



Measurement and Evaluation in Healthcare Communications

The HCA's Value Proposition

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Introduction

Foreward

The Healthcare Communications Association's (HCA) first published guidance relating to evaluation in communication activities, notably from a Public Relations perspective, over 20 years ago. Whilst the world and our industry has significantly changed, the importance of this topic remains, as do the challenges and barriers to implementation.

The HCA is now re-looking at the role of measurement and evaluation in the healthcare communications industry in 2024 and beyond. The purpose of this new HCA initiative is to support all of our members to:

1. Better understand the importance and value of measurement and evaluation
2. Overcome barriers to implementing measurement and evaluation in their communication programmes
3. Provide practical guidance to implementation and signpost to other resources on measurement and evaluation already available from other organisations

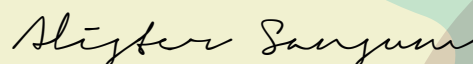
To help us achieve these aims we have conducted x14 structured interviews with members representing all the communications disciplines (advertising, medical education, medical affairs, and public relations) in both agencies and industry. This has given us a better understanding of our members perspectives on the role and importance of measurement and evaluation in our work. Publication of

these results will help the HCA to raise awareness among our community. The HCA will also look to provide its members with additional support and guidance through further publications and training.

This **Value Proposition** has been drafted to accompany the HCA's Measurement and Evaluation Initiative. It outlines the HCA's views around its importance and provides a simple model to aid implementation. It is intended to provide everyone who is involved in healthcare communications with a useful guide to measurement and evaluation and to act as a catalyst for discussions between all stakeholders.

As this initiative gathers pace, we envisage this guidance will evolve overtime incorporating users feedback and as initiatives are rolled out and further work is done in this space.

We look forward to working with our members on this important initiative that will benefit all of us in the healthcare communications sector.



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This Initiative has been developed by members of the HCA's Measurement and Evaluation Working Group, part of the HCA's Standard and Best Practice Committee

Why is measurement and evaluation of our work important?

- To enable us to assess the value of healthcare communications activities for all stakeholders
- To measure impact, integrity, transparency, and a 'holistic view of performance'
- To provide tangible insights and guide direction into future work and campaigns

“
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”

Why does this matter?

- As an industry we are focused on making a genuine difference to people's lives. This may be achieved in any number of ways for example by supporting a change in patient behaviour, advancing scientific understanding, communicating a new medical practice, treatment, guideline, or a change in health policy
- The HCA believes it is incumbent on us to ensure our work is as valuable, engaging, and impactful as possible and we cannot effectively do this if we do not measure and evaluate our work
- From an ethical perspective we should be striving to achieve the highest possible standards in everything we do so that our work has maximum positive impact
- How can we improve our work if we don't have some objective measures to define our success? "What can't be measured can't be managed (or evaluated)"
- Demonstrating a ROI is simply not possible if we do not measure and then evaluate the success of our work
- Achieving the highest standards in our work will further enhance the reputation of the healthcare industry

Incorporating measurement and evaluation into healthcare communication activities

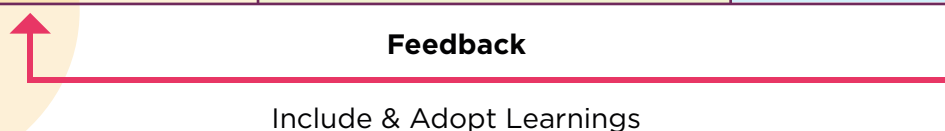
To assess the value of our communication activities we need to first **Plan** for any given programme, what we are trying to achieve and how we will know we have been successful or not.

Identification of the key metrics we are going to **Measure** will enable us to assess a change against an agreed benchmark.

Measuring a change on its own cannot inform us about effectiveness, we need to **Evaluate** what this means in the context of our objectives.



