



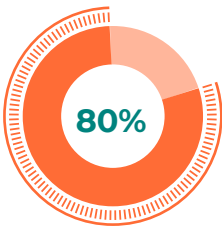
CISION[®]

Measuring PR's Impact:
The Framework for Digital PR

Introduction

All communications professionals know that they work in a dynamic field; what was true, and what worked even a year ago is subject to change. It's also true that many of those same professionals continue to work within outdated, and technologically lacking frameworks, often due to budget constraints or a lack of buy-in from higher-ups on more sophisticated measurement solutions.

In an increasingly data-driven world, PR professionals need to prove the value of their work but without value to show, it is challenging to gain the buy-in from key company decision makers especially if you're not aligned to company KPIs. The question, then, becomes how to take PR measurement to the next level by using the essential metrics that show ROI using the tools and techniques to get you there.



80% of marketers said they were using data to drive decision-making, but as that number is continuously increasing, so are the questions around which metrics are key.

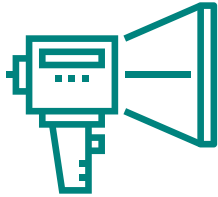
What percentage of your decision-making is driven by data?

This eBook discusses exactly which metrics can help you prove the value of your work in the age of Digital PR (more on that in a minute). We'll dive into the concept of the Communicator's Funnel to help make things more concrete, in addition to real, actionable metrics, and the data behind them that you can use to justify your PR budget, spend, and decision-making.

And we'll be honest: Much of this can be made easier by using Cision, especially as we implement new capabilities across social media, and influencer marketing. But whether you're a customer of ours or not, the metrics we recommend are available to you if you're willing to do a little work.

Let's get started.

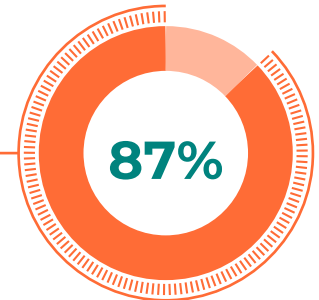
First: What Is Digital Pr?



Digital PR is everything you are already doing as a communications professional in an increasingly interconnected world. At the intersection of traditional PR, and digital marketing, Digital PR incorporates digital functions of marketing including SEO, Social Media, Influencer Marketing, and Paid Media with traditional PR disciplines like pitching, and relationship building.

87% Of PR Executives Don't Believe "Public Relations" Will Describe The Work They Do In 5 Years

[2017 USC Annenberg School for Communications and Journalism]



Increasingly, PR Professionals do not typically believe PR is just the “public relations” tasks the title implies, but a job that incorporates much more across the communications spectrum. For example, a recent study by USC Annenberg School for Communications and Journalism shared that “87% of PR executives believe the term ‘public relations’ won’t accurately describe the work they will be doing in five years” and that “60% of PR executives believe that content creation and working with social media influencers will be vital parts of public relation efforts in the future”.

PR professionals today need a deeper understanding of how social, and influencer marketing fit into the earned, owned, and paid media landscapes, and the value that can be found at their intersection. Let’s discuss how to prove the ROI of your PR efforts, along with some tools you can try if you have limited resources or are just starting out.

