

If AVEs are “Bad” PR Metrics, What are the “Good” Ones?

Wes Tyeryar, Director of Strategic Partnerships, PublicRelay

AVEs – or Advertising Value Equivalent – are on their way out. Thanks to the efforts of the “Say No To AVEs” campaign that AMEC has been running for the past 2 years, fewer PR pros are using AVEs to measure anything. But the question that sometimes still lingers is what are the alternatives to AVEs? What can we use instead to fill the role that AVEs held?

You’ve probably been using AVEs because “my CEO understands dollars more than data”. And while that statement is true, it doesn’t actually help your team establish its true value to the business. Attributing your work to many points of the business will make you a respected strategic partner.

Topical Share of Voice



Rather than asking for an arbitrary dollar amount, a better metric to seek out is where you stand in relation to your peers for your key messages. Identify which topics are reputation drivers for your business, and analyze the sentiment and volume against your peers over time. This allows you to quickly understand which programs are working and where you need to make adjustments. This type of information allows you to show executives that you are on top of what is happening in your market AND your organization is agile enough to take advantage of gaps or change direction and close them.

Conversions/Attribution

In order to do this at all, you must understand what your executive team values. Then you must be certain that the data you are gathering is both relevant and accurate. From there you will be able point to revenue, donations, memberships, website visits or sign ups that are directly attributable to your PR work. Understanding your business goals, and then correlating how your PR work impacts that is far more meaningful than simply looking at how much money your one article is worth.

Earned Media's Social Media Impact

If part of your PR strategy is to establish thought leadership, you know that great content and earned media will get shared on social media. This is a very effective way to immediately tell both whether your brand has established thought leadership, and whether the article you wrote is worth reading. However, this can be more difficult than it initially sounds. Automated social media listening tools look for key phrases or specific URLs – if a social post doesn't include either of these things it may be missed. With a comprehensive earned media measurement program in place you will already know the key data points about the articles (like key messages and the sentiment around those messages) before you incorporate social sharing information. Now you can start to benchmark whether negative financial news gets shared less or more than positive workplace environment news. Is there an impact when your spokespeople are quoted? Which ones?

What all these alternatives to AVEs have in common is that they allow you to show a deep relation to broader business goals. It is increasingly important for communicators to illustrate that they understand and align to the goals that the rest of the company is working toward. As an added benefit, the Communications team gets further exposure to

different groups within the business – extending their worth as a strategic partner. And finally, more comprehensive and actionable measurement also shows that your team is agile – ready and willing to pivot as business needs evolve.