

Developing Government Communications Performance Measurement and Evaluation

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a first stage investigation into implementing Recommendation Five of the Cross Government Communication Review as follows:

“Drawing on Government Communications Network (GCN) web resources, a set of best practice measurement reporting tools be developed and made available to all core public sector agencies. Such tools be trialled for one fiscal year and then be incorporated as agreed measurements in departmental statements of service performance.”

The Cross Government Communications Steering Committee agreed that a necessary first step in approaching this challenge was canvassing current communications evaluation practice in New Zealand and internationally.

The methodology was determined as:

1. A literature review of communications performance measurement models, approaches and tools being used by the public and private sectors internationally with the view to identifying those with the potential to be adopted in New Zealand. Particular focus should be given to the work done within this area by the Canadian Government and the United Kingdom’s GCN.
2. A survey of senior New Zealand government communications professionals to determine which performance and evaluation tools are being used in New Zealand.

This paper brings together the key findings from these two pieces of work and provides recommendations for next steps.

2. Methodologies

2.1. Government Communications Survey

In December 2009, a brief online survey was sent to senior communications staff at a range of government agencies to assess what is being done to measure the performance of communications and what is considered most effective.

Seventeen responses were received.

2.2. Literature review

A range of mainly United Kingdom and American industry association, government and not-for-profit websites were reviewed in January 2010. The aim was to assess their approach to communications evaluation, with the view to determining models and tools which could be adapted for use in New Zealand.

3. Findings

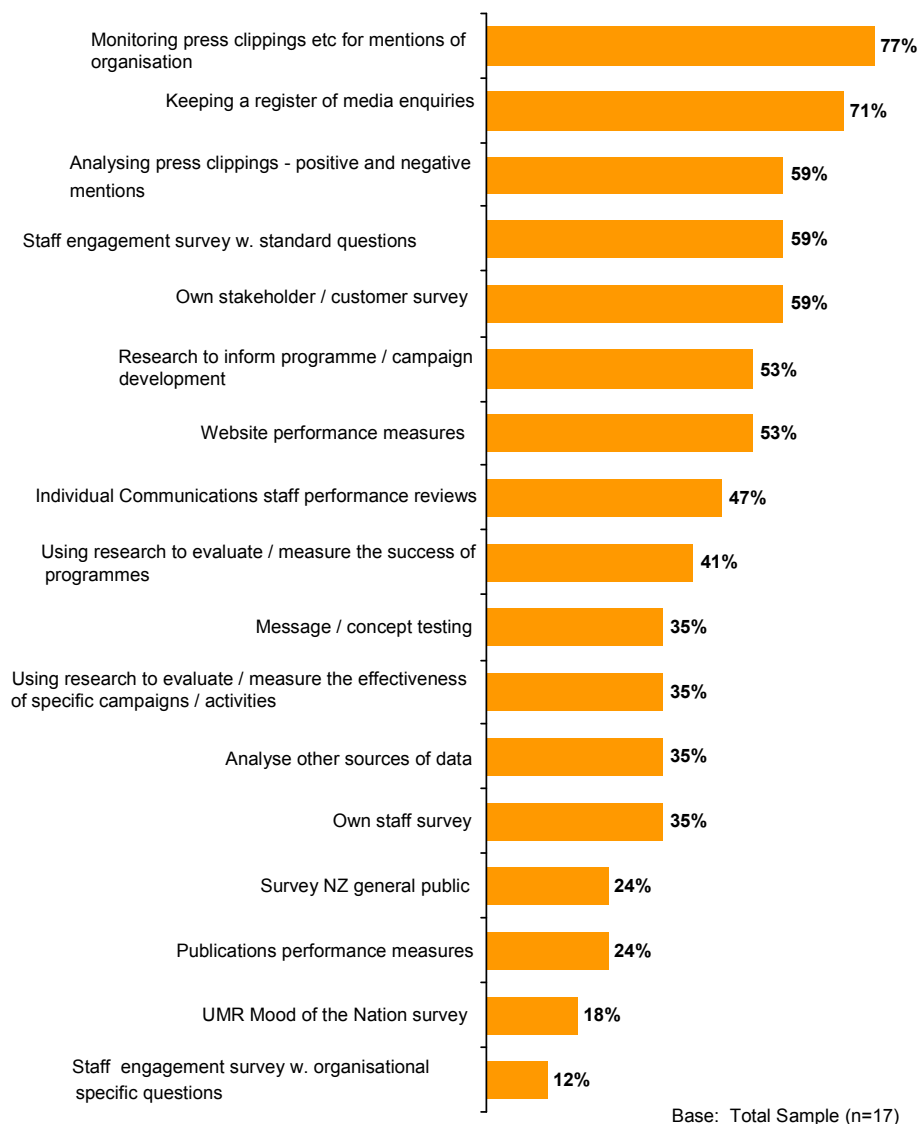
3.1. Current New Zealand usage and effectiveness