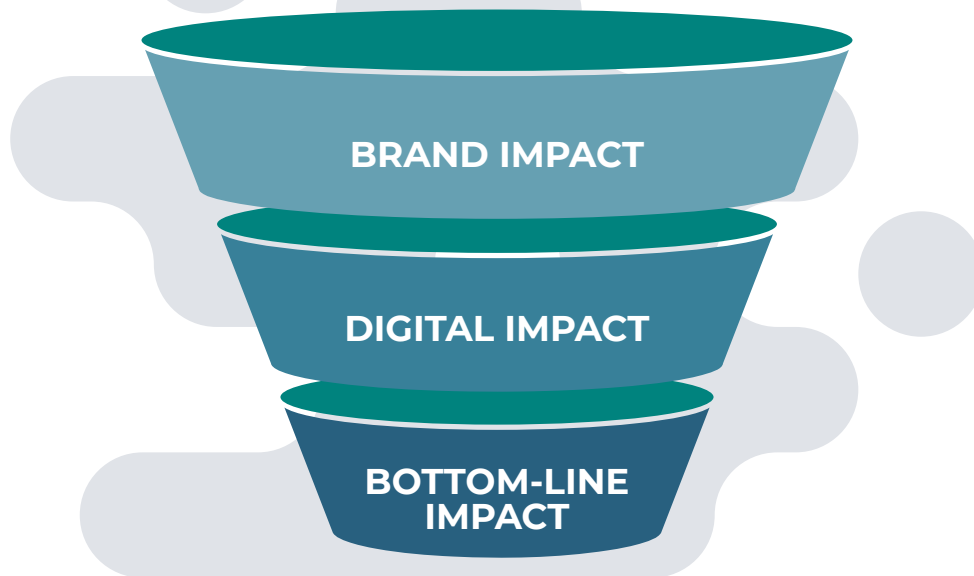
Communicator's Funnel

As the PR industry and the technology surrounding it evolves, it's a good idea to start visualizing your process in a new way. The old ways of organizing, thinking about, and reporting on PR are just that: old. Just because something is old doesn't make it wise; stop pointing to lists of articles as success. **Dive deeper.**

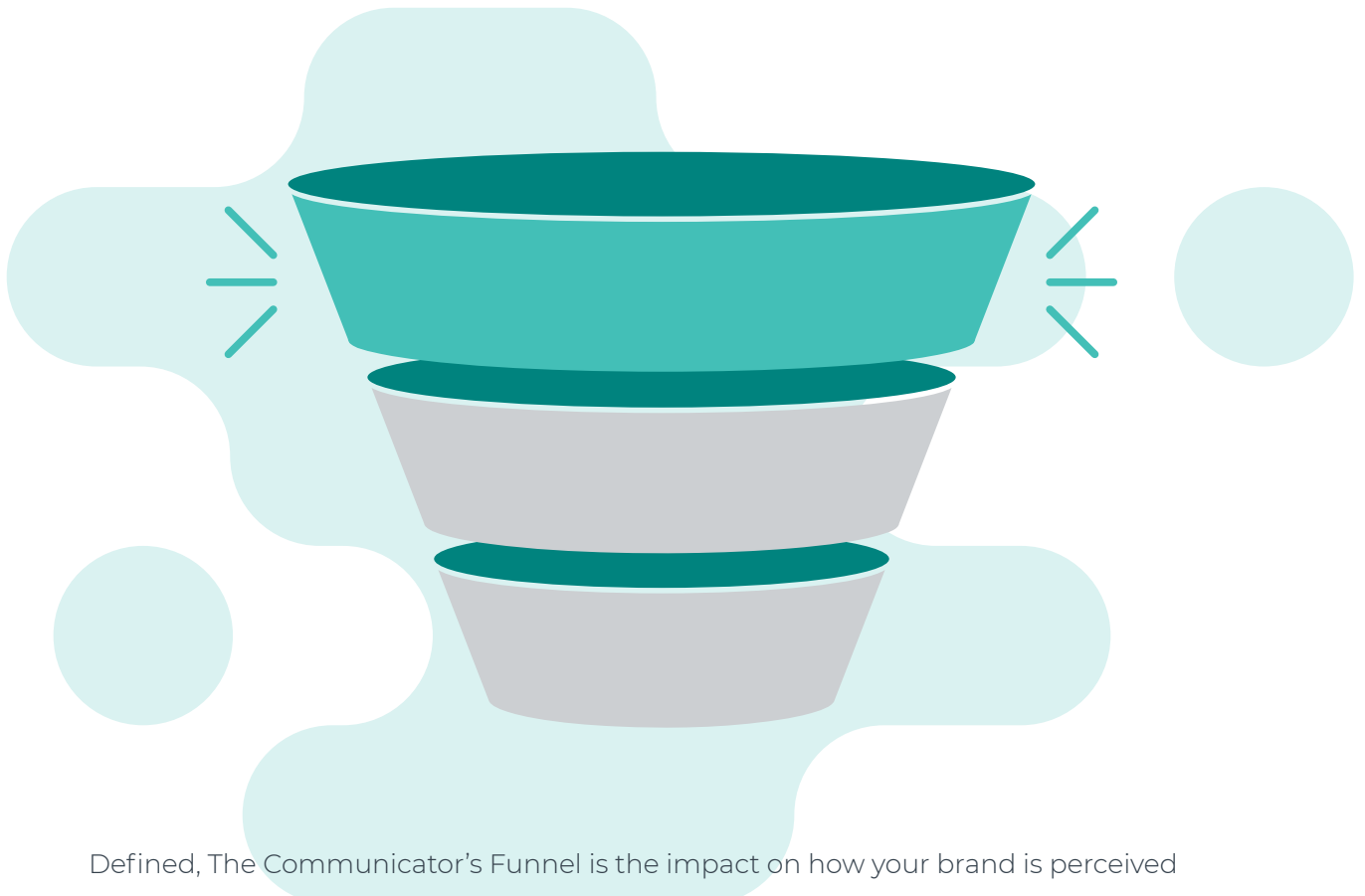
Let's look at the PR terms you may already know, and use consistently in a different way, this time based on analytics, and data— because there is actionable data behind every article, journalist, and publication out there. The biggest struggle in a more data-driven PR strategy is organizing all this new information, second only to making sure you're tracking the right metrics in the first place.

