



Measurement matters

How to measure PR
the right way



How do you measure PR?

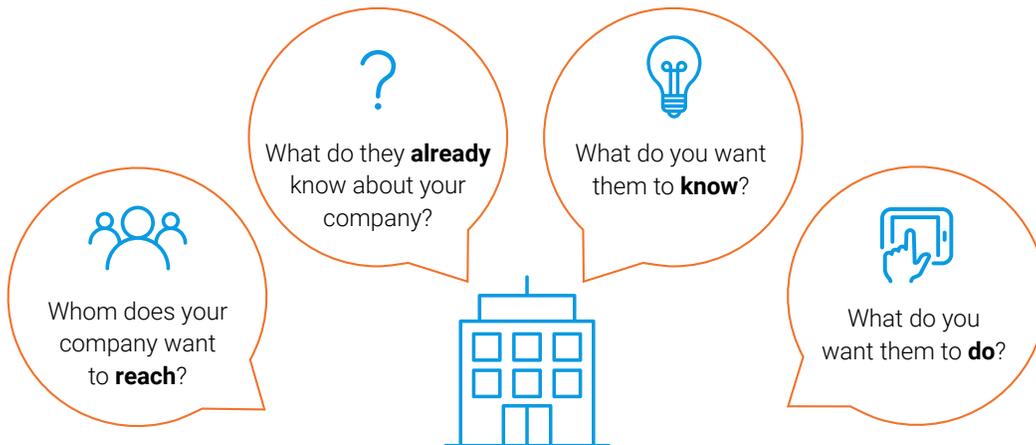
This is one of the first questions prospective clients ask us – and it’s a great one. It goes to the crux of how Axia Public Relations provides superior PR services aligned with your company’s goals.



Here's our client timeline for measuring:



In the research and planning phase, we consult with you to determine your company's unique PR needs. To do this, we focus our questions around the following topics:

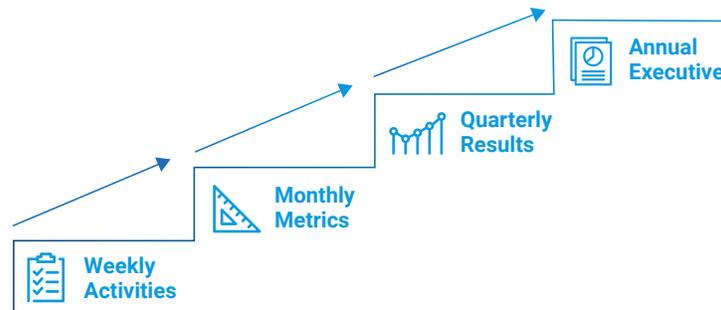


Using this input, we begin developing a strategic PR plan. Ideally, your company already measures important **key performance indicators (KPIs)**. We research to identify the current state of these measurements. If baseline measurements aren't part of your company's available toolbox, we'll make recommendations on what it's important to measure. All the collected information, including inputs from you, gives us what we need to create an analysis, gather any other important metrics, and prepare a PR plan.

Our recommended PR plan will contain **specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives** crafted around your company's business goals and its communications goals.



We have methods of evaluation for each objective and an agreed-upon timeline for reporting. Generally, for our program clients, we share weekly activities reports and monthly metrics reports concerning the target KPIs and any other metrics applicable to the stated objectives.



This attention to measurable results gives us the ability to fine-tune our efforts for greatest efficiency and maximum results. It also means we can do more than share how we feel a campaign did; we can show you the real numbers and the results of our actions. Ideally, this attention to measurement in the beginning and during the entire program demonstrates the program's full **return on investment (ROI)** and whether it exceeded expectations.



What are PR analytics?

Our public relations professionals are well-trained and well-versed in creating content for a variety of audiences.

We work closely with clients to create communication strategies that directly address business objectives. One of the ways we do this is through measuring indicators of value that are relevant to the brand overall. It's important to evaluate these results for efficacy and change as well as for areas of **strength, weakness, opportunity, and possible threats (SWOT)** to progress. In other words, today's PR professional must be an analytics-driven master communicator.

Quantifying the results of PR actions adds credibility to the important work that PR professionals do. Understanding the fundamentals of **measurement and evaluation (M&E)** is essential in making wise decisions around the use of data. Although many people conflate measurement and evaluation, they are separate concepts and distinct tasks handled at different places within the framework of data collection and analysis.

Measurement is the act of collecting data to determine the size, amount, and degree of change. Data is quantitative or qualitative.

Quantitative data is what we usually think of when we hear the word "data:" numbers that we collect, aggregate, or disaggregate and then manipulate for statistical analysis.

Qualitative data describes the qualities of a state or situation. Often, we collect this data through focus groups, interviews, and observations when examining sentiment on social media.

From there, we organize the data so that we can make sense of it.

Let's look at some data for a fictional company we'll call Twidget.

About Twidget

Twidget is a medium-sized company preparing for a new product launch. The company is re-evaluating its public relations efforts to see what results it's currently getting and if it should partner with an outside PR firm for better results.

