

How You Can Monitor Press for Free Using Google Tools



By *Jim Brock, Founder and Leader, [MarketSpace](#)*

In building MarketSpace, we've met with a lot of [PR](#) professionals and agencies. For all of them, a core discipline is tracking media mentions of their clients and products.

It's striking how many agencies rely on a combination of free services (mostly from Google) for this task.

It's a clever approach, and it looks like this:

1. Set up Google Alerts for brands, products and people, to monitor mentions in the Google News dataset.
2. Set up a feed reader and subscribe to any publications that often mention those brands.
3. Create a Google Sheet for each client, with a row for each article and columns like source, title, date, etc.
4. Task a team member to check Google Alerts and the RSS feeder often during each day, weed out false positives, grab the results and paste them into the Google Sheet, cell by cell.
5. Perform general Google searches, too, at least once a day with the same queries.
6. Share the results within the team via the sheet. Maybe with the client, too.
7. Use the charting features in Google Sheets to make exportable visuals for coverage books.

This approach has many virtues: Google Sheets is easy to master, and works really well for sharing within your agency or department. Tapping into Google's news dataset also helps ensure that you see what your client is seeing, since you can bet they've set up a few of their own Google Alerts. You don't want to miss anything your client has already seen.

Here's what a [Google Sheet for PR](#) looks like (populated in this case by our own system), and covering news and social activity for some top PR firms themselves.

As useful as this may be, agencies we're working with acknowledge its shortcomings:

- It's very manual, and even if you're billing that cost through, that's not a recipe for long-term client happiness or team fulfillment. Delay in the results comes along with the manual process.
- It's incomplete, since Google imposes their own relevance screens on what gets through, so everyone's results are a little different. It also doesn't cover developments like trending social posts, videos or app updates.
- There's no organization or grouping of articles in the same news cycle, unless done by hand.
- It's hard to monitor your client's competitors, since that just multiplies an already laborious process.

Nevertheless, there's something to be said for the certainty of knowing that you've covered the waterfront at least as far as Google's data set is concerned, and without the out-of-pocket expense associated with a dedicated third-party provider.

About the Author: Jim Brock is Founder and Leader of [MarketSpace](#). He has more than 25 years of experience in the legal, venture capital, communications and consumer services

sectors. He has founded and launched multiple successful start-ups, including Attributor and PrivacyChoice. Jim was formerly a partner with Amicus Capital and Senior Vice President, Communications and Consumer Services at Yahoo!