To effectively track, and measure impact, you need a detailed framework. Marketers use a marketing funnel or Buyer's Journey model to understand what their objectives, and key metrics are at each stage. We can apply a similar model - the Communicator's Funnel - to PR, and communications.

The Communicator's Funnel introduces three main concepts: it breaks ideas down in terms of your communication goals, asks the right questions, and matches metrics to those goals.



Brand Impact



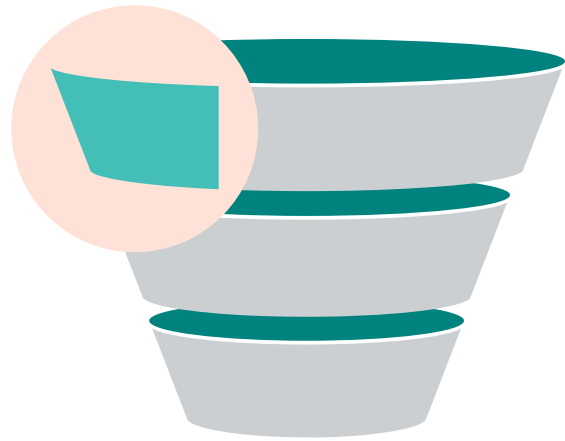
Defined, The Communicator's Funnel is the impact on how your brand is perceived in the marketplace, in the minds of your potential customers, and the general public. Once people become aware of, and favorably disposed to your brand, they're more likely to engage with you.

But measuring a campaign's impact on your brand has been elusive. Even if you are Disneyland, it can be hard to say that a new campaign had positive impact.

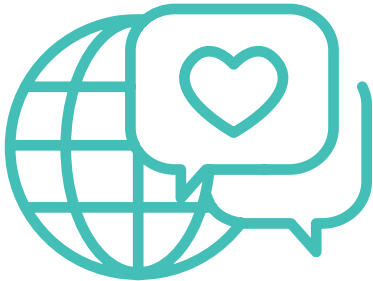
You are already the "happiest place on earth", so how do you get campaign specific, ensuring that your efforts can be tied to real results? We've broken down Brand Impact into 3 categories: Awareness, Mindshare, and Reputation. Now, let's break each of those down into real, actionable metrics.

Awareness

In theory, awareness is simple. Are people aware of your brand? Has your target market heard of you? Are they mentioning your product at conferences or in market specific articles? Focus groups, and surveys may measure awareness through aided, and unaided recall of your brand, but in the PR world there are more effective ways to measure whether you're getting in front of your audience.



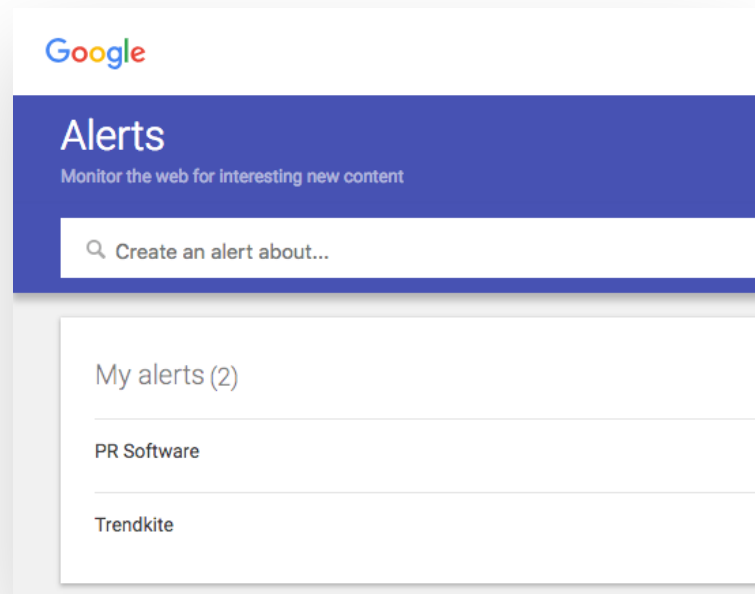
Before you can do anything with a brand, you need to know how aware the market is. If you aren't already quantifying awareness, you need to start in order to create a baseline. But how?