Twidget's baseline data

Twidget has not appeared on any broadcast news outlets in the last four quarters and has had two mentions in print media, both trade magazines. Twidget's owned media produces two blog posts per week on average and has 1,254 subscribers to its newsletter. Social media data from its Facebook account shows that, this week, people have used the hashtag "twidget" 545 times; they've liked @twidget's posts 3,500 times; and the Twidget Facebook account has 97 new followers.

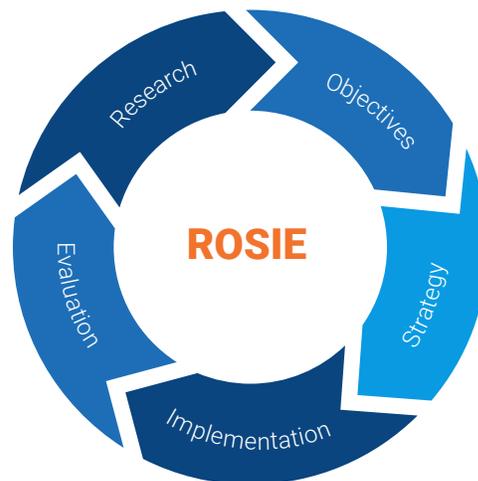
That's all **quantitative** data.

We find that when people use the #twidget hashtag, they're mostly using words like "love," "easy," "happy," "wish," "finally," and variations on those themes. Users like the @twidget posts about user productivity tips and funny memes.

That is **qualitative** data. By collecting and measuring both kinds, we have the information we need for evaluation.

Evaluation is the process of assessing the impact and value of a series of actions in achieving desired outcomes from start to finish. If you haven't yet set SMART goals and objectives, you won't be able to evaluate. Of course, you may describe the data you measured; however, that alone is not evaluation. You can use the measured information to inform the business problem, set goals, collect new data, and evaluate, then use that information to set new goals.

If it sounds like we're talking in circles, we are. In fact, measurement and evaluation is a cycle, as illustrated in the graphic below. The M&E process never stops and may actually change as a company grows, adjusts targets, and gets new leadership. The well-known Deming Cycle is an evaluative framework that has aided companies in refining their business processes for more than 65 years. In PR, we've personalized it by creating a **Research, Objectives, Strategy, Implementation, and Evaluation (ROSIE) model**.



In this guide, we will describe how Axia uses ROSIE to measure and evaluate our PR efforts so that our strategic plans address our clients' business and communication objectives.

Development of measurement and evaluation in PR

In the past, many PR professionals used advertising value equivalency (AVE) to place a monetary figure on the value of media coverage. Some still do. However, the industry mostly frowns on this practice. Why?

AVE = length of the content multiplied by the outlet's published advertising rate

Often, because it's content and not advertising, many PR pros will use a multiplier from 1-10 times the ad value.

AVE calculates the monetary rate of what the same ad space would typically cost. This is not an effective measurement because it doesn't provide measurement for PR outtakes, outcomes, and business impacts. It doesn't take into consideration the article's message, sentiment, and tone, nor does it account for varying ad rates, the audience's perception to news versus advertising, cost versus value, and other factors. It's a simple formula for a big empty number *that doesn't provide executives with any communication insight whatsoever*. For that reason, Axia doesn't recommend using AVEs as a measurement metric, and we encourage others to also [stop using AVEs to measure media coverage](#).

The internet impacts everything. Where once you could easily delineate advertising space and rates in print, radio, and television, the lines are now blurred since online media has become more prevalent. That's a good thing. There's a lack of control in response that adds credibility to PR efforts in online channels. The internet has also created an abundance of data, characterized by the **five Vs**: volume, velocity, variety, veracity, and value.

The Five Vs

Volume

With 6 billion people using mobile phones and contributing to the proliferation of content on the internet, researchers estimate that there will be 300 times more data in 2020 than there was in 2005.

Velocity

The data contained online changes at unimaginable speed, due in no small part to the fact that, by some estimates, there are almost three connected devices per person on the planet. Facebook alone processes 2.5 billion pieces of content daily.

Variety

Data is structured and unstructured. It fills YouTube channels, customer call recordings, and organizations. It populates Facebook, Twitter feeds, and Instagram accounts. We organize a variety of data and present in monthly metrics reports.

Veracity

This revolves around truth and reliability. Big data is, at its core, messy and noisy. You can't trust much of harvested data. Axia gets at the heart of data to make sure it's a valid portrayal of PR efforts.

Value

Axia works hard to provide tangible value (In fact, in Greek, *axia* means "value.") to our clients through the use of careful consultation, strategic planning, and deliberate measurement and evaluation with the utmost integrity.

