

# STANDARDISATION OF PR EVALUATION METRICS



**ADRIAN CADWALLADER, DEPUTY HEAD OF MARKETING,  
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SAID:**

We very much welcome and support this initiative to standardise PR evaluation metrics, as set out in the paper you circulated last month. While not all the metrics listed would be appropriate to apply to all of our activities all of the time, we believe that they do represent a robust framework from which to select the most appropriate set for each project. Of course, most of these are well-established quantitative and qualitative metrics, many of which we are already employing on a regular basis; but it is good to see them brought together in this way so that they might be applied more consistently. However, we particularly welcome the new cost per impact (CPI) metric, given the imperative to try to establish value for money, and be clearer about our returns on investment. We confess to occasionally having used the old advertising value equivalent metric, and were often troubled by the appropriateness of using one marketing technique to evaluate another. So, we see CPI as a step forward.

We recognise that these metrics will not replace the need for attitudinal and behaviour change tracking as part of our broader communications evaluation, but we do think that they will help to provide a more comparable appreciation of the contribution that PR is making towards reaching our objectives. We also noted COI's helpful and leading role in taking all this forward.

It is, therefore, our intention to be an early adopter of this framework, and this initiative has already prompted us to review some of our current PR-led projects to see how these metrics can be more consistently applied.

## FOREWORD

At a time of great pressure on public finances, it is right to be looking closely at how we measure the benefits of what we achieve through communications. Public relations is no exception, but only accurate facts and data will enable us to learn from both the successful and the less successful, and to explain worth, not just worthiness.

In July 2009, COI sent an identical brief comprising 138 items of media coverage to five companies for evaluation. We wanted to know how many people consumed the coverage, how much it cost per 1,000 reached and what the favourability and tone of the coverage was. Not only did we get five different sets of results, but the range within each was very large.

This simple exercise has led to the creation of the first ever mandatory core standards for PR evaluation. The standards have been developed after extensive consultation with government departments, the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA), the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), the Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), and the wider PR and digital industries. The standards set out clear definitions for the terminology and methods appropriate for measurement of the value of PR. We have made it very clear that they are core standards and we welcome further innovation

in the industry and more refined approaches to measuring outcomes.

The standards have been widely welcomed, but this is just the start. They form part of a much wider COI initiative that we call 'holistic evaluation', which will measure communications' effectiveness across all channels using hard data.

We help tackle some of society's most difficult and costly problems, from climate change to stopping smoking. If we can get the evaluation right, it will save money, be far more effective in delivering policy outcomes and, ultimately, save lives.

I hope you find this a useful resource.

**Neil Martinson,  
Director News and PR, COI**

## BACKGROUND

COI began a consultation process in June 2009 to establish core standard evaluation metrics for PR media evaluation. The consultation documents went to agencies on the PR, media evaluation and digital frameworks as well as client departments, industry bodies and the academic community.

The response confirmed that there is widespread recognition of the importance of standardising metrics. Establishing a consistent approach to the choice of metrics and how these should be calculated will make it easier to compare results across PR campaigns and other marketing disciplines. It will enable more effective comparisons over time and feed into econometric modelling.

The standards identified in this document are one of the pillars of COI's much wider 'holistic evaluation' initiative, which will measure campaign effectiveness across all channels using hard data. The standardisation of metrics is crucial in helping to ensure accurate measurement and to benchmark results for future planning and evaluative purposes.

## OVERVIEW OF CORE MANDATORY METRICS

### Quantitative metrics (core metrics for COI campaigns for which PR evaluation is commissioned)

Below is the core set of mandatory metrics that must be included for COI PR campaigns for which media evaluation is required. Also listed below are the respective definitions for each metric and additional notes about the data sources that should be used to calculate each metric.

Metric	Definition	Notes
Pieces of coverage	Number of pieces of coverage achieved	Aggregated number of pieces of coverage achieved as a result of campaign activity.  Please note that if an item of coverage is syndicated, each resulting piece of coverage should be counted individually and considered as a separate piece of coverage.
Reach (%)	Percentage of a target audience exposed to one or more (1+) mentions	Key target audiences should be agreed at the outset of each campaign.  The target audience universe and reach calculations should be based upon readership/audience data (rather than circulation data) available through Target Group Index (TGI), well-regarded industry surveys, Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB) and other industry bodies as indicated below.
Reach ('000)	Number of audience exposed to 1+ mentions	This calculation should be based upon readership/audience data available through standard industry bodies as indicated below.

Metric	Definition	Notes
Frequency – opportunities to see (OTS)	Average number of times an individual is exposed to PR	This calculation should be based upon readership/audience data available through standard industry sources.
Impacts	Number of times the article is seen or heard (Reach '000 x OTS)	This calculation should be based upon readership/audience data available through standard industry sources.
Ratings – gross rating points (GRPs) and TV ratings (TVRs)	Impacts (as indicated in equation above) divided by target audience universe; this figure then needs to be multiplied by 100 to achieve the ratings figure	As mentioned above, key target audiences should be agreed at the outset of each campaign and indicated in the brief.  The target audience universe should be calculated as indicated previously (see Reach (%)).
Cost per 1,000 impacts	Total of PR spend multiplied by 1,000, then divided by impacts	The impact figure should be calculated as indicated above.
Source of coverage	Where coverage appears – which outlet	Title of source where coverage appears.  Name of programme should be included for any audiovisual coverage.