How do you measure awareness? In its most simplistic form, the number of mentions serves as a proxy for awareness, because it captures the voice your PR work is creating in the market. As you record, and graph this number, you can capture the volume of your signal. This is where a strong baseline has to be established. Even if this is a new metric, start building the numbers now. In three to six months, you'll be able to show a chart of concrete numbers to which you can tie success by showing an up-and-to-the-right trend.

Or not. As we discuss each of these metrics, there is the possibility things are not going the direction you want (but that's why you're reading this book, to better your strategy), so don't be intimidated by less-than-stellar numbers. You have to understand strengths, and weaknesses— and it's often the latter than can teach us more about the work we need to do to succeed, even when it's a painful lesson.

You may already be beyond the first steps with awareness. Even the greenest PR pros start their day with a strong Google Alert review. But not all mentions are created equal, so you can't stop with Google Alerts. Next, you'll look at the publications. What is their readership? Do they hit your target demographic, geography, or industry audience? You'll look at the articles, too— what's the sentiment, is your audience engaging with them, and other measures of article impact. This gives you a data-driven take on awareness. However, if you just stop at mentions, you aren't getting the full picture.



Prior to using Cision, one of our Fortune 500 customers tallied success by mentions alone. They had no idea which articles were impactful, positive or negative, or even being read by their target market. That laundry list of articles they had stockpiled became something their bosses just glazed over, keeping their PR team from getting any real recognition of success.

As they saw other areas of the marketing department reporting on tangible numbers tied to real business results, they realized they needed stronger analytics or they would continue to see their budget- and team- shrink.

So they reorganized their metrics, started pulling in incredible amounts of data, and began reporting brand awareness in a way that garnered more attention, and respect. That's the purpose of a data-driven framework.

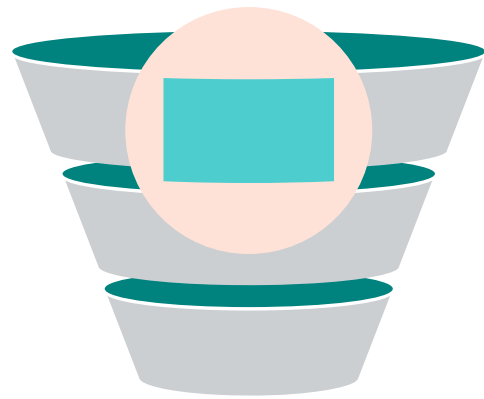


TOOL

Google Alerts is always a good start. It's free, it's relatively easy to use, and you can customize it from so many angles.

Mindshare

Mindshare includes finding trends in your mentions and featured mentions. (A featured mention, in plain English, is a mention in an article that is specifically about your company or product, rather than a passing mention in an article that may be about another topic.) You can also evaluate share of voice (SoV) versus competitors by counting their total or featured mentions versus yours, and benchmark against the companies in your industry or other industries that you might want to emulate. It's worth looking at this over time, rather than just in a snapshot, because the trendline can show if you're gaining, losing, or plateauing, and the impact of specific programs that you run.



In practice, mindshare as measured by standard media mention reporting includes: article publish date, publication name, author, link to publication, article title, topic/trend, and publisher domain. For a clear picture of mindshare, you need to record every mention during your given reporting time period.

Trend/Topic - To take mindshare a level deeper, assign a topic or theme to each media mention. Common examples include: Product launch, funding announcement, charity, industry topic, etc. Why is this important to your strategy?

Researching, and recording data based on trends will help you spot patterns in coverage so you can adjust your strategy to fit any upwards trends. Also, use this in your competitive analysis to ask why your competitor got a huge bump last week. If you know, you can then adjust your week to combat (or drown) their share of voice.

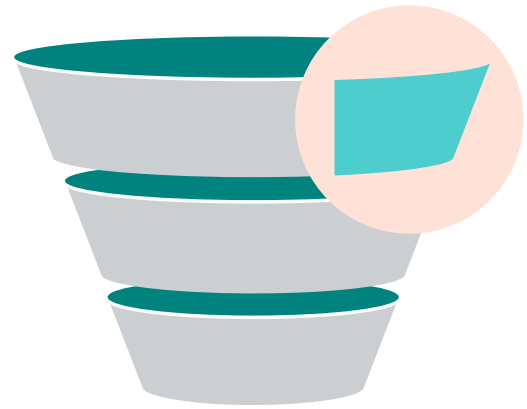


TOOL

You can use Google News to find relevant media mentions. You will have to do some manual filtering as Google News is less effective than a purpose-built tool at separating quality mentions from the noise, but the information will be there.

Reputation

As a successful PR professional, we consistently track if our coverage is resonating with our target audience. This is a great use case for social amplification, since social sharing is a good proxy for audience engagement, looking at sentiment, and key message pull-through, as well.