Plan	Measure	Evaluate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research• Set objectives / KPIs• Determine evaluation methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do we measure? Outputs; outtakes; outcomes and impact• Collect data according to chosen evaluation methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess Reach and Engagement• Evaluate Knowledge and Behaviour Change• Consider Patient Outcomes• Compare and Benchmark• Return on Investment (ROI)



Planning

In the planning phase we need to define

- What are we trying to achieve? “Be objective about objectives”. Setting clear and measurable objectives is foundational for any successful programme
- Different frameworks can be employed to help ensure their utility e.g.
 - **SMART** - **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound
 - **FAST** - **F**requently discussed **A**mbitious in scope **S**pecific metrics and measures and **T**ransparent for everyone

Measurement and evaluation strategy

As we develop our strategy we need to ask ourselves the following questions

- What is our research plan that will inform our approach to measurement and evaluation?
- What is going to be measured?
- What, how & when is data going to be collected?

Think about what can be measured

- **Outputs:** What you develop for target audiences. Outputs are the work you produce
- **Outtakes:** What audiences do with your communication. It involves knowledge transfer - it's what an audience now understands after its exposure to content about your programme. Audience engagement, sharing, and commenting are examples of outtakes
- **Outcomes:** The effects your communication has on audiences. What happened as the result of your project? e.g. a measurable change in knowledge, attitude, opinion, behaviour, or reputation
- **Impact:** The results that your communication brings. Impacts clearly demonstrate how the efforts affect your objectives

Know where you are starting from – identifying benchmarks

- At the Planning stage gather insights to establish benchmarks
- You must have some clear data showing where you are starting from, to serve as the benchmark, to demonstrate impact
 - For example: In a disease awareness campaign we may state “we know doctors don't recognise symptoms” – how do we know? If we have evidence for this, we have a benchmark even if that is qualitative. If we don't, and it is just a feel, is that good enough to start a programme based on that? Should we not first test the hypothesis or understand it better?

Measurement

What we measure will be defined by the objectives for our programme. In turn these objectives will need to be measurable.

WHAT do we measure?

Identifying what to measure will depend in part on the nature of the programme and the objectives.

“
When a
measure
becomes a
target, it ceases
to be a good
measure
”

Example measurement methodologies we can employ

Category	Criteria	Methodology
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disease• Product (within regulations)• Brand name• Key campaign issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market research surveys• Medical team, MSL and sales team feedback• Traffic to relevant websites / call centres
Event Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance at events• Impact on attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Numbers attending events• Attendances vs acceptances• Award of CME points• Post-event participant survey• Changes in knowledge on a particular topic• Self-assessed confidence before and after
Opportunities Arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sales opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sales force feedback
Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Product sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sales analysis• Modelling and forecasting methods
Uptake of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patient education leaflets• Posters• Reprints• Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tally of numbers of requests for a service• Coded feedback of a service• Website streaming
Media Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media coverage• Media attendance• Media services e.g. press offices etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media analysis• Volume/ reach in defined target audience media• Key message penetration• On-line sharing of articles (virality)

Reference: Based in part on HCA's Guide to Evaluation. Published 2001

Evaluation

Evaluation of whether our communications have been ‘successful’ goes hand in hand with an analysis of our evaluation criteria. Evaluations that can be made include:

1. **Data analysis:** comparing metrics against your objectives, identifying trends and patterns, and drawing insights from qualitative feedback.
2. **Assessing reach and engagement:** evaluating metrics such as website traffic, social media followers, likes, shares, comments, email open rates, click-through rates, and overall engagement levels. Compare these metrics to your objectives to determine if you have achieved the desired reach and engagement.
3. **Evaluating knowledge and behaviour change:** this can be done through surveys, interviews, or focus groups to measure the level of knowledge acquired, understanding of medical information, and any observed behaviour change resulting from the communications.
4. **Measure patient outcomes:** including assessing patient adherence rates, treatment outcomes, quality of life improvements, patient satisfaction, or participation in clinical trials or research studies.
5. **Compare and benchmark:** Compare your results against your previous projects or industry best practices to identify areas of success and areas that require improvement.
6. **Monitor Return on Investment (ROI):** Assess the financial and business impact of your communication activities. Analyze the costs associated with content creation, distribution channels.

Staging evaluation

Evaluation needs to be an integral part of your communication programme – not something tagged on at the end of a project.

For example:

- Setting staged outtakes and outcomes with staged evaluation
- Staging budgeting and expenditure
- Conducting pilots, evaluating pilots before scaling up

Barriers to implementation

Implementing measurement and evaluation into communication programmes does mean overcoming certain barriers which can be as varied as the projects we work on!