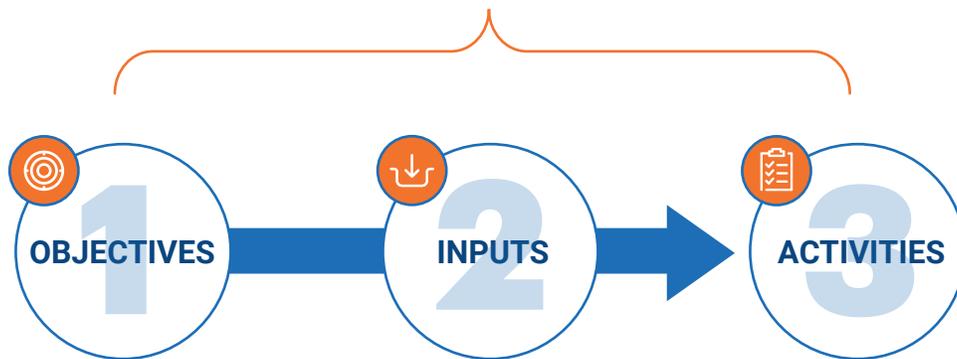
In response to increasing demands from clients to provide a more solid measure of value as well as a desire to standardize PR and communications measurement, communications professionals from around the world gathered in Barcelona, Spain, in 2010 to create the Barcelona Principles. In 2015, they reconvened and revised those standards to become the Barcelona Principles 2.0.

Barcelona Principles 2.0.

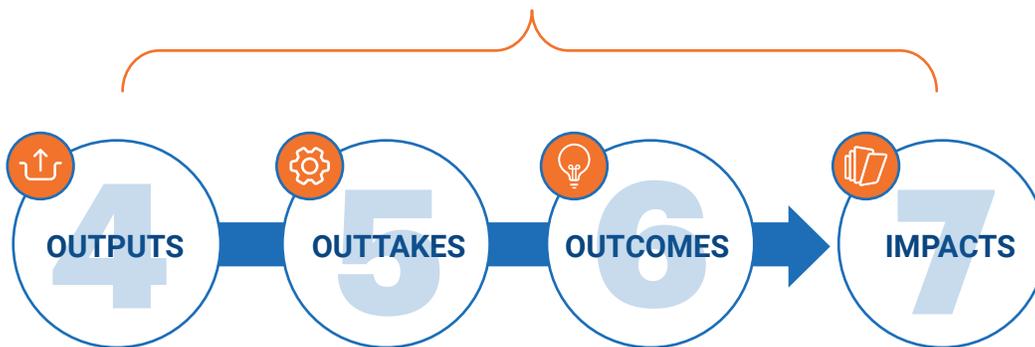
| 2010 | 2015 |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Goal setting and measurement are important.</p> | <p>Goal setting and measurement are fundamental to communication and public relations.</p> |
| <p>2 Measuring the effect on outcomes is preferred to measuring outputs.</p> | <p>Measuring communication outcomes is recommended versus only measuring outputs.</p> |
| <p>3 The effect on business results can and should be measured where possible.</p> | <p>The effect on <i>organizational</i> performance can and should be measured where possible.</p> |
| <p>4 Media measurement requires quantity and quality.</p> | <p>Measurement and evaluation reports both qualitative and quantitative methods.</p> |
| <p>5 AVEs are not the value of public relations.</p> | <p>AVEs are not the value of communications.</p> |
| <p>6 Social media can and should be measured.</p> | <p>Social media can and should be measured consistently with other media channels.</p> |
| <p>7 Transparency and replicability are paramount to sound measurement.</p> | <p>Measurement and evaluation should be transparent, consistent, and valid.</p> |

Axia takes the Barcelona Principles seriously and uses them to thoughtfully create communication plans for clients that include these best practices. In addition, Axia subscribes to the recommendations from the Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication to develop our methods in providing measurable PR plans to clients. The use of a framework allows us to make sure we keep our clients at the center of all our efforts while balancing the many avenues of communication that align message delivery targets and business objectives.

RESEARCH, PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION



MEASUREMENT



In future chapters, we'll dive deeper into how thorough preparation and fidelity in implementation inform each of the areas of measurement.

What are goals and objectives?

We develop a unique PR plan for each client. We collaborate with company leaders to develop their communications objectives – based on business objectives – for the quarter, year, and future. We're experts in planning and executing great strategic communications, and we know how to make them sharp and SMART.

Goals

A goal defines what you want to achieve. The campaign goal should reflect the company's needs; be a broad idea of what you want to happen; and define what behavior, attitudes, and opinions you want to foster in specific audiences. You develop your goal based on research and it encompasses your organization's comprehensive strategy.

We focus on two kinds of goals: business goals and communications goals.

- Business goals align directly with what the company desires. These are the discussion centers in C-suite meetings and they cross silos for overall company performance.
- Communications goals can be more particular to PR, though they don't have to be. In fact, you can approach communications goals collectively through PR, marketing, and advertising since they often have common communications end results. Regardless, these communications goals must reflect and support the business objectives.

Going back to our fictional company, Twidget has two goals. Its business goal is to reach initial sales targets of \$200 million for the new product line. Its communications goal is to increase awareness of its new product line.

You'll notice that both goals are broad, and that's OK. When we get into objectives, that's when things get more specific.

Objectives

Objectives are the statements that emerge from the organization's overall goals. The objectives answer the question, "What do you want to accomplish?" Campaign objectives always include an action verb (e.g., to secure, increase, earn, expose, etc.). Each objective should state one result you want to achieve and should have a measurable outcome – usually expressed as a percentage or final number. We always apply SMART principles when creating objectives.

Again, we have business objectives and communications objectives.

- Business objectives are those very specific, time-constrained statements.
- Communications objectives are also very specific and address targeted changes in feelings, behaviors, and attitudes.