After all, if you're getting a strong signal with a lot of coverage, but the sentiment is poor or your audience isn't talking about the messages you're trying to deliver, you're not achieving your goals. Those three elements- illustrated by the right metrics- give you a data-driven read on reputation. Comparisons of specific event coverage like product launches or crises against your total brand coverage can give you a quantitative metric for the impact to your reputation. Benchmarking those events against historical brand events, and those of other companies gives you a way of talking about the "seriousness" or success of an event— and can give you hints into where in the life cycle of a crisis you are.

Sentiment measured by social amplification: When most PR profes-

sionals think of shared media, they think of social. It's easy to look at the number of times something has been shared across a social platform, and much more difficult to gauge the sentiment behind each of those shares put into an aggregate. After all, robots aren't very good at sarcasm or the nuanced ways we use hashtags, and emojis. (There's more; We will dive deeper into social amplification on page 15.)



TOOL TIP

Try the free [Twitter Snapshot Report](#). While it isn't a deep dive into sentiment, it gives you a basic overview of your sentiment. Plus you can search any hashtag, keyword, handle, or more.

Digital Impact



Measuring digital impact answers the question, *“Is my PR coverage driving traffic to my website or other digital properties, and if so, what action are those visitors taking?”*

PR professionals are becoming more familiar with digital measurement, but it’s safe to say that they’re not as comfortable with it yet, for example, as demand gen professionals are. It requires a different set of tools, and a different mindset. This mindset shift is worth pursuing, as digital marketing has set the standard for modern marketing—everything becomes measurable, quantified, and therefore optimized. In order to thrive in today’s digital environment, PR has to make a similar shift.

To make digital measurement meaningful, break it down into the right components. You’ll want to understand how many visitors you’re driving, if the links you’re creating are of value, and if your content is resonating with your site visitors. Website traffic, SEO impact, and social amplification are a way to break those objectives down for digital impact metrics.

Traffic

In order to measure digital impact, start with tracking how many visits PR drives to the website. It's not enough to just watch spikes in traffic, however. **To understand PR's impact, you must map against your overall site traffic, and understand what percentage of total web traffic you're driving over time.**



Getting a visitor to your website is the first step, but you also need to understand whether they engage or “bounce” (exit the site within seconds). Engagement is best measured by understanding your visitors' behavior. How long do they spend on the site? How many pages do they visit? What is their bounce rate? What content draws and keeps their attention? By understanding that, you better understand the value of the traffic, because you can differentiate between articles that drive one-hit wonders, and articles that drive visitors who engage in a positive way with your site, and therefore your brand.



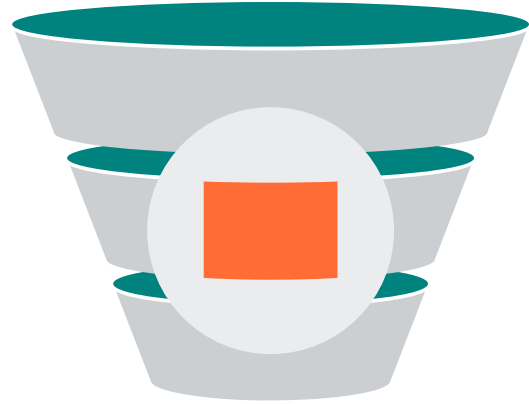
Ask someone with access to your company's Google Analytics (GA) account to export the data or for the credentials to log in, and generate the reports you need. GA isn't the most intuitive tool, but it will give you a strong picture of web traffic, and you can build reports based on your PR metrics, and goals.

Almost every CMO understands the high value of a new site visitor, and the high cost of gaining that visitor through paid search or other traffic-building programs. You can use this data to show the real ROI of your PR in terms of website visitors, leads generated (B2B) or items purchased (eCommerce).

High value actions— Did the person interacting with your site complete a key form? Download info on the product? Or, if B2C, did they add something to a shopping cart? Tracking these high value actions from your PR efforts is key to your reporting.

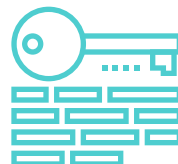
SEO Impact

SEO (search engine optimization) is how a domain is found when people search in Google or other search engines. PR can be a big SEO asset, but some publications have a high level of SEO impact, and others don't. For SEO impact, start by looking at the Domain Authority of your referring domains to help assess whether they're helping increase your rankings for desirable search terms. This is important because not all links are created equal. A single link from a high-traffic, highly-regarded website can have a big impact on where you rank in search engines—and consequently, an impact on how easy it is to find your content. Links from lower-traffic, less-important sites still improve your search rankings, but to a lower degree.



