Expanding Public Relations Research into Predictive Analytics

The pace of public relations is moving at an ever increasing speed, and Universal Information Services continues to focus our development on tools that better empower the PR professional. Since last year we've been compiling research data related to how historical patterns in PR outcomes can indicate future results. This effort isn't to say what you did in the past will hold true for the future, but rather a way of using specific outcomes to inform the decisions you make to benefit your future results.

We are refining the field known as **predictive analytics** for public relations purposes. The Harvard Business Review offers a great primer on the subject of predictive analytics. As the HBR states, "No one has the ability to capture and analyze data from the future. However, there is a way to predict the future using data from the past." Specifically we are studying how client PR results can help clients predict their PR outcomes of the future. This is where you can become part of this cutting-edge research.

Mathematically, **evidential decision theory** can be shown as (ref. Allan Gibbard and William L. Harper)

$$V(A) = \sum_j P(O_j|A)D(O_j),$$

We can build software, formulas and programs to do the heavy lifting on the predictive analytics' math. After all, we are in pursuit of tools that *empower public relations' professionals* and not simply the pursuit of advanced equations. We want to know "where the rubber hits the road".

Our media measurement services have over 20 years of data related to public relations goals, tactics and outcomes. The next level of our PR analysis has entered the final stages and we've chosen you to participate in a select sample of PR professionals.

What we have learned is that given normal conditions, future PR results can reliably be predicted based on your historical performance. Furthermore, we are developing a set of core tactical recommendations that will allow a PR professional to reliably adjust their PR campaigns based on results. Simply put, Universal wants to help our clients navigate all possible options in order to focus on the options that most likely will help them reach their goals.

The ability to reliably predict the results of your PR efforts and make strategic changes during a campaign, is what we hope to help our clients achieve by this research. You are invited to help further this research by participating in our survey (**click here to take survey**). This survey may take 10 minutes of your valuable time. With your help, we hope to share our findings with PRSA as well as the International measurement group, AMEC. From this data we will interpret:

- How geography may impact public relations results
- How your media results are impacted by your outreach strategy
- How the media, both social and traditional, react to specific types of messages
- The time cycle for message amplification from mainstream to social media, and the reverse
- Where your efforts are best placed when deciding what type of media to engage
- Who offers the best return of investment, or return on effort, when working with specific media contacts

- How your event or message may perform during specific times of the year (e.g. seasons, holidays, etc.)
- When deviating from a plan may or may not be advantageous to your overall PR goals
- How does your personal influence impact the media contacts with which you want to engage
- The impact of gender or age on the success or failure of your PR engagement efforts

Sample Questions

Q26: Stock prices for your company drop significantly last quarter. What PR tactic do you use to limit negative coverage, or do you try to limit negative coverage?

Q27: An employee that works for your company Tweets a series of offensive and negative posts. While the story doesn't see pickup in national media, local media outlets are covering the story extensively. How do you respond?

Once we have collected sufficient data from our PR sample, we will distill these finding and share them with you. Ultimately, this data will be tested to show which future PR outcomes can statistically be predicted based on tactics, and which cannot.

Take Survey Now

In the science of analytics, what we are doing is developing a decision model to benefit public relations professionals. So what is a decision model? "The *Decision Model* is an intellectual template for perceiving, organizing, and managing the business logic behind a business decision." Producing a desired set of future outcomes, based on the past performance of your chosen tactics, is what will inform your decision model.

In the end, providing proven tactics as suggested actions for the PR professional is what we hope to determine. These

actions can then more easily be adopted and applied to shorten the PR pathway to success.

I would be happy to discuss this further if you have any questions about the public relations measurement research we do at Universal Information Services. We hope you will find this research as interesting as it is important. I hope you'll take your time to help us in this effort.

Thank you!

Todd Murphy

Vice President