Data on reach, engagement and audience of a brand image, as well as influencer insights, can be leveraged to create and adjust communications strategies. Those who rely on text (or text-based monitoring) are missing this key component that completes a brand’s comprehensive view of earned media’s impact on the business.
Once you have a good grasp of the basics of media monitoring and the different types of monitoring your brand should consider as part of your communications and PR strategy, it’s important to understand the kind of impact that media monitoring can have on the different areas of your communication efforts.

You can assess your media monitoring requirements by understanding how successful companies use media monitoring services and how you could incorporate similar strategies. For example, The Stroke Association, the U.K.’s leading stroke charity, turned to Cision analysis to aid in optimizing PR outreach and monitored awareness of stroke among the general public. Cision was able to show that although 48 percent of U.K. adults were reached by their content and messaging, only 14 percent had been exposed to coverage featuring a link to the website. Following this feedback, the Stroke Association adjusted its activity and managed to increase the coverage featuring the website link which doubled its original results. As you think about justifying the addition of media monitoring technology and services, here’s a few things to consider:

**Prevent Crisis**
No one likes a crisis, but strong monitoring helps you become more adept at handling one. Your team should be poised to quickly identify and remediate PR issues, negative sentiment or potential pitfalls that could be brewing about your company, product or industry. The right media monitoring solution in place empowers a company to stay ahead of these events and make sure the proper protocols are in place. The ability to identify a crisis before it takes place is the equivalent of having home insurance before an earthquake. Alerts that you can configure will help communications teams avoid and quickly diffuse crisis situations. It also acts as a barometer to help gauge real-time sentiment showing how people are responding to advertising and content marketing campaigns.

**What Are You Missing? You Don’t Know What You Don’t Know**
With technology at the level that it is at now, ignorance is no excuse for any communications team. You need to be monitoring everything, all the time, that pertains to your brand, product or service. If a new competitor, product, or event happens that can potentially disrupt your industry, the last thing you need is your boss coming into your office referencing a news article that you had no idea published.

**Conduct Market Research For Campaigns**
Media monitoring solutions can serve as market research analysis for campaigns or new products your company is developing. By setting up monitoring searches around similar industry topics as a way to test the water, your team can then start to answer some preliminary questions: Are there any audience backlashes against a similar product? What is the overall audience sentiment of the industry as a whole? Comms must be able to
acquire and understand market research quickly to fuel content and campaigns that take advantage of emerging trends and therefore will more likely resonate with audiences.

**Execute and Adjust Campaign Messaging On-the-Fly**

Executing a campaign pitch, product launch, or new initiative is only the first step in the communications cycle. Effectively tracking efforts, and making the right mid-campaign adjustments to messaging and content, is imperative to overall success. The right media monitoring solution enables your team to continuously track key mentions, competitor reactions and overall audience engagement with in an automated fashion that allows your teams to focus on the bigger picture.

**Attribute Value For The Coverage You Create**

PR and comms are always looking for ways to better map campaigns to specific business objectives their executive stakeholders care about and gain better insight into how to architect future campaigns. A strong media monitoring solution should provide analytics that can illustrate your objectives in an easy-to-understand format. This includes the staple PR metrics like share of voice, sentiment over time, coverage by media type. It can also tie into more sophisticated digital marketing metrics such as web traffic and conversion. Analytics around coverage should also return audience demographic and firmographic data, helping you understand your target audience more effectively. While the goal may not always be to tie back to a dollar amount, professionals in this space need to be able to attribute value from their campaigns to show that messages are resonating with target audiences and supports key business objectives.

**Smarter Outreach**

Does your company distribute press releases on big events? Or reach out to local or national influencers to help boost campaign visibility? Complimenting your outreach strategies with an all-encompassing media monitoring solution can help your team further understand which messages resonate best with your audiences and influencers. Additionally, using this information to pinpoint the most influential individuals can help you make better decisions on journalist outreach. Furthermore, this type of understanding establishes the groundwork for future content and helps contribute to your content calendar planning for the year.
Smaller companies and organizations may initially be skeptical about going with a paid vendor, considering that there are some free services out there that provide automated news alerts and so-called ‘media monitoring.’ Google Alerts is a common example. As explained in this guide, gathering metrics, analyzing the data and measuring against objectives and competitors can be more than a full-time job – one that can’t be done using free tools like Google Alerts. That’s where paid media monitoring services come in. **Consider the following differences:**

**Missing Coverage**

While a free tool like Google Alerts is great intro to monitoring the media for smaller, less critical topics, it is important to understand that it is not a tool that can be relied upon to catch news mentions of key topics and messages with consistency or accuracy. With Google Alerts, you are only receiving news from a limited number of online publications, leaving you with only a fraction the news that is taking place around your key alerts. Leaving critical gaps in coverage can have a big impact on crisis planning or campaign monitoring.