Quick note: While most links are helpful, Google considers some links from low-authority publications to be “toxic links”. If you know that, you can disavow those links so they don't undercut the valuable SEO contribution PR can provide.

SEO Impact is a loaded metric, so let's break it down even more by diving into Domain Authority, and backlinks.





Domain Authority

Domain Authority, developed by Moz, is a score (on a 100-point scale) that estimates how well a website will rank on search engines. **A well-established publication with quality traffic, informative content, and strong audience interaction will generally have higher Domain Authority.** So as a SEO-savvy PR pro you'll want to include publications with high Domain Authority when you're evaluating, and placing content.

This adds a dimension to the research you already do when planning pitch strategy; you start by researching the top publications, and journalists in your market, But which publications have the strongest Domain Authority and which journalists have the highest impact?

There are different ways to measure a publication's Domain Authority. Uncover content, and link-building opportunities, track your site's link profile over time, and compare to competitors for intelligent, targeted link building using free tools from Moz.

With this information, you can focus your PR efforts on the publications, and journalists that are going to create the greatest [positive] impact to your brand, i.e. drive more traffic, bringing more quality eyes, and warm leads that are easier to close.



TOOL

Check out Moz Open Site Explorer, and the Mozbar to get a stronger picture of Domain Authority, and the information you need to record in tracking your PR impact.



Backlinks

One of your primary goals as a PR pro should be to land backlinks in your PR coverage, because ultimately you want an engaged reader to visit your website to learn more about your brand.

If industry influencers or high-readership publications are talking about you, and linking to your website, then Google deems you more credible. Additionally, if you're frequently linked to on social media or influential blogs, Google sees that as organic interest in your brand, which has a positive impact on your company's search engine ranking. Google specifically gives priority in search to companies with the greatest number of relevant backlinks, and PR is one of the best sources for generating strong backlinks from relevant sources.

Not all links are created equal. You will want to categorize each link by the following: mention (good), mention with a backlink (better), and a backlink with anchor text (best).

Consider each type of link in terms of a restaurant recommendation. You've asked your friends where you should go out for dinner. In evaluating the answers, you'll consider how credible each of your friends is on the topic. This is kind of like Domain Authority, as it evaluates how trustworthy a recommendation is based on who the recommender is.

Also consider how complete, and helpful each answer is. Do they give you all the information you need to take action? This gives us an analogy for links, and helps us understand the difference between mentions (good), backlinks (better), and backlinks with anchor text (best). However, link diversity is important in today's SEO world, so don't fret if you're simply getting a naked link or a mention - they all help improve your overall link profile.

Backlinks 101

GOOD



Your company's name is mentioned in a story, but not hyperlinked.

"I like Second Bar, and Kitchen."

Good: Your friend has created a positive impression of Second Bar, and Kitchen. If you want to go there, though, you have to search for it yourself. In the PR world, a mention of your brand may create a favorable impression, but the only way for a visitor to take action is to do the work to find your site.

BETTER



Your company's name is mentioned in a story. It is hyperlinked so that readers who click on the name go directly to your website.

"I like [Second Bar, and Kitchen](#) at 200 Congress."

Better: You don't have to pull out your phone to find Second Bar, and Kitchen, because now you have the address, so you can go there easily. In the same way, a reader who clicks on your name in the story is taken directly to your site.

BEST



A search term (product, service, or idea that you want to rank for) is mentioned in a story. It is hyperlinked so that readers who click on that search term go directly to your website.

"I like the Seared Faroe Island Salmon at [Second Bar, and Kitchen](#)."

Best: You've been given a compelling reason to visit Second Bar, and Kitchen, and your friend is building Second's reputation for a signature dish. Similarly, if you have links with anchor text in your press articles, you'll gain greater authority in search engines for those specific search terms.



TOOL

Use SEMRush to quickly find all backlinks that are pointing to your site, and the quality of those backlinks. Google Search Console is another free alternative if your company does not have a professional SEO tool.

Social Amplification



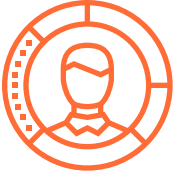
The third element of Digital Impact is social amplification, measuring how readers are extending your digital footprint across social platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Metrics like reach, shares, and likes aren't a bad place to start when measuring, but they don't give a complete picture of how a piece is being engaged with— or, more importantly, if it's being engaged with. (We've all been guilty of sharing something we haven't actually read or read deeply.)