Three types of objectives

There are three distinct objectives in a communications plan; each seeks a different result.

- 1** **Informational objectives aim to educate and communicate the message.**
These objectives expose the audience to information and increase awareness of a topic or issue. We usually measure informational objectives using outputs.
- 2** **Motivational objectives aim to change the way people feel about an issue.**
These concern changes in attitudes and opinions and influence behavior in the target audience. We typically measure motivational objectives with outtakes.
- 3** **Behavioral objectives aim to ultimately change or reinforce behavior in an audience.**
These go along with motivational objectives. Behavioral objectives either reinforce or change behavior and action. Outcomes and impacts measure progress with behavioral objectives.

We apply strategies and tactics to reach stated goals and objectives. A strategy is a rationale or method we direct toward a goal. Strategy answers, "What is the big picture?" and, "Why is it important?" It provides rationale for why we're doing what we're doing. Each objective requires at least one strategy.

Twidget has SMART objective for each goal. To address its communications goal of increasing awareness of its new product line, Twidget has created two objectives:

- 1. To increase sharing of new product line posts on social media platforms by the end of the next quarter to the following:*
 - 3,000 shares per post on Facebook*
 - 800 shares per post on Twitter*
 - 1,500 shares per post on Instagram*

Twidget used previous sharing results from successful launches to determine that these numbers were achievable and meaningful within the first 30 days.

- 2. To increase positive reputation to a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 70 or greater within 72 hours post-purchase by the end of the next quarter*

As part of its strategy, Twidget's PR team intends to measure whether there is any correlation among the audience's sharing behavior, positive social media sentiment analysis, and sales conversions. Additionally, the team will work closely with influencers and other members of the news media to align earned media coverage with the new product line.

What about KPIs?

Key performance indicators are obviously SMART. They are not, however, goals or objectives. KPIs are just that: indicators. You can use them as baselines, benchmarks, measures of change over time, and leading indicators of progress. While they have much in common with objectives and should align with company goals, they're not always interchangeable with business and communications objectives. For that reason, Axia will carefully consider your company's KPIs in certain areas and determine how they inform the creation of PR goals and objectives. Our overall purpose as your PR firm is to implement an effective PR plan that helps your company meet its business and communications goals.

Metrics that matter

According to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), these five standard metrics measure online PR effectiveness:



Reach

How many people could possibly have viewed an item



Impressions

How many people probably viewed an item



Items

Any content that originally appears as digital media



Mentions

How many items reference the brand, organization, product, etc.



Engagement

Total number of people who engaged with an item via likes, comments, shares, views, etc.

Axia's analytics software includes ways to measure these data points. While we can't directly control engagement or mentions, we can control the quality of materials and, to some extent, impressions. All these elements are key in determining how your audience reacts to content. They lend insight through trend analysis and click progression, and they allow you to pinpoint influencers with whom you can deliberately connect. This information may prompt web design changes, such as adding call-to-action buttons, creating an A/B split test of various company site pages, and adding a digital adoption platform in order to optimize business traffic.

While the previous metrics are valuable quantitative measures, you must remember to own your story. Emotions inform the consumer's actions as much as logic. Measuring the quality, message, and tone of your message is at least as important as knowing the cascade of engagement.

Quality: Does the content include key information, points, and actions?

Message: Is it true to your company message? Does this content accurately convey what you desired to communicate?

Tone: Is the tone favorable to your company?

Even though current advancements are exploring how to leverage artificial intelligence to measure these qualities through sentiment analysis, automation isn't foolproof yet. Instead, we can do some snapshot analyses to gauge overall quality, message, and tone. A rating scale with examples of high- or low-value measures of quality, message, and tone creates consistency in periodic data snapshots of media coverage and social media interactions.

What do we do with all these numbers?

Don't count the things you do;
do the things that count.

- ZIG ZIGLAR

What we do with the numbers really depends on how we decide to measure the objectives in the PR plan. Is improvement in certain areas the main focus? If so, then we may be looking closely at changes in targeted impressions, likes, and click-through rates. If impact is the objective, we may be closely monitoring conversions and engagement metrics. This allows us to attribute achievement of business objectives directly to PR efforts.

Reread that Zig Ziglar quote above. We want clients to realize that there are numbers that don't really impact all goals. Let's go back to Twidget to illustrate this.

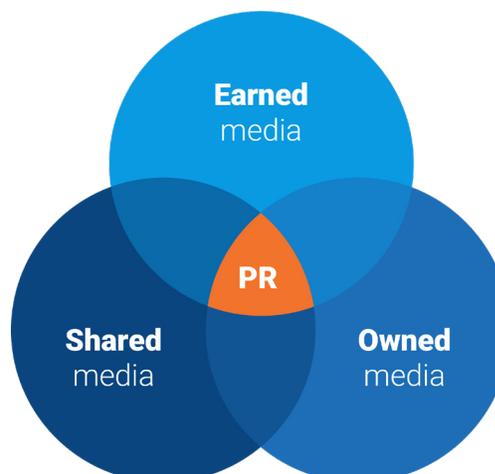
The buyer persona for Twidget's new product is between the ages of 40 and 55, is college-educated, has children, and has a household income over \$120,000.