**Informing Business Decisions with Insights**

Free tools like Google Alerts simply notify you of mentions, which doesn’t help drive any action as standalone points. Media monitoring should act as a medium to help identify trending topics over time through charts and graphs, categorize mentions by sentiment and benchmark and visualize data points to give your team a clear idea of what is working, what isn’t and what needs to be prioritized.

**State of the Art Audience Metrics**

Gathering more granular metrics is something only achievable by more sophisticated media monitoring solutions. Understanding website traffic, leads and *revenue generated*, and demographic and firmographic data can help your team really dig deep into your earned coverage. This information goes a step beyond most media monitoring vendors and starts to bridge the gap between the PR and communications space to marketing metrics that are measurable across your organization. Companies like Cision have made a point to invest in technologies that further enhance the detailed insights that can be gained from media monitoring.

Are you ready for a specialized tool? Have you out-grown Google Alerts? What google misses? Media monitoring solutions like Cision can help you weigh the importance of discussions happening about your brand.
So you have decided that more emphasis around media monitoring is an initiative you are going commit to this year? Great! The first thing you should do is **consider what success looks like for your business.** Start by determining your goals for media monitoring.

Ask internal stakeholders for their input. For example, are you seeking to save your team time? Generate new earned media opportunities? Gather more market intelligence?

Do you want to capture every mention or simply understand trends and tone? Do you want your team to communicate more effectively and stay on message? Do you want to gain a competitive advantage? Are there certain influencers or publications you’d like to track? Or do you want it all?
Having a clear picture of your short and long-term strategies will inform your decision. Here are some questions to ask yourself before you make that first vendor call:

**WHO?**
- Who are your target audiences and where are they talking about you?
- Who are your company’s supporters and critics?
- Who are the key influencers within your industry?
- Who are your competitors and what are they saying in the marketplace?
- Who are the journalists and bloggers that are talking about you?
- Who is covering your senior leaders and how are they being viewed and discussed in the media?
- Who in your company will be monitoring coverage and conversations using the platform?
- Who will be viewing the reports?

**WHAT?**
- What metrics are important to you and your stakeholders?
- What are the different media types you want to monitor?
- What are the primary media outlets that are important to you?
- What is your crisis communications plan?
- What regions do you need to cover and in which languages?
- What monitoring needs are flexible and what is a “must have”?
- What are your requirements today? What are your requirements long-term?
- What type of training will your team need?

**WHEN?**
- When throughout the day is monitoring most important?
- When would you need alerts of mentions?
- When will you be generating reports?
- When do you expect your breaking news to become visible within your platform?
- When do you expect to be trained on the platform?
- When do you expect the platform to be ready for use post-sale?

**WHERE?**
- Where will you access the media monitoring platform most often?
- Where do you need this data to be shared?
- Where would you like to see all of your data? Do you need an integrated platform?
- Where can I get help from customer service if needed?

**HOW?**
- How important is post-sale customer support?
- How important is budget vs. performance value?
- How comprehensive is our requirement to justify cost?
- How do you share results with senior management?
- How do you keep your organization on message?
- How does your team react to a crisis? Will you need multiple people to access the platform?
- How is your team measuring ROI on campaigns and programs?
- How many users will you have?
It’s important to have a clear idea of what you need before you get too far into the buying process—and well before you reach out to vendors for demos and presentations of media monitoring platforms. Otherwise you may start focusing on flashy features that may not meet your needs, instead of the tools and content that will help you reach your goals.

Now that you’ve performed your internal “monitoring audit” and you have a couple of services in mind, make sure you’re asking your potential vendors the right questions. If you don’t ask, you won’t get what you ultimately need. So be thorough with your questioning process. You want to make sure the service you choose will perform in the ways you want and need.

You’ll want to base your evaluation of the service on three key areas: **content, functionality and reliability**. Translate your answers from above to establish the criteria for these three areas.

### Three key areas of service:

- **Content**
- **Functionality**
- **Reliability**

**FUNCTIONALITY**

Media monitoring solutions differ on look and feel. It’s important to know how they compare. Find one that best suits how your department operates. Here are some questions to ask about the software’s functionality:

- How user-friendly is the platform?
- How many search terms does it include?
• How advanced is the functionality when creating search strings? Will my team need to be Boolean search experts? Will you provide one?