Social engagement metrics tell you which content is resonating with an audience enough for them to not only share it, but comment on it or even bring others into the conversation by tagging them. You see this behavior in Quote Tweets on Twitter or friends tagging each other in the comment section of an Instagram post.

By paying attention to these metrics- which do vary slightly across platforms- you can break social amplification into its component parts so you understand what is driving impact, and where to focus your efforts.

If you're not using a PR analytics platform with social capabilities, it will take some time to build up enough data so that you can see trends. You'll have to create your own spreadsheet of social shares, for example. But an exercise like that will give you a good starting point. If you do it for a number of articles, you can start to get a sense for which coverage resonates with your readers, and which coverage they ignore. Coverage that is socially amplified tends to be coverage that connects with your audience on an emotional level, or coverage that they find so useful that they just have to share it.



INFLUENCER AMPLIFICATION

Influencer marketing is growing out of its adolescent wild west phase, and into a serious, established form of marketing— when done right.

The key to a successful influencer marketing partnership or campaign is for a brand to have clear expectations set out between them and the influencer prior to launch, including which metrics will speak toward success. For example, if a brand is partnering with an influencer to boost brand awareness, they're tapping into the social amplification the influencer provides, and will want to start with reach, and impressions.

Engagement metrics are a more complete indicator of interest in a brand, however, just because an influencer post got 10,000 likes doesn't mean that folks in that 10,000 likes are going to buy your product. The people leaving comments asking detailed questions are the most likely to convert, and they're the ones you should be paying attention to, and engaging with from your own brand when appropriate. For more on influencer marketing, download our playbook.



TOOL

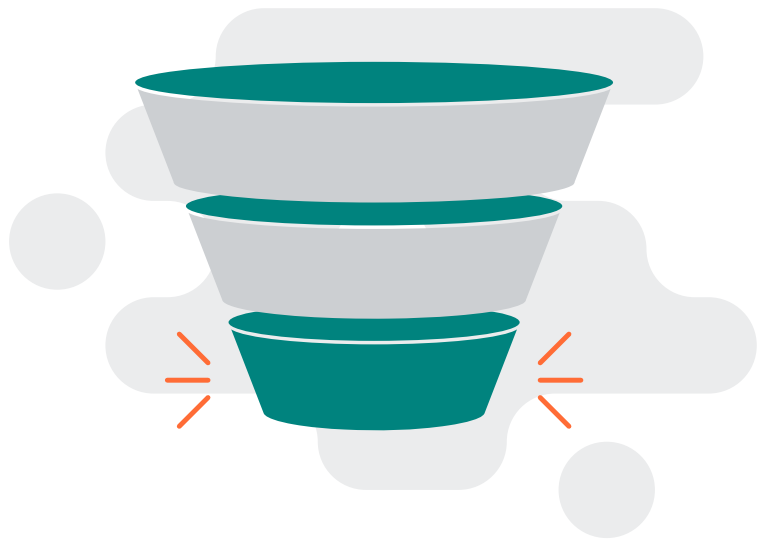
Try the [free Cision Instagram check-up](#) to see at a glance if an influencer is a good fit for your brand.

Bottom Line

PR measurement has typically focused on only the top third of the Communicator's Funnel, covering Brand Impact. But more PR teams are beginning to measure, and report on Digital Impact in the age of Digital PR. The end game, though, is measuring bottom line impact. How many sales did PR drive for an ecommerce retailer? How many donations to a non-profit started with PR activity? How much business was created or influenced by PR?

Influenced Pipeline (Hubspot, Marketo, Pardot, etc.)

Without a PR analytics platform this metric requires a bit more work, but it's worth it. Think of pipeline as all the business that, in a perfect world, you could close. These are potential customers who are aware of you, and who are engaged in shopping activity or, for B2B, in an active sales cycle.



If this sounds like a hard number to get to, don't be intimidated because it probably isn't. You have colleagues on the demand generation or marketing team who use systems like Hubspot, Marketo, Pardot, or Eloqua. (Or, if you're a marketer at a smaller company, you may use these systems yourself.) Engage with that team, and learn how they measure pipeline activity. When a new prospect enters the sales pipeline, the marketing team tags the prospect with a lead source or campaign.

By adding PR as a campaign or lead source, you'll soon be able to run reports showing which prospects were influenced by PR activities. Spoiler alert: It's almost certainly more prospects than you- or your CMO, and CFO- might suspect.

CONVERSIONS

(Google Analytics)

There's more to digital marketing than just getting visitors to the site or getting them into the sales pipeline. At some point you need to close some business. Google Analytics makes it possible to report on this by tagging "high value activities" or "conversions".

