

Metrics in Crisis Comms, Marketing and Social Media

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The way I see it there are two key challenges with measurement in [marketing](#) – and both are human.

First, metrics can be gamed. Ask any digital savvy marketer to drive more clicks or more webinar registrants and they certainly can. Whether those are the right clicks and webinar registrants is another story. Just ask your sales development rep (SDR).

The second problem is that the things marketing wants to definitively measure tend to be asymmetric and intangible. Sometimes I think metrics in marketing is trying to measure the circumference of a circle with straight edge ruler – and neither the circle or the ruler is perfect.

As units of measure, metrics are intended to be indications – stepping stones of some larger direction. And so, metrics is the theme for this week's [Unscripted Marketing](#) links [UML] roundup. As it is every week, below you'll find highlights from three carefully vetted articles that deserve to be read in their entirety.

1) Communication Metrics: Disruption or True Crisis

“There are media disruptions, and there are media crises,” according to Ashley Deibert, vice president of marketing for

IQ Media. In a [piece](#) titled *3 Ways Media Metrics Can Help You Handle PR Crises*, she draws a distinction between “a snarky comment” and bona fide media crisis that “threaten to compromise an organization’s credibility.”

She uses a series of case studies to illustrate the impact of monitoring and metric can have in shaping a crisis communications response:

“Remember the Rutgers University debacle in 2013? When ESPN aired a video of its coach physically and verbally abusing his players, the once-internal problem went from bad to worse as the university received significant backlash from the campus community and the public—ultimately losing brand trust and confidence.

The situation could have been handled before it ever got into PR crisis mode, however, if only Rutgers officials had not underestimated how quickly the leaked video was gaining attention. Monitoring the story in real time could have helped steer a more favorable conversation around the incident, rather than losing control of the perpetuating idea that the university was to blame.”

Having access to historical mentions is an important distinction to consider when procuring monitoring tools. Some of the monitoring tools designed around social media, provide storage for just a few months of data. However, PR, content marketing and social media marketing are long games – and you need data over time to make compelling decisions, crisis-related or otherwise.

2) Marketing Metrics: Garbage In; Garbage Out

I believe a major trend in marketing this year will be the degree of confidence in analytics. The [click fraud in online advertising](#) for example, sophisticated and frightening.

But the garbage data doesn’t just come from outside sources,

but also from internal bias, according to Larry Alton of the analytics platform Simply Measured. His ideas come in a [piece](#) titled *These Major Accuracy Problems Are Affecting Your Marketing Reporting* where he covers down on five key problem areas including confirmation bias, hidden variables, and status quo bias:

“Another bias that interferes with your perception of data is the status quo bias, which causes people to be resistant to change. With this bias, you might see a noticeable drop in traffic and rationalize it as a coincidence—after all, your strategy has worked well so far, right? Status quo bias can also make you resistant to trying new strategies or tactics, especially if your current set is working reasonably well, but that’s more a problem with interpretation and action than it is with the data itself.”

If I added to that sentiment, I’d say resistance to trying new things in marketing communications is career killer. The digital landscape just changes too fast.

3) Social Media Metrics: Three Impacts

“Marketers feel stuck with engagement metrics that don’t tell them anything about the business impact of their social programs,” according to Jessica Liu, an analyst from Forrester Research. “And, some fall victim to thinking there is an industry standard set of KPIs that will reveal their social impact in relation to other brands.”

She borrows from published research in a [post](#) titled *There Are No “Right” Social KPIs* to make three recommendations that strive to look at the business, marketing and content impact. Her second recommendation on marketing impact stands out to me as a framework.

“Quantify whether social is helping you meet your objectives across the six phases of the customer life cycle: Discover, Engage, Buy, Use, Ask, and Engage. Proving performance at this

level is crucial for marketers responsible for setting strategic priorities and channel allocation. Measure how well you're achieving your stated marketing objective in a specific customer life cycle phase and how well you're guiding customers to the next phase of the life cycle."

In B2B, it's really difficult to tie organic social media effort to a business impact like sales, and for many businesses, you'll likely spend more time (and money) trying to measure the program than actually executing on it. I'm also not convinced sales is the right metric. That metric incents teams to sell hard on social and the results won't be good.

Sure, social metrics are soft, but they are indications of a direction. Instead, measure the content and think of the social channels as just that – channels to communicate. There's clear value in having a market conversation, and while the metrics may not fit the funnel, the case study evidence now, a decade or so into social media marketing, is quite compelling.

***About the Author:** Frank Strong is the founder and president of Sword and the Script Media, LLC, a veteran-owned PR, content marketing and social media agency in greater Atlanta.*