Finding One: Monitoring press clippings and keeping a register of media enquiries is most commonly used to measure communications performance

To measure communications performance, most of the government organisations surveyed monitor press clippings and the like for mentions of their organisation (77%) or keep a register of media enquiries (71%, see chart overleaf).

Very few survey the New Zealand general public (24%), use publications performance measures (24%), the UMR Mood of the Nation survey (18%), or staff engagement surveys with organisational specific questions relating to the communications function (12%).

Current Measures of Communications Performance



Base: Total Sample (n=17)

Finding Two: Most effective approaches not always most commonly used

NB: The following results are indicative only as the number of people rating the effectiveness of some of these measures was as very low.

The **most effective** tools for delivering meaningful communications performance measurement were considered to be:

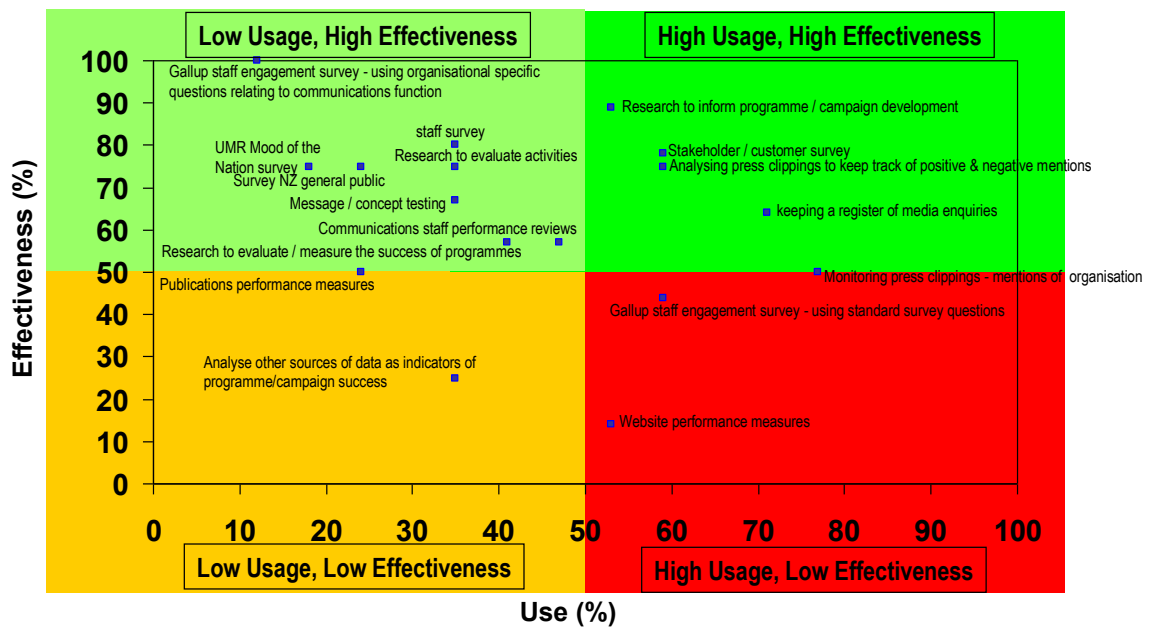
- staff engagement surveys (using organisational specific questions relating to communications function), which only 12% actually use,
- research to inform or evaluate programme/campaign development,
- staff surveys,
- stakeholder/customer surveys, and
- analysing press clippings etc to keep track of positive and negative mentions.

