

The Time for Public Relations is Now



*By Mark Weiner, CEO, [PRIME Research](#) –
North America*

One of the great myths in public relations is that PR, driven as it is by relationships and creativity, is impossible to measure in terms of sales and return on investment. To the contrary, public relations in today's business environment is as much science as it is art—and its contribution can be quantified. New applications combining public relations research and advanced statistical analyses clearly demonstrate PR's ability to drive sales and to deliver a strong return on investment (ROI) in terms of increasing efficiency, lowering overall communication and marketing costs, and mitigating catastrophic cost.

Public relations provides what advertisers and direct marketers desperately want: customer involvement, message credibility, and sustainable brand value...all with greater efficiency.

Many companies and brands have reached a common and sometimes unexpected conclusion: PR delivers quantifiable business results often at a fraction of the cost when compared to other forms of marketing. While PR has been used to deliver value for decades, now professionals can scientifically prove how they generate measurable benefits from their public relations activities in ways that resonate in the board room.



Rather than relying on PR-speak references to “hits,” “buzz” and “media awareness,” advanced communicators quantify the degree to which PR drives sales or generates a positive return on investment. In

the board room, ROI translates to how much money was made, retained or lost in relation to what was spent.

This phenomenon is not new: The first documented case of [PR-ROI](#) analysis using advanced statistical analysis came after ATT conducted an extensive, statistical analysis of marketing performance in 1999 and discovered that public relations, in the form of media relations, generated just as many new customers as advertising even though the investment in advertising was many times greater than PR. In addition to generating customers, analysis also showed that public relations regularly provided a boost to other forms of marketing, something unique to PR among all marketing channels tested. When news about ATT was positive, prominent and visible, advertising was more successful as was every other form of marketing—further demonstrating how PR was greatly undervalued as a resource.

The statistical analysis discussed here isolates the impact of public relations performance relative to other forms of marketing. Based on sales data over time and in a select set of markets, patterns emerge that allow data scientists to assign a measurable outcome to each marketing and communications element in the mix being analyzed. Studies similar to the one conducted by ATT 17 years ago consistently

show that their findings continue to be true today. In cases ranging from automobiles to financial services, consumer packaged goods, traditional and on-line retail, beverages and telecommunications services, public relations generates the greatest efficiency. While other forms of marketing – mass market advertising and sales promotions – drive a higher volume of sales, they do so at a much higher cost and with much less efficiency.

***About the Author:** Mark Weiner is the Chief Executive Officer of PRIME Research, an international research-based communications consultancy helping many of the world's most admired companies and brands to improve their PR-ROI.*