

Measuring Digital Success



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Measuring the effectiveness of a digital campaign seems to be the hot topic on everyone's lips right now – and the sheer number of 'professionals' claiming to possess the perfect programme or tool to help measure success is staggering. In the last two months of 2009, I received over 30 calls, emails or meeting requests from companies offering digital PR reporting of varying degrees. And the average cost? £1,500 per client per month.

For large, blue-chip corporations, this figure is manageable. But, for the bulk of clients, £1,500 per month is a ridiculous amount to even contemplate paying. As we know in this business, it's often tough enough getting clients to fork out a couple of hundred quid for media monitoring, let alone £1,500 per month for digital reports. But, without them, how can we measure success?

To many clients across the UK, digital PR is a bit like Tantric Sex. A lot of people rave about it, but you're not quite sure how to make it work for you. And at least with tantric sex, you know when it has worked as you (eventually) end up with an orgasm. Digital PR – just like traditional PR – needs to deliver ROI...and not necessarily in terms of volume. Bigger isn't better.

Influence is a much more certain way of determining campaign value. Ignore the numbers and look at messaging! Who's talking about you, what are they saying and are they passing your messages on?

Before you begin any campaign, you need to determine who your target consumer is and what your message is. This is exactly the same thing you would do with a traditional media campaign, so it shouldn't be too much of a leap. Focus on who will use your product or be interested in what your brand has to offer. How old are they? Where do they live? What do they do in their day?

Then, once you have worked out who your target market is, you can determine what digital PR tactics to take. If you are going after a 15 year-old male, you'll need to have some digital campaign creative and tactics that appeal to this demographic. And it will certainly differ from what you would do to target a 45-year-old female!

Forrester Research has provided a good breakdown of social technographics that define people according to how they use social media. In their research, they break social media users into six categories ranging from Creators through to Inactives and clarify how each category can be influenced using social media tools. In order to determine which category your target demographic falls into, use their widget which can be found at http://www.forrester.com/Groundswell/profile_tool.html. Plug in the

details of your target market and you'll see the breakdown in what appeals to them in the world of social media.

If you find your target demographic falls under the 'creator' category, then look at developing a campaign that challenges participants to make or do something. A good example would be Tourism Queensland's 'Best Job in the World' campaign which required entrants to film short job application videos. The end result was over 30,000 submissions from around the world – with most falling into the 18-30 age demographic. How has that translated into success? A 17% lift in young travelers booking passage through STA travel in the UK – the market leader in student travel. Creator campaigns can therefore be measured in terms of submission numbers. How many people have sent you a video? Or if it's a challenge to write a Twitter Haiku – how many poems have been written?

A 45-year old female falls primarily under the 'spectator' category. They will read blogs, watch videos, listen to podcasts, read online forums and rating/review sites – but they won't post any comment or content of their own. Achieve success through content creation of your own. Create videos and upload them to YouTube, liaise with influential bloggers and have them write about you and your brand, develop podcasts and seed them. Measurement will therefore be determined according to how many people watch the video, listen to the podcast or read the blog. In this case, you'll need to do research to determine which sites to seed the videos and podcasts on and who the influential bloggers are – but that's a topic for another article.

There's no single magic method to measure digital PR success. It is dependant highly on who you want to go after and what you are trying to achieve. You can't clip a website and measure it to determine the AVE. Every campaign is unique and your measurement tools should reflect that fact. Online PR has exploded because users want to use the Internet in a way tailored to their needs. And just like the user, digital PR campaigns are going to need bespoke measurement tools and reporting parameters to work effectively.