

# 8 Star Wars Lessons About Communication Measurement



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*I have always been a great Star Wars fan. Waiting impatiently for the upcoming premiere of Star Wars: The Last Jedi this week, I was inspired to write this post about 8 important lessons about communication measurement that we can learn from the Star Wars storyline.*

## **1. Don't be seduced by the Dark Side of the Force (AVE's)**

Darth Vader's seduction by the Dark Side of the Force, and how he and Emperor Palpatine also try to turn Luke Skywalker, is a central theme in Star Wars. Whereas the Light requires patience and discipline to master, the Dark Side lures us with promises of quick and easy power.

In the world of communications measurement, 'vanity metrics' are the Dark Side and none more so than Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE). They will try to seduce you with big numbers that you may be able to impress your boss or client with (for a while). But the Dark Side can never be as strong as mastering the Light, namely looking at [output, outtake and outcome](#) and using the full range of [quantitative and qualitative methods](#) to measure the actual effect of your communication.

## **2. Search your data carefully for important insights**

Analyzing the stolen data plans enabled the Rebel Alliance to find a small design flaw that revealed a critical weakness in the defense of the dreaded Death Star. This allowed Luke Skywalker to fire a proton torpedo down a thermal exhaust port, exploding the battle station.

[Measuring communication](#) serves a dual purpose: to document your results and to create new knowledge. You do the latter by analyzing your data for insights that can help you improve your communication in the future. Make sure you set aside some time to really look at your data sets. Insights can sometimes reveal themselves in the most unlikely of places.

## **3. Seek out training and learn from others**

To complete his Jedi training, Luke Skywalker went to the Dagobah system to learn from the last Jedi Master, Yoda.

While you can learn a lot about communications measurement from reading books and articles on the web, you should also consider the benefits of learning from others. Organisations like AMEC offer [online certification courses in measurement](#) and you should also be on the lookout for webinars, guest lectures and after-hours-meetings taking place near you.

## **4. Sometimes small and agile is better**

An Imperial Star Destroyer may have superior firepower, but Han Solo proves time and again that the Millennium Falcon (which did the Kessel run in just 12 parsecs) can out-fly and out-maneuver them at every turn.

Managing your measurement setup, you should pay attention to

the fact that big is not always better. An agile setup with incremental learning is usually preferable to a model that requires data gathering for e.g. a year and subsequent analysis, because it allows you to apply what you learn much faster and adjust your strategy accordingly.

If you only look at results annually, you may be disappointed with your results and find that you have wasted an entire year when you could have switched course sooner.

## **5. Practice makes perfect**

When Luke Skywalker first started training as a Jedi, he didn't know how to use the Force. Master Obi-Wan Kenobi therefore made him practice blind-fighting with his light saber using only his feelings.

Like using the Force, communications measurement takes practice. Be patient while you are still learning and try to get a broad perspective. Measuring news coverage, social media, your newsletter and internal communication may all seem similar but there are subtle differences that are important to be aware of. Practice until you master them all.

## **6. Test your ideas and establish a baseline**

Darth Vader tested the carbon freezing facility in Cloud City on Han Solo to see if he would survive the process. The objective was to gauge whether it was a safe and reliable means of hibernation for Luke Skywalker's capture and journey to the Emperor.

It is always a good idea to test the validity of your plans on a small scale before any major launch. Even an unscientific sample of data can give you a clue about whether or not to proceed.

Similarly, if you are going to measure the effect of your communication, you should always establish a baseline that will allow you to measure progress in whatever metric you are monitoring.

## **7. Be careful about assumptions**

When the evil Emperor Palpatine laid a trap on the forest moon of Endor, he assumed that a legion of his best troops would be enough to capture Han Solo, Princess Leia and the rebel force sent to blow up the Death Star's shield generator. But Palpatine did not anticipate that the brave Ewoks would join the fight. We all know how that went.

Assumptions can also cause a lot of problems in communications measurement. When we try to make an audience do something by communicating to them, we are creating what is academically called 'an intervention'. The operating mechanism (the impulse to act) is called an 'intervention logic' and it is always based on assumptions.

If, e.g. I promise you a reward for doing something, the underlying intervention logic behind the possible success of my communication is that this reward is sufficient and relevant enough to motivate you. Other assumptions built into the intervention logic would typically be things like you understanding the language I am speaking and so on.

If, for some reason, the intervention logic and the assumptions it is based on are flawed, then the communication will almost always fail. And it will be very difficult for you to measure why or how. So you should always take a moment to ponder what assumptions your plan or intervention logic is based on – like Palpatine ought to have done.

## **8. Remember to celebrate your success**

When Luke Skywalker and Han Solo blew up the Death Star, it

was not the end of the evil Galactic Empire. But it was a major victory for the Rebel Alliance, so naturally our heroes were honoured with a celebration.

Too often, we are so preoccupied with “the next mission” that we forget to take a moment to pause and be happy when something succeeds. Measuring your communication makes it easier to know when you have accomplished something worthy of a celebration.

## **May the Force be with You**

*About the Author: Jesper Andersen is a strategy advisor and international keynote speaker specialised in communications measurement. From London to Riyadh and from Bergen to Belgrade he has helped companies, organisations and the European Commission measure the outcome and impact of their communication – whether they are affecting a change in the hearts and minds of their target audience.*

***A version of this article originally appeared on the [blog](#) of Quantum PR Measurement.***