Would it make sense to track impressions on Snapchat? Probably not, [since 86 percent of Snapchat users are under age 35](#). Instead, Twidget's PR strategy should seek earned media articles in industry trade magazines and business journals, and connect with social influencers who have followings of similar audience demographics.

We don't want anyone to confuse vanity numbers ("We got 1 million impressions with that campaign!") with results and return ("We had 200,000 impressions directed to our target buyer and made our sales goals with the conversions!"). One number sounds big; the other number makes a business impact.

Axia classifies media into three categories: earned, shared, and owned.

If we use this categorical breakdown, we can also see what kinds of metrics are valuable to measure each media type.





| Earned | Shared | Owned |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media impressions • Quality of media coverage • Key message inclusion • Social media shares and engagements • Link tracking and website traffic • Media, blogger, and influencer scoring • Sales leads increases around earned media coverage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post reach, impressions, and clicks • Page and post engagements • Reactions • Engaged users • New fans and followers • Video views • Likes • Shares • Comments • Social media placements • Reviews • Unique landing pages, discount codes, coupon codes, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landing pages • A/B testing • Unique visitors • Time spent on site • Bounce rate • Leads and conversions • Email marketing downloads and shares • Email databases • Community activity, comments • Sales |

Depending on the personalized PR strategic plan we create for your company, we may collect many different metrics; we'll evaluate them through the lens of what will best help you reach your goals and achieve your business and communication objectives. As the chapter title states, our focus is on metrics that matter – to you and your company.

Inputs and activities

When designing a PR plan, we start with your goals and objectives. Then, we dig deeper with inputs (such as research and materials) and activities. This is the first step in creating an effective strategy for you.

Inputs

What you need in preparation for communication

Inputs give focus to your plan. To begin, we look at the different publics for your message. Who are they? How do they prefer to receive information and which channels are most meaningful to them? What do these audiences need and want?

Next, we ask, “What are you not doing and what can you do better?” To answer those questions, we work with you to do a situation analysis, also called a SWOT analysis. What internal factors – the *strengths* and *weaknesses* – are impacting your goals? What do you excel at? What do you struggle to do well? Are there flaws in image, reputation, communication, product, employee relations, and other areas?

Then, we examine external factors – *opportunities* and *threats*. Where can your company gain new footholds, emerge as a thought-leader, and fill a product niche? What is threatening this? Competitors? Regulation? Changing demands? Something else?

Twidget's objectives

To increase sharing of new product line posts on social media platforms by end of next quarter to the following:

- 3,000 shares per post on Facebook
- 800 shares per post on Twitter
- 1,500 shares per post on Instagram

To increase positive reputation as measured by NPS of 70 or greater within 72 hours post-purchase by end of next quarter

Once we establish all these factors, we examine them to see which ones we can address through a PR plan in a way that is consistent with your company goals and time-bound objectives. What resources do we need to prepare our communication methods? What is the budget for these inputs? You must agree on and record these factors before moving on to the next stage.

In the Twidget example, the two objectives are to increase sharing and realize an NPS score of 70 or greater. What does the team need to make this happen? A list of possible inputs might include the following:

- *Social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram*
- *Social media manager*
- *Content for social media and people to produce it*
- *Program to prompt buyers to submit NPS information*
- *Database linkage between buyers and NPS program*
- *Analytics capabilities to evaluate NPS data, social media engagement data, and sales data*

Activities

Things you do to plan and produce your communication

Activities are the visible actions – the things most people think of when they think of PR. Web content and social media posts, when journalists write about your company, and when news shows call on your company’s spokesperson are all examples of activities that cultivate relationships and earned, shared, and owned media.

Some activities for Twidget, might include:

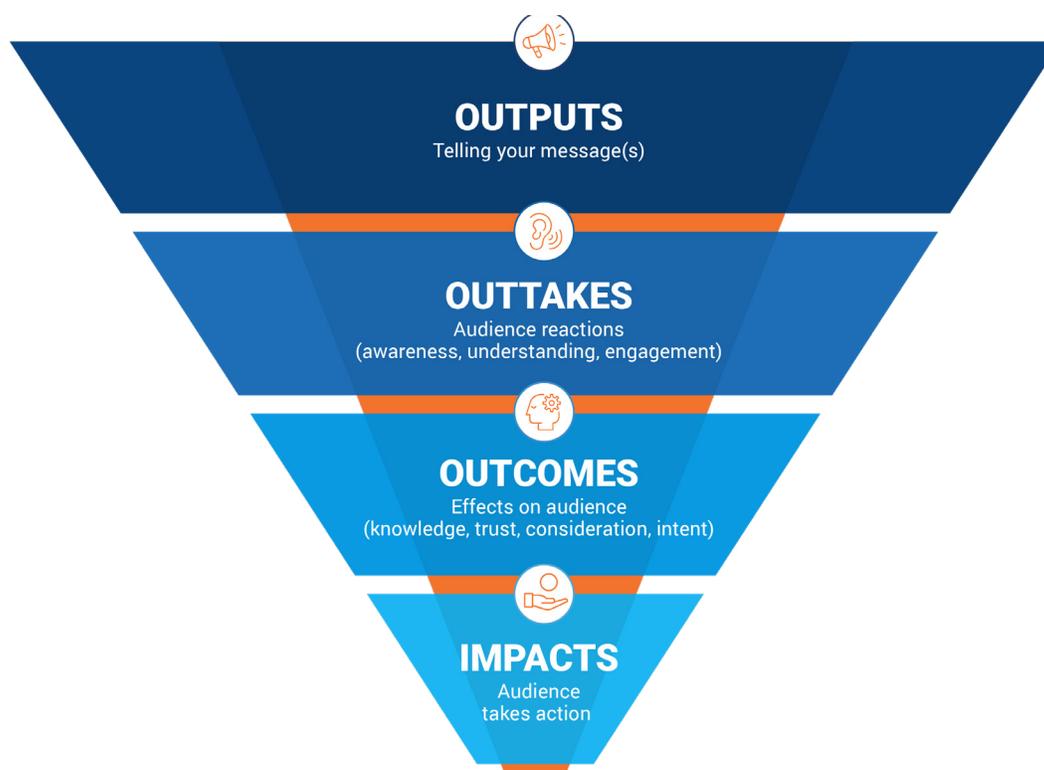
- *Collecting engagement baselines on current social media accounts*
- *Surveys and other forms of research regarding audience preferences*
- *Social media content*
- *Social media boosts*
- *Embedding an NPS program into the retail platform*
- *Reaching out to specific influencers*
- *Creating a customer follow-up system*
- *Creating an evaluation plan and protocol to measure results*

Axia Public Relations approaches PR from a broad perspective. Our years of experience have shown that in order to provide the most effective service possible, we need a full picture of your company to develop an honest and comprehensive plan built around your needs. Data informs that plan and allows us to evaluate the plan’s efficacy for the absolute best use of your time and resources.

Measurement

Outputs, outtakes, outcomes, and impacts

Evaluation includes quantitative and qualitative measures. We look at the numbers and what the numbers mean. Do they show changes in awareness, understanding, trust, and consideration? How do the numbers show achievement of the objectives stated in the plan? We cover that in outputs, outtakes, outcomes, and impacts – the next part of our PR framework design.



Outputs: What you share with target audiences

These are news releases, email marketing blasts, and product launches as well as the earned media coverage that they generate. Outputs also include proactive communication by an organization on its owned media channels and properties. In the most basic of terms, did the PR team's message get exposed to an audience?

In our Twidget example, social media posts, news releases, and sponsored events are all outputs.

Notice there is no evaluation at this point as to how effective the outputs were. Outputs are simply the work you produce. As such, they are fairly easy metrics to collect. How many people attended the event? How many tweets or Instagram posts did you create? How many media impressions did your news release reach?

Outtakes: What audiences do with your communication

Think of this as knowledge transfer; it's what an audience now understands after its exposure to content about your organization and brand. Audience engagement, sharing, and commenting are examples of outtakes. How did your efforts change minds and touch emotions to provoke a certain behavior?

For Twidget, outtakes were one objective. To measure audience behavior change – in this case, social media sharing – is to measure an outtake.

Outcomes: The effect your communication has on audiences

What happened as the result of a campaign? In PR, this would typically be a measurable change in awareness, knowledge, attitude, opinion, behavior, and reputation metrics. What change did your social media efforts affect? Did customer loyalty for the brand improve? Are your leads more qualified? Did increased engagement lead to people subscribing to your blog or newsletter or downloading an e-book? Can you attribute increased sales directly to increased product awareness?

The PR team at Twidget selected improved reputation as a primary outcome that would flow from its outputs and manifest as concrete outcomes.

Impacts: The results that your communication brings

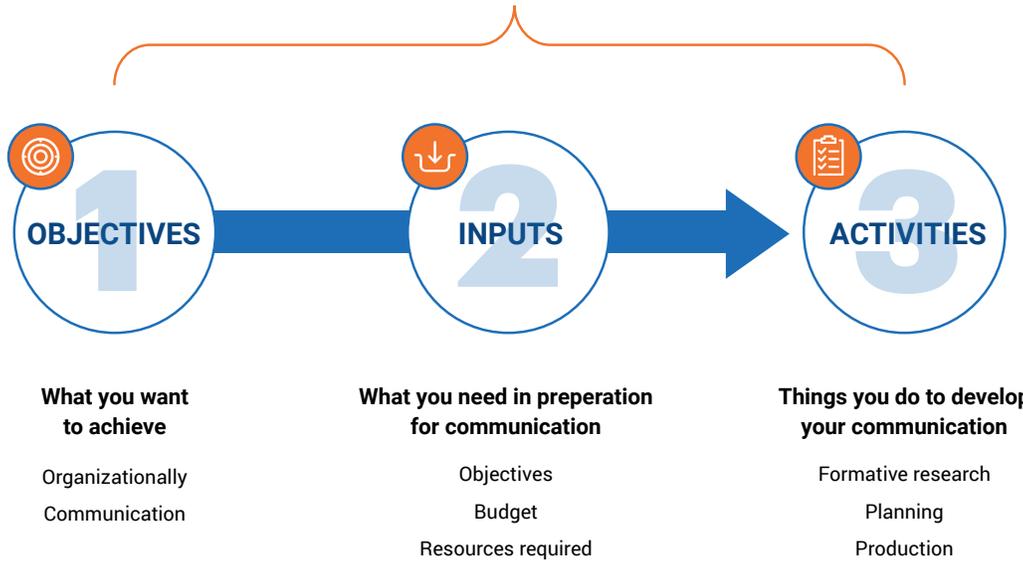
Impacts clearly demonstrate how the efforts of the PR program impacted business objectives.

