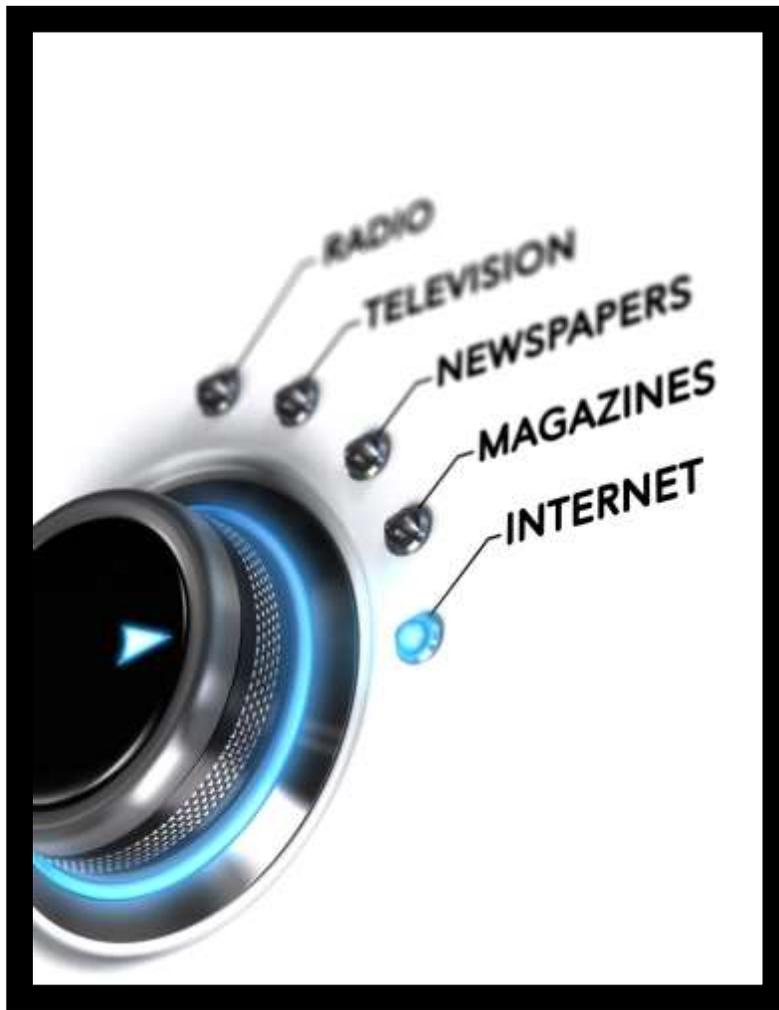


Choosing a Media Monitoring & Measurement Service

(In 3 questions or less!)



See. Measure. Share.

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From public relations to politics, ethical questions are an integral part of the choices we make in life. Choosing a media monitoring and measurement service to track and measure the effectiveness of your PR efforts is no different.

Universal Information Services conducts business under a set of Core Values. At the top of that list is “Honest and Direct Communication with Everyone”. That includes prospective clients inquiring about our services and how we might compare to other vendors. Do we want to cast ourselves in the best light? Of course, we do. Do we want to mislead a future client? Never!

At a time when making choices, whether for president or for public relations tools, can be difficult, we want to help those searching for the right fit. Choosing your next media intelligence and measurement vendor doesn't have to be hard. Remember, you are looking for a partner to work with you, not against you.

A simple, common sense approach to choosing or changing vendors is what we have delivered below. Knowing these questions, along with what you want to obtain from your vendor, is really all that is needed to prevent you from choosing a service that doesn't meet your needs. We have also included the "red flags" you need to know so you can avoid a costly mistake.

Whether you choose Universal Information Services, or someone else, the last thing you want to do is spend the next two years stuck in a contract you can't escape from. At worst, you'd be spending money on something you don't use. At best, you would lament how much better the service could have been had you chosen a different vendor.

This is the third edition of this very popular white-paper, and as such has been updated to reflect the most recent consolidation of media monitors, wire services, and media contact organizations. We hope this helps you make some important decisions for your organization.