You can think of a conversion as a "change in status." When you browse on Amazon, you're a prospect. When you click "Add to Cart", and make a purchase, you have changed (or been "converted") into a customer.

When you dive into your marketing team's goals, you'll find that they monitor a number of high-value activities as conversions. It may be downloads of sales collateral, or online purchases, or donations, or sign-ups to a list. Those are all measurable conversions. Use Google Analytics to understand both how many conversions you've had in a given time period ("we had 2,017 prospects download this eBook, and convert into eBook readers"), and conversion rate ("of our total site traffic, 2.3% downloaded this eBook, and converted into eBook readers").

REVENUE

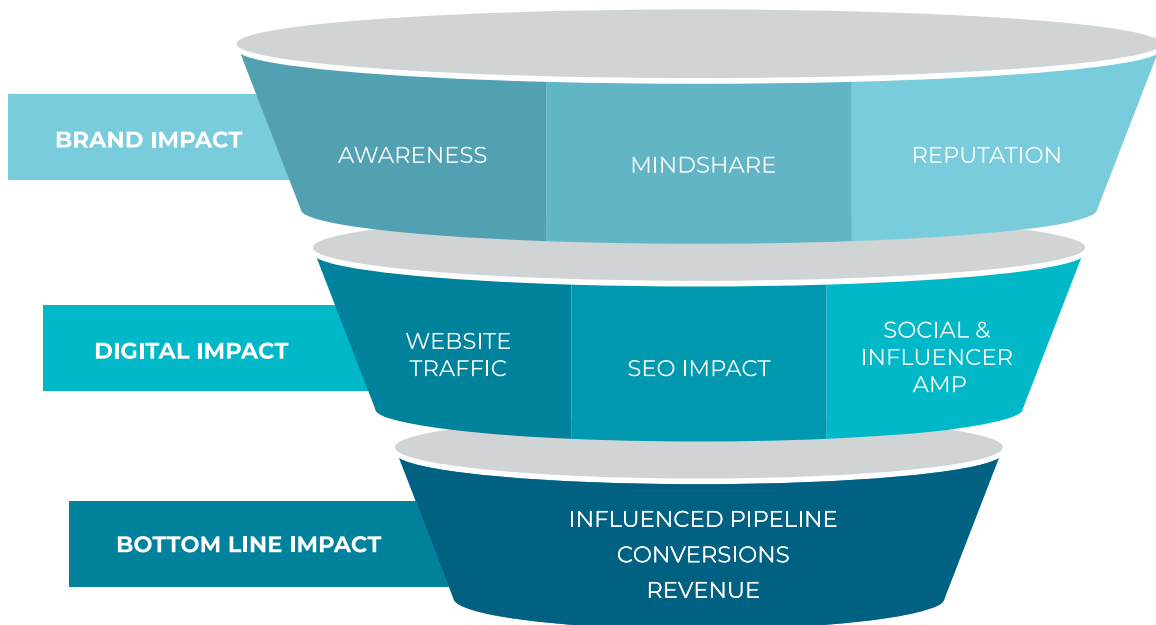
(Google Analytics)

For years, PR professionals have relied on questionable metrics to prove actual financial impact. Metrics like ad value equivalency look respectable on the surface, but when digging below the surface, you may find that the numbers are hard to tie to actual sales, bookings, and revenue.

Web analytics tools like Google Analytics make this easier. Think about the high-value activities that we measure as goal conversions. A good marketer will have an idea of the value of each of those activities. An online retailer will know how much an average shopper spends per transaction. A B2B marketer will know the cost, and value, of an additional opt-in to the list or an additional download of content (like this eBook) based on how often those visitors convert to customers. A non-profit executive will know the average value of an additional donor.

In each case, if the value per conversion is known, the total revenue number can be calculated through simple math. Google Analytics makes this easier by calculating the value right in the console, based on the dollar value assigned to each goal. A PR analytics platform can make it even easier by pulling that value right into your PR dashboard. But the concept, and math, is very simple: Average value per conversion event x number of conversion events.

Communicator's Funnel



With the organization of the Communicator's Funnel, and definition of strong metrics, the PR pro can leave behind conceptual conversations, and focus on data-driven reporting. From reiterating PR theory to detailing actionable metrics (including suggested free tools), we've discussed the resources you need to build out the reporting system that elevates your success, and gets the PR person or team the recognition they've earned.

Need a head start?

Download TrendKite's Digital PR template to organize your pitches and campaigns.

Learn More About



Want all of the detailed metrics from the Communicator's Funnel in a custom dashboard for your brand so you can see them quickly, and easily, in one place at one time?

Cision can do that.

Contact Us

sales@cision.com

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