For example, if Twidget meets its reputation objective, does this transfer to the organization as a whole or is it limited to the new product line? Does improved reputation lead to greater sales overall? How much greater? By keeping in mind how the PR program helps reach organizational objectives, the team can prove how it provides real value to the entire company through solid numbers and tie-in to the bottom line.

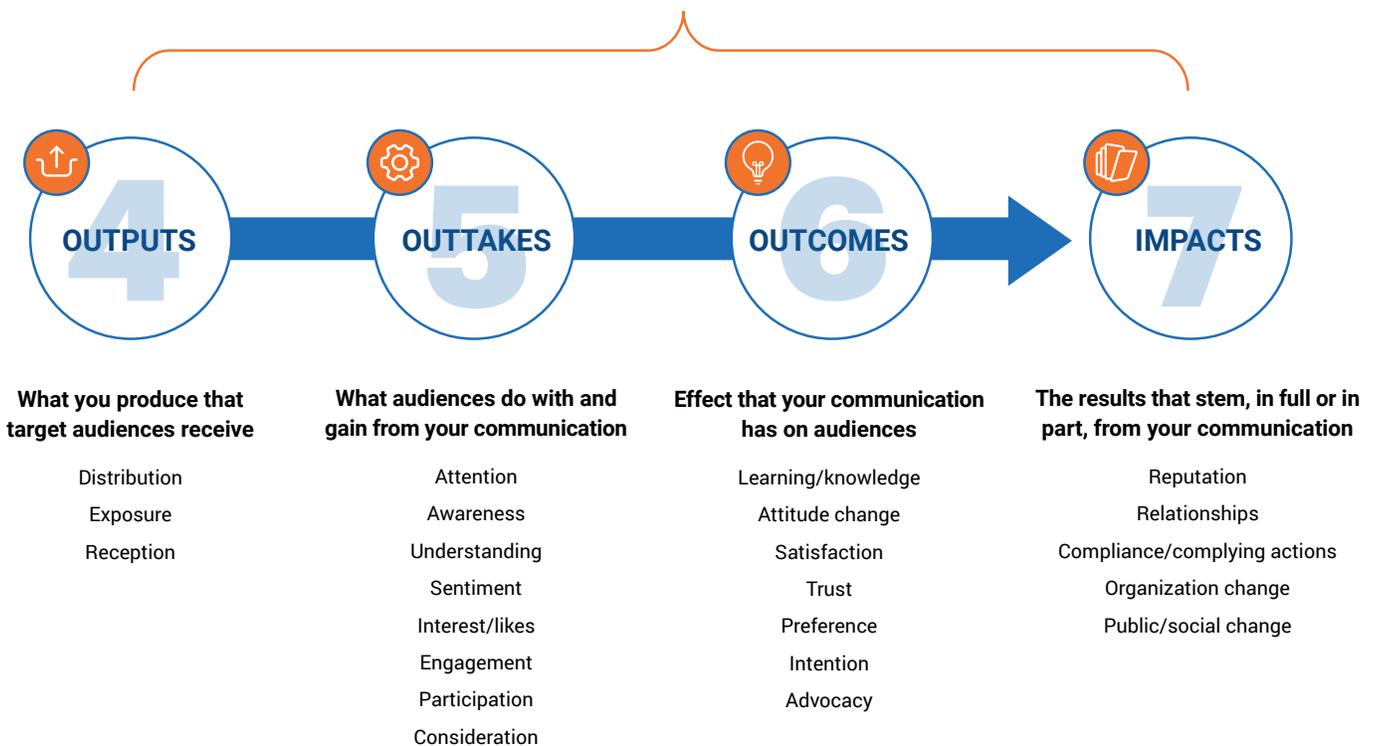
By moving beyond a list of activities, we ground your public relations plan in consultancy around true business needs and plans for growth. We recommend following a proven framework for success that you base on data, center on business and communication objectives, and develop with company leadership. Inputs and activities are the start, and nothing is complete until we can measure and evaluate the output, outtakes, outcomes, and overall impact of our work for you. Taking this kind of systematic approach leads to increased client confidence and agency credibility as well as stronger relationships built on mutual trust.

Axia PR's overall measurement process

RESEARCH, PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION



MEASUREMENT



What's ROI?

Let's be frank: Your company must be profitable. With any capital investment you make, whether in goods or services, you expect to create wealth.

Do you look at the work of your PR firm as an investment or as an operating expense? Our hope is that when working with us, you'll see us as a company that helps you make more money and that hiring us for our work is an investment.