• How accurate are the results? Am I going to miss mentions?

• How easy is it to organize, save and manage the content for future use (e.g., quarterly reports)?

• Can I address other business and communications needs within the platform, outside of monitoring, e.g., building media lists, engaging with key influencers or distributing content?

• How quickly can I generate my own reports?

• Can I customize the look and feel of the interface, e.g., customized dashboards or branded reports?

### RELIABILITY

With a range of media monitoring solutions to choose from, you should make sure to evaluate how reliable the provider is when it comes to service needs and support. Here are a few questions to ask:

• What are other customers saying about the platform?

• What are other customers saying about support?

• What are their hours of support? Is it 24/7, or during business hours?

• What’s the typical turn-around time for support to get back to clients?

• How do clients get help using the platform?

• What’s the standard onboarding process?


• Can I have support perform ongoing or on-demand monitoring and in-depth reporting on custom projects? How much will that cost?
Comparing Different Media Monitoring Vendors

After your preparation and research, it’s time to contact a few vendors for more information and a demo of their media monitoring solutions. What should you expect so that you can truly assess whether the platform will meet your requirements and organizational goals?

- The vendor should ask questions to identify your core business needs and evaluate the context in which your company might use the platform.
- The vendor should make sure a mix of media monitoring users, buyers and stakeholders is represented in the session.
- Using this information, the vendor will prepare a demonstration to show how the solution provides relevant metrics and satisfies your requirements.
- During the demo, you’ll get a chance to see how the platform performs and will be shown all of the bells and whistles—and how the solution answers all of your questions.
- The vendor may also provide you with some sample reports that you can share with your internal stakeholders.

You’re taking your media monitoring management program to the next level. But before you sign on the dotted line, make sure you’re evaluating the providers from all angles. There are many things to consider when it comes to choosing a media monitoring solution that best fits your business needs. You just need to ask the right questions.
How the Cision Communications Cloud® Stacks Up Against Competitors

Enter the Cision Comms Cloud the only fully integrated communications platform that takes your PR and communications campaigns from pitch to placement to attribution. As stated, there are many media monitoring providers out there, but none that can provide as much meaning behind media monitoring as the Cision Communications Cloud.

In head-to-head competitions with other media monitoring vendors, Cision continually comes out on top in:

- Integrated monitoring for all four core areas: online, broadcast/radio, social media and print.
- Overall data and content quality.
- Ways to customize charts and graphs.
- Simple, clean look and feel of a platform.
- Onboarding and professional services setup of Boolean searches that uniquely benefit your brand’s goals.

Through acquisitions and partnerships and a strong software development team, Cision has ensured that its impact within the PR and comms industry continues to grow with investments in features and functionality that continue to set it apart from the competition.

Whether you are looking for a basic media monitoring solution, or an integrated communications platform to house all your workflows from monitoring, to campaign creation, to distribution, to measurement and attribution, Cision has the tools and analysts to grow with your company as your needs expand. Here is a comparison to Meltwater, Agility, and TrendKite.

Cision vs. Meltwater

While Meltwater does monitor for the four main media types (Online, Print, Social, Broadcast), it is important to understand that access to data and utilization of data can be the difference between stellar reporting and missed coverage and frustration. Meltwater is well known in the industry to sell a “flashy” demo at an “unbeatable” price, but once locked into a contract, clients don’t see the level of professional services support or initial setup implementation that is required in order to effectively launch and maintain media monitoring campaigns with Boolean searches. For more sophisticated users, the basic graphs, charts and customization present limiting factors prohibiting them from truly illustrating the data stories they want to tell.

Cision vs. Agility

Agility has recently developed a newer monitoring service to keep up with leading media monitoring vendors like Cision. Because they are in the software development stage, some of their content distribution partnerships are still being developed. Social, broadcast, and print mediums are limited within their content archives and level of detail in how they can show their analytics don’t go much beyond basic measurements.

Cision vs. TrendKite

Though a minor player in the industry, TrendKite’s focus on media monitoring places a heavy focus on some of their analytics they can provide. The big caveat is they do not monitor for any social media. With the rise of the importance in social media and the impact it can have on day to day communications, crisis control, and outreach planning, it can be difficult to tell accurate analytical stories that miss such an important part of the overall conversation.
COMMUNICATE LIKE NEVER BEFORE
WITH THE CISION COMMUNICATIONS CLOUD®

Are you ready to see a robust media monitoring solution in action? Schedule a demo of Cision Media Monitoring today.

REQUEST A DEMO