Todd Murphy, VP, Universal Information Services



What you need to know



The big three questions we address are designed to empower the PR professional so you can objectively find the best service for your needs. Below we list what you should ask when shopping for a vendor, or choosing a new vendor.

There are essentially three points to consider when choosing a media monitoring and measurement partner. These fundamental decisions may require you to choose, or allow you the benefit of choosing, 1-2 vendors to

best fit your needs. Although the one-stop-shop option is always ideal for accounting and relationship management, the needs of your company or client choosing a couple of services that specifically deliver what you need may be more valuable than convenience alone.

“Can you connect me with the right media contacts and key influencers?”

Media Contacts and Distribution Management: If you don't manage your own media relations and contact list, chances are you use a vendor to provide this service. Running from \$800 per year to well over \$7000 per year, depending on region and media types, you should consider the following when shopping.

1. If you currently have a provider that delivers the contacts you need, you like their user interface, and they provide valuable customer support, you may want to *simply stay put*. No sense in changing if you are happy with all aspects of your vendor.
2. If you like your current contacts management provider, but their media monitoring results and measurement reports are lacking the needed depth or useful insight, you should *consider splitting your services*. You can always keep the media contacts service with the current vendor, then find a new service to track and measure your results. Often this approach gives you the best of both worlds and satisfies your team or client the most. Your existing vendor may fight to convince you that including their monitoring and measurement tools with their contact management is your best option, but trust your instincts. If their monitoring and measurement tools live you *lusting for more*, look elsewhere for those functions.

3. Finally, if you are not satisfied with the accuracy of your current media contacts provider, their customer support is lacking, or you simply want to reduce the cost for what you're paying, *you should look elsewhere*. There are plenty of options to choose from and media/influencer targeting software is always evolving. You can get what you need, and at the price you want.

"Are you comprehensive enough to find all the news we need, but eliminate false hits?"



Media Monitoring: Tracking your media mentions and media placements is the foundation of any goals-based public relations effort. Monitoring your media mentions results shows you what messages the public, target audience, or key influencers are seeing. Media monitoring also lets you gauge the accuracy of the media reporting your news and is the data needed for true media measurement. Some have said public relations without news monitoring is like playing a

game and not keeping score. At some point, ideally throughout the entire campaign, you need to evaluate your effectiveness. The key elements to look for when choosing a news monitoring service are:

1. *Comprehensiveness:* Be careful here, there are vendors that tell you, "Yes, we monitor all media types" (see Red Flag #1). Unfortunately, once you've signed that annual contract, or in some cases a two-year contract, you find out they are only tracking TV, radio, and newspaper websites, not the actual broadcasts or published content. A truly comprehensive news monitor can show you all results from print, broadcast, web, and social media sources. Ask for proof by demanding they show you a report with both newspaper articles and stories from the web. Look at their TV and radio coverage to see if they link to websites instead of the actual broadcasts. Can they show you social media hits for your specific keywords? A failure at any one of these indicates you are working with a web monitoring service that may be aggregating limited content. If you only need web news, that may be good enough. Most PR professionals need a true monitoring service who can track all media. A web monitoring firm cannot do this.
2. *Quality of results* differs widely among news monitoring vendors. In reality, there are no shortcuts to providing quality results that include the right hits from the sources you need. If a price is too good to be true, chances are you'll be

getting web-only results. Low cost monitoring firms gravitate to "web-monitoring" because it is the easiest service to automate and deliver. With more than 50% of the content not freely or legally accessible online, web monitoring alone can leave you very unhappy. Make sure your provider has trained search strategists onboard to professionally build your search parameters. Too broad of a search, too narrow of a search, or the wrong terms can give you a horribly distorted view of your PR placements. Similarly, building your own searches can be time consuming and often may yield undesired results. Make sure professional search strategies are free from your news monitoring vendor. Also, you should not be limited by number of keywords or recipients. The best services take care of your needs regardless of how many terms you might want (see Red Flag #2).