## INDUSTRY BODIES FOR SOURCING QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

The measures outlined above must be sourced using the same industry bodies as COI uses for other media disciplines, as outlined below.

Industry body	Media discipline	Notes
National Readership Survey (NRS)	National press/ magazines	Data should be based on figures no less than three months old or the figures that correspond to the campaign activity period.  Please match your coverage as closely as possible to the available data, e.g. for daily publications the daily readership figure should be used, ideally for the day of the week on which coverage is secured.
BARB	TV	Please use the most recent data available that corresponds to the campaign activity period.  Consolidated BARB data should be used for the specific programme slot where the coverage is achieved.
JICREG	Local press	Please use the most recent data available that corresponds to the campaign activity period.

Industry body	Media discipline	Notes
Radio Joint Audience Research (RAJAR)	Radio	Please use the most recent data available that corresponds to the campaign activity period, ensuring that the statistics used are closely matched to the coverage achieved.
No established single industry-accepted body currently exists for digital measurement	Digital	Examples of the types of data sources that can be used: comScore, Google Analytics and Nielsen.  Please use the most recent data available that corresponds to the campaign activity period.

#### Non-mandatory

NRS/TGI/ Touchpoints	Audience readership habits	Additional proprietary databases and/ or readership surveys may be used to supplement data available through NRS, TGI and Touchpoints.  Please use the most recent data available that corresponds to the campaign activity period.
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### QUALITATIVE METRICS (NOT INCLUDED WITHIN THE CORE MANDATORY METRICS BUT GENERALLY RECOMMENDED FOR ALL CAMPAIGNS)

COI generally recommends including qualitative measures such as key message penetration and favourability in media evaluation alongside quantitative metrics as outlined above. It is recognised that agencies have their own unique methodologies for undertaking qualitative evaluation and that a certain degree of subjectivity will inevitably exist when undertaking such forms of evaluation.

Metric	Definition
Key message penetration	Analysis of message content in coverage; can include statistics on percentage of coverage containing call to action or other relevant key messages.
Favourability of coverage	Generally categorised according to positive/ neutral/negative following analysis.

#### “CENTRAL GUIDANCE ON STANDARDS USED IN EVALUATION

would be a welcome contribution to government communications planning, helping professionalise what we do and create meaningful comparisons for shared learning between projects carried out by different departments.”

(Ministry of Justice)

## TRACKING RESEARCH AND OTHER METRICS

There may be other appropriate and relevant metrics that can be commissioned. These could depend on whether the campaign is stand-alone PR, part of a wider campaign or relates to issues where it is possible to identify other quantifiable outcomes (e.g. driving the audience to a response mechanism or products). Such metrics would be defined at brief stage and could form part of the key performance indicators (KPIs).

## ADVERTISING VALUE EQUIVALENT (AVE)

Given the feedback received from the industry consultation and the concerns surrounding AVE's accuracy and relevance, COI will not be including AVE in the core set of mandatory metrics.

While AVE should not be used to measure PR, it is often requested and can sometimes provide a simple, though flawed, comparative metric across campaigns. If PR managers wish to include AVE within an evaluation report, COI recommends that the calculation is based on the standard advertising rate card, updated within the past six months.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **I would like to include additional metrics not included in the core set of metrics in my reports. Is this permitted?**

Yes, it is fine to include additional metrics beyond those specified in the core set of mandatory metrics. The mandatory metrics are intended as a building block for evaluation rather than a comprehensive list. Further proprietary and bespoke metrics can be included in reports, depending on the specific objectives and nature of activity undertaken. Core metrics should be reported on first, and additional metrics differentiated.

### **Are these metrics a substitute for campaign KPIs?**

It is worth bearing in mind that these standardised core metrics for media evaluation are only one component of any campaign evaluation. It is crucial to agree specific KPIs at the outset of a campaign.

### **As a campaign manager, how much budget should I allocate to media evaluation?**

We would generally recommend allocating anywhere between 5 and 10 per cent of the overall campaign budget to cover media evaluation activity although, sometimes, media evaluation can be commissioned for less or more than this amount, depending on volume of coverage and depth of reporting. COI PR managers will be able to advise further on budget recommendations for media evaluation specific to the individual requirements of a campaign.

### **There is no additional budget available for media evaluation for my campaign. Will this preclude the appointed PR agency from conducting their own campaign evaluation?**

PR agencies will still be permitted to do their own evaluation of a campaign. However, the core mandatory metrics should be used based on the definitions and criteria as outlined above in order to ensure accuracy and consistency for benchmarking purposes.

### **Why is there no single industry body listed for digital audience measurement?**

The industry consultation, which included input from the agencies on COI's digital framework, confirmed that the area of audience measurement for the digital sector is developing quickly, yet is still in its infancy. Therefore, no established single industry-accepted body currently exists for digital measurement. Rather, there are many data sources on offer, including those mentioned by COI above. COI will be monitoring this area closely and may adapt the guidelines to reflect developments in this area in future.

### **I'd like to clarify a question about the metrics and data sources – who should I contact?**

If you have any questions about the data sources permitted or application of the best practice metrics, please contact Oliver Hickson, Kate Finch or Matthew Nardella on 020 7928 2345 or e-mail [prevaluation@coi.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:prevaluation@coi.gsi.gov.uk) for further information.

