



Geneva Communicators Breakfast

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Presented by the Geneva Communicators blog:

<http://genevacom.wordpress.com>

Evaluating Communications: An Introduction

Evaluation has been flagged as one of the major challenges facing communication professionals today. Given that the methodology and tools are available, why aren't we seeing more evaluation undertaken?

Overcoming obstacles to evaluation

Despite everyone agreeing that evaluation is important, communication professionals and their managers often find many reasons for not evaluating, including:

"It's too expensive"

"I'm too busy 'doing' to bother with evaluation"

"I don't know how to"

"What I'm doing can't be measured"

"I'm afraid of what I'm going to find out"

"I don't see the value of it"

Measuring what has been the impact of your efforts is the ultimate way of illustrating the value of your work and finding out if you achieved what you set out to do. You might be anxious about what you are going to discover, but it will surely assist you in improving your work and its impact. With the development of web-based survey tools, readily available expert guidelines, resources and tools, evaluation is now inexpensive and accessible to all. If you believe your work cannot be evaluated you probably need to go back and consider why are you communicating in the first place.

What to evaluate

As an indicator of what has been carried out, we measure *output*: number of press releases issued, events held, etc. Far more important is to measure *outcomes*: did communication activities result in any opinion, attitude and/or behavior change amongst targeted audiences?

Organizations are now going further and measuring the effectiveness of their *relationships* with targeted audiences, the "*Return on Investment*" from communication programs and overall *impact indicators* of change in an organization.

How to evaluate

Most evaluation methods are adopted from market research techniques: quantitative (surveys, content analysis) and qualitative (interviews, focus groups). Depending upon the nature of the evaluation, complementary methods can be added including field observation, tracking mechanisms and experiments.

Current issues

- Reputation verses relationship studies
- Return on Investment measurement techniques
- Evaluation and social responsibility
- Measurement of social media
- Standards on impact indicators for communication

Communication Measurement & Evaluation - Selected Bibliography

Books

Berk, R. & Rossi P (1998). *Thinking about Program Evaluation*, Sage Publications, 2nd Edition, ISBN: 0761917659

Comment: evaluation methods applicable to many fields, particularly useful for government and non-governmental organizations.

Broom, G.M. & Dozier D.M. (1990). *Using research in public relations: Applications to program management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, ISBN: 0139391665.

Comment: although 15 years old, *the book on communication evaluation*.

Daymon, C. & Holloway I. (2002). *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications*, Routledge, ISBN 978-0415222747.

Comment: One of the only books that focuses on qualitative methods for evaluation.

Noble, P. & Watson D (2005). *Evaluating Public Relations: A Best Practice Guide To Public Relations Planning, Research & Evaluation*, Kogan Page, ISBN: 0749443065.

Comment: A very good overview to evaluation theories and methods.

Weisberg, H. & Krosnick J., Bowen (1996) *Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*, Sage Publications, 3rd Edition, ISBN: 0803974027.

Comment: Answers all your questions if you are using surveys for evaluation.

Journals

The following journals often have articles concerning communication and measurement:

Strategic Communication Management (print and online versions available – subscription based)

http://www.melcrum.com/cgi-bin/melcrum/eu_content.pl?docurl=pub%20scm%20home

Prism online journal (free online journal)

http://praxis.massey.ac.nz/prism_on-line_journ.html

Websites

K D Paine PR measurement blog: <http://kdpaine.blogs.com>

IABC measurement blog: <http://commons.iabc.com/measure/>

New PR wiki measurement page:

<http://www.thenewpr.com/wiki/pmwiki.php?pagename=PRMeasurement.HomePage>

Papers / Studies

Key guidelines on communication and evaluation from the Institute for PR:

http://www.instituteforpr.com/measurement_and_evaluation.phtml

Excellent case studies and papers on evaluation of NGO & public education communication:

<http://www.comminit.com/evaluations.html>

Further information - Glenn O'Neil: glenn.oneil@gmail.com

Evaluation blog: <http://intelligentmeasurement.wordpress.com/>