3. *Functionality of the user interface* may be the most important consideration for you or your team. Is the interface easy enough to use, but includes all the powerful tools you need when you need them? A good news monitoring portal will be clean and fast while letting you drill down into the advanced functions when needed. Be sure to ask if the vendor limits you to a low number of "alerts", "searches", "logins" or "seats". An effective news monitor provides you all the searches or logins you need and doesn't limit you. Also, be sure that your chosen vendor archives ALL your results for you as a client. Nothing can be more frustrating than trying to generate an annual report when you can only access the last 60-90 days of coverage. Again, ask your prospective vendor to prove their ability to archive your results.

"How can we trust the metrics you provide and be sure the measured insights aren't a mistake of automation?"



Media relations and news monitoring is the work of pushing and tracking your efforts. But PR measurement is where you discover insight, impact, engagement, and potentially ROI. When looking to learn what your results truly mean, and how they align with the outcomes you expected based on your goals, detailed

measurement is what is needed. Although there are fewer options here, you'll want to look for vendors that provide both qualitative and quantitative measurement. Gone are the days of counting hits, totaling circulation and promoting the ad value equivalency (AVE) to your boss. Here's the best way to choose a PR measurement service.

1. *Forget name recognition* in a vendor, some of the most reliable and ground breaking insight is coming from PR measurement services that specialize in this area. The large media monitoring vendors are often using automated metrics and algorithms to “estimate” sentiment or tone. Studies have revealed that automated measurement can be, at best, 55% accurate at times. So here you have to ask yourself, can I afford to be wrong almost half the time? Ask the vendor if they have real people analyzing your stories at some point in the process. If not, move on.
2. Ask if the prospective vendor, or the existing PR Measurement vendor, adheres to *current industry standards* outlined by such groups as AMEC. PR measurement has evolved greatly in the last five years. With a framework like the Barcelona Principles and turning the focus to impact and engagement, PR measurement can yield amazing business insight when performed correctly. Ask the hard questions of your current or prospective measurement service, just so you don't end up paying for meaningless data.
3. *Find out who is doing your analysis*. Accurate and reliable PR measurement is “data analysis” not “data entry”. Trained analysts should be the only people evaluating your stories. Not only can trained analysts decipher difficult inferences, sarcasm, and rationalize meaning that computers cannot, but they bring cross-coder reliability to the work so your results do not deviate depending on the analyst evaluating your stories. Accuracy in measurement can be seen in sample reports, be sure to ask for samples before signing an agreement for service. If the vendor can't provide real samples, keep looking.

The Warning Signs!



There are three, very simple warning signs you can look for as indicators you need to steer clear of a vendor. These red flags may not be true in every situation, but they are almost always an indication of a problem.

1. The Exaggeration: If a salesperson claims they can do all that you need for an alarming low price, run away. The worst offenders will tell you they can cover all media, or match your current service for far less than you're paying now. The reality is that this classic sales trick is rarely true, but often effective.

2. LIMITS! If the prospective vendor puts limits on the number of searches, keywords, logins, or "hits", look elsewhere. The best services are prepared to serve you with an unlimited number of searches, keywords, logins, or hits. You need what you need, so get what you want.

3. The 90 Day Auto-Renewal: The worst red flag of them all. Unless you start shopping for a new vendor four months in advance, you may auto-renew without even knowing it. An unscrupulous media monitoring service will use this contractual obligation to keep you locked up, even if they are failing to deliver what you need. The best services will offer you a 30-day renewal clause, or let you specify the renewal that works best for you. Look closely at the renewal of any contract to prevent yourself from becoming a legal casualty.

The Bottom Line

If you're that person who reads the end of a book first, here's your reward. **It really comes down to looking for transparency, authenticity, service and value from your media monitoring and measurement service.** If a prospective vendor isn't willing to give you a thorough demonstration, provide sample reports specific to your topics, or even let you perform certain trials of their service, be suspicious.

For those who read the whole book through, meaning all the above content, be sure to ask the hard questions we provided. **A reliable news monitoring and PR measurement service has nothing to hide and everything to gain.** A good service knows your trust is at stake.

If you would like additional help exploring the options available for media contacts and influencer targeting, news monitoring, or PR measurement, please give us a call. Even if we're not the right fit for your needs, we're happy to refer you to someone who can help you. **Contact us: (800) 408-3178**

You can also reach us online by visiting our website at <http://universal-info.com>. We are in the business of empowering the PR professional, so let us know how we can help you.