The **least effective** were considered to be:

- website performance measures,
- analysing other data sources as indicators of programme or campaign success, and
- staff engagement surveys if only using standard survey questions.

The chart below shows the relationship between usage and effectiveness. Some of the measures considered most effective are clearly not used by many of the organisations surveyed, such as staff engagement surveys (using organisational specific questions relating to communications function), staff surveys, and UMR mood of the nation.

Usage vs. Effectiveness



Noteworthy is that although many New Zealand government agencies are researching their communications for *development* purposes, far fewer are using research to measure performance and evaluate the *outcome* of their communications.

Finding three: Researchers are most commonly consulted to measure communications performance

Researchers (either internal or external providers) tend to be the most commonly consulted practitioners, for measuring communications performance. Advertising agencies are used the least (27%), and 13% say no one else is involved.

3:2 International usage and effectiveness

Searches revealed that evaluation is regarded as a core communications requirement by international industry and government organisations.

However, much of the discussion covers the lack of common measurement in the industry and the difficulties that communicators face in evaluating their work such as:

- Isolating the effects of communications on outcomes that have many competing influences and factors.
- Limited resources – communicators often don't have enough money or staff resources to be able to use standards tools such as questionnaires and interviews to measure changes to knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of audiences.
- Lack of expertise and fear that others will question its value.
- Fear that a poor result will reflect negatively on the team that has worked on the project or campaign.

A 2009 international survey conducted by the UK Institute of Public Relations surveyed 520 international practitioners and found that the PR profession have not agreed upon a common set of criteria or tools and those that are evaluating (77%) are using a wide range of tools and evaluation practices. Many practitioners are using multiple methods (on average four) to overcome the limitations of each individual method and no one method was considered “most effective”.

One area where there is more agreement is internal communications which is considered easier to measure and monitor. Employee surveys are the number one measurement tool. Second favourite is feedback from colleagues. Employee surveys, internal reviews, feedback from colleagues and focus groups all get strong approval ratings. This echoes the findings of the New Zealand survey where Gallup results were considered one of the most effective tools.

Most of the online discussion and literature focuses on describing the relative merits of different methodologies (e.g. surveys, media analysis and interviews) for evaluating the stages and elements of communications campaigns.

Little information was uncovered on best practice measurement and reporting tools for evaluating the performance of communications departments. Neither the CGN site, nor the Canadian Government site provides this information either.

The same tools (e.g. opinion surveys, media analysis) can be used to measure communications departments and campaigns. While using these tools is straight forward, there is little information on what questions should be asked or data analysed to provide meaningful information on overall communications performance and to assist in understanding what targets should be achieved.

Some of the most detailed material relating to measurement and evaluation has been produced by the US Institute for Public Relations, which supports a Commission on Measurement and Evaluation. This website provides valuable academic (and dense) discussion on communications evaluation and theory. In particular, it introduces the concept of measuring relationships in Public Relations. However it would require further work to identify the most relevant information and simplify it.

The Government Communications Network (GCN) in the UK has produced some general information on campaign evaluation and the GCN website contains a best practice guide developed by the Home Office which elaborates further. This content is useful and could be adopted in New Zealand to establish a guide to evaluating communications campaigns and materials.

The Central Office of Information (COI) in the UK is a government department which operates as a full service marketing and communications agency for government. Within COI, there are two units with specific knowledge on evaluation and measurement, the strategic consultancy service and the research department. Both provide evaluation services and are in the unique position of having a cross-government view of what's happening in communications evaluation.

COI has developed a tracking research database tool which can be used to help to set realistic targets for communications campaigns and benchmark against other campaigns in government. COI does not provide examples of this or any guidelines on their website. The only way to find out more about this and other models or tools that they (and their clients) are using would be to contact them directly.

4. Conclusions and discussion

4.1. The current situation in New Zealand

In New Zealand, some of the more effective methods of measuring communications performance are not necessarily being used. Survey results also suggest that many New Zealand government agencies are open to researching their communications for development purposes, but that, given the low usage currently, some government agencies may require a little encouragement or support to use research to measure performance and evaluate the *outcome* of their communications.