These can include:

- Lack of clear, measurable, agreed programme objectives
- Lack of baseline measurements
- Lack of clarity around the definition of significant endpoints
- Limited general understanding of how to evaluate
- Practical considerations of cost and resources
- Reluctance to include from key stakeholders

Overcoming these (and other) challenges requires thought and consideration and further guidance can be sought in our Further Reading section at the end of the article. The effort to do so however, should be balanced against all the benefits that we and the end recipients of our work will gain.

References & Further Reading

AMEC

The world's largest professional body for communications, research, media intelligence and insights.

Integrated Framework for Evaluation

- This framework is a free-to-use, interactive, online tool that will guide you through the planning stages for your project(s) and encourage you to think about the desired impact from the outset. The framework takes you from organisation objectives and communication objectives all the way to business impact.
- Richard Bagnall, AMEC Chair, [introduces the Framework and shares instructions](#) on how to use it.
- To support you with using AMEC's Integrated Framework, AMEC has provided a [list of useful resources](#), which includes a set of digital tools that will enable you to measure the performance of your programmes.
- Have outstanding questions about how to use the framework? Check out the [FAQs](#).

'What has planning got to do with it?'

- Richard Bagnall writes an insightful blog around the lack of proper planning in PR projects where teams step back and ask themselves, why am I doing this? What is the purpose? What am I trying to achieve?

Barcelona Principles 3.0

- A set of guidelines and principles for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of public relations and communications efforts. The seven core principles represent an international and industry-wide consensus on what matters most to improve the industry's approach to measurement and evaluation, encouraging organisations to move beyond simple, quantitative metrics and focus on measuring the real impact of their activities on their business objectives and reputation.

Taxonomy of evaluation

A wide range of PR and communication evaluation can often feel like a different language due to the wide range of terms used to describe the methods and metrics for each stage of the program. Drawing from a wide range of research studies to be as comprehensive as possible, this table maps out each stage of the planning process and categorises the concepts and terms and how they fit together.

Case studies

If you need some inspiration, or want to see the gold standard of measurement and evaluation from a range of industries, look no further than AMEC's collection of case studies:

- [The Stroke Association](#)
- [NHS Blood & Transplant](#)
- [Who really won Christmas?](#)
- [The Social PR Virtuoso](#)

BARCELONA PRINCIPLES 3.0



Recommended further reading

Interested and want to know more? AMEC shares their recommendations for further reading, including the following types of resources:

- Academic books and book chapters
- Articles, and refereed conference papers
- Online articles and professional papers
- Evaluation literature from other disciplines

Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)

With nearly 10,000 members, CIPR is the world's only Royal Chartered professional body for public relations practitioners. CIPR works with their members to set, maintain, and advance standards through industry respected qualifications, trainings, research and guidance.

Research, measurement & evaluation in public relations and communication management

- CIPR recognises the importance of research, measurement and evaluation as key components of strategic management and professional practice, which is why they have developed this learning resource focused on developing knowledge, skills, and competencies in this area.

Institute for Public Relations (IPR)

Non-profit foundation dedicated to foster greater use of research and research-based knowledge in public relations and corporate communication practice.

Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research

As the industry looks to set standards and

demonstrate consistent, credible approaches to measurement, we must first be aligned behind consistent and correct terminology. That is why IPR have created this dictionary resource, providing clear definitions and common uses for each term.

IPR Measurement Commission

Members of the IPR Measurement Commission regularly research, draft and publish insightful articles on a range of measurement and evaluation topics, which can be easily navigated via their hyperlinked categories at the top of the page.

The Communicator's Guide to Research, Analysis, and Evaluation

This resource was created to help Public Relations leaders understand how they can apply data, research, and analytics to uncover insights that inform strategic decision making, improve communication performance, and deliver meaningful benefit contributions.

A five-step cyclical process based on the core components of communication research, analysis, and evaluation serves as the cornerstone for this report, which also features examples and applications to help you put it all into practice.

LinkedIn Articles/Advice

How can health communication campaigns measure and demonstrate their impact and value?

Learn about some of the methods and challenges of measuring and demonstrating the impact and value of healthcare communication campaigns.