When you consider an investment, you must discern whether the return is worth the cost. ROI is a popular term, even in advertising and marketing circles. While Axia is not an advertising or generalist marketing firm (we specialize exclusively in strategic external communication), we believe it's important to consider what kind of return on investment our work will produce.

In the strictest form, ROI is simply the net profit divided by the cost of investment. Multiply that figure by 100 to get a percent value.

$$\frac{\text{Return (benefit)}}{\text{Investment (cost)}} = \text{ROI}$$

We feel it's very important to note that net profit means profit in the true sense of the word: the amount you earned minus the amount you spent to earn it. All too often, companies brag about outstanding ROI, and when you press them, you learn they aren't factoring in their working expenses, which leads to an inflated ROI. In addition to being incorrect and unprofessional, we find this to be unethical. Axia uses the standard ROI formula and we expect others to, as well.

We also believe that companies should set aside resources for measuring their strategic partners, including their public relations agencies. Being unwilling to spend the time and money upfront for proper PR measurement is one of the [15 mistakes companies make when hiring a PR firm](#). Measurement should be part of your PR investment.

Before the campaign begins, we need to dedicate time for research. We discussed this more in-depth in chapters 4 and 5. Expect basic research to last about 30 days. We'll research your current web traffic, inbound leads, social media following, sales, and several other metrics that we access with your assistance. This way, throughout the campaign, both parties can check on progress and see the top-performing activities as well as any underperforming ones. Spending the time and money upfront on research and measurement is better for both parties in the long run because it establishes a baseline and defines your success at the end of the PR campaign.

By keeping numbers consistent and agreeing upfront about which values matter most for your particular objectives, we have a mutual understanding of success. We can look at ROI from an objective standpoint – not one where simply working hard equals a gut feeling of success or an emotion based on nothing more than instinct and recent momentum. Since we pride ourselves on our work, we stand by what we do and look at the metrics together to determine the positive impact of the campaign.

So, does Axia guarantee ROI?

No.

Wait! Keep reading...

We don't guarantee ROI because it's **unethical** to guarantee any results outside of your immediate control.

Take a look at some examples of results a company may want to see:

- Coverage of a product in the “hottest gifts of the season” feature of a national magazine's shopping guide
- Thousands of shares of a how-to video that features the company's product
- Hundreds of people download your company's e-book featuring your services and solutions to a common issue

We've established relationships with journalists, we create the environment, send supplemental information, nudge and push, and publish through owned media. In guaranteeing what is essentially earned media, there is a danger of spilling into unethical territory, falling under a quid pro quo scenario. After all, we can control our behavior; however, we can't control how someone else – in this case a news outlet or client customer – will behave.

So, when someone asks for a guarantee, what are they really asking?

- *Can I trust you?*
- *Is this worth my company's money?*
- *What number can I put on my budget spreadsheet?*

We guarantee the quality of our work and that we'll meet the agreed-upon scope.

A PR firm can't guarantee results. We can't control third parties such as media and consumer behavior. As a PR firm that focuses on handling various PR services for its clients, Axia Public Relations doesn't own any media outlets, nor do we have any control over media outlets and other third parties, including television, radio, print, web, and any other medium.

As you seek to hire a PR firm that fits your company's needs, it's important to recognize that there are elements like business, economy, and third-party factors that are outside of any PR professional's or firm's control – and this includes expecting a guarantee of sales. Other factors your PR firm can't control are products, services, prices, demands, markets, quality, competition, consumer behavior and preferences, media bias, and major events.

We make a commitment to our clients to be relevant and trusted advisers. Just as every sophisticated corporation demands accountability from each department to hit certain KPI measures that top management tracks and cares about, we, too, will work to hit success measures that we determine together. We hold ourselves to those objectives when providing your company with the services you hired us for.



Final thoughts



Not everything that counts can be counted,
and not everything that can be counted counts.



- **WILLIAM BRUCE CAMERON**

This quote originally appeared years ago in a sociology textbook. Cameron also commented that if we could quantify all the data in sociology and run it through a computer, sociologists could put together charts and predictions to graphically describe trends in human society. The point, of course, is that the ability to perform descriptive and predictive analyses could lead to new ways to optimize behavior and head off undesirable trends - which hits close to home in the PR world.

Today, the explosion of power in artificial intelligence and machine learning has led to programs that attempt to do just that. Programs that can process and predict tend to capture both our imaginations and our practical desire for knowledge.

The truth is that humans are still humans, and no amount of data can replace the personal aspect of what we do. We are public relations professionals. Creating and nurturing relationships, understanding sentiment in responses, and leveraging years of experience to determine where the public's attention is waxing and waning are all human-skill realities even as they remain machine-skill goals.

Maybe someday we'll perfect the models and lend greater clarity to our work so we can identify areas of opportunity and new audiences while simultaneously eliminating bias. However, while we acknowledge the development on the horizon, we are not yet there.

And, lest you think only statistics, data, and change metrics drive us, we also bring heart into what we do. At Axia, we're passionate about using our skills and experiences to create communications plans for your company that allow you to reach your goals. Quite literally, your success is our success. We can automate applications; we can crunch numbers; we can analyze feedback. However, only if we demonstrate care and only if we swathe our activities in integrity and foster genuine relationships among companies and their audiences will we have done our job right.