4.2. Developing guidelines to government communication evaluation in New Zealand

There is relevant international material which could be adapted to produce some general guidelines for government communications evaluation in New Zealand. The guidelines could cover why, what and how to evaluate communications campaigns and materials, with examples of the different types of methodologies available. This could be based on the GCN and American material and include examples and case studies from New Zealand government departments.

4.3. Developing a common set of government communications measures and reporting tools

There seems to be little publicly accessible, widely accepted “best practice measures” which could be used in a common reporting tool. Much of the literature advocates using multiple evaluation methods to overcome the weaknesses of one tool and to triangulate results.

A starting point could be determining what sorts of measures and audiences would be common to all New Zealand government agencies.

Suggestions could come from:

- The Review’s definition of the public sector communications function which focuses on areas such as neutrality, openness and trust.
- Identifying generic measures covered in the Gallup Engagement Survey, the MAF Communications End-User Survey, and the MAF Communications Staff Survey.
- Looking at media evaluation examples from a range of government departments.
- Examining the questions used in a range of other survey types such as reputation surveys, customer satisfaction surveys, stakeholder surveys.
- Reviewing the guidance from the American Institute for Public Relations on measuring relationships in public relations – this covers what questions to ask to measure how well any organisation’s relationships are working.

After determining if there are common measures and audiences which all government departments could assess, the next step would be determining the most appropriate and practical collection methods/tools which would suit everyone.

4.4 Issues to consider

Some academic discussion refutes that it is possible or even desirable to develop a common set of measures and tools given that each organisation will have very different strategic objectives and programmes.

We would need to establish normative or benchmark measurements across New Zealand government communications to provide an indication of what is an acceptable result or not. Different levels of funding, communications channels, whether or not enforcement is involved (heightening awareness and compliance more than communications with no enforcement component) etc all make it difficult to be able to compare like with like.

High-level measures used in a common set of tools are more likely to be affected by factors outside the control of communications. This leads to the issue of trying to isolate the impact that communications have had on an outcome, given other influencing factors, so we can *evaluate* our role and improve rather than *monitor*¹.

5. Recommendations

Setting-up a sub-group of the working group of communications leaders from across government (and potentially general government research and evaluation specialists) to:

1. Develop a guide to government communications evaluation in New Zealand by adapting the work of the UK Government Communications Network (GCN) and other best practice guides from America. Include examples of the methodologies used by New Zealand government communications departments and case studies.
2. Debate whether a generic framework/common reporting tool/s for government communications performance measurement is required/desired:
 - Look at what the SSC has done in terms of providing common government frameworks for measurement and the potential for benchmarking, for example customer satisfaction across government agencies (the Common Measurement Tool (CMT)).
 - Debate what measures would be appropriate to put into a common reporting tool, the best methodologies, and what results would be determined as ‘good’ communications, and what results would be determined as ‘poor’ communications.
 - Debate if using multiple sources (e.g. a public survey, stakeholder survey, staff survey and media analysis, focus groups, interviews) would then require the data to be “crunched” into a set of agreed high-level reporting criteria to be useful.

3. Investigate the feasibility of creating a database across government agencies to use as normative data:
 - Interview the Head of Research and the Head of the Strategic Consultancy at the Central Office of Communication in the UK, to provide an overview of their campaign evaluation database and any common measurement criteria and tools being used in across government in the UK
 - Look at the potential to link into the UK database (this would mean also looking at the questions used in any measuring and evaluation tool to ensure the questions were asked in a similar manner to make any comparisons meaningful).

ⁱ From Jane Davidson's article *Why genuine evaluation must be value-based* – "What makes something genuinely an evaluation is that it involves asking and answering questions about quality or value, e.g.

- it's not just measuring outcomes; it's saying how substantial, how valuable, how equitable those outcomes are
- it's not just reporting on implementation; it's saying how well, how effectively, how appropriate the implementation was
- it's not just reporting on whether the project was delivered within budget; it's asking how reasonable the cost was, how cost-effective it was, and so forth,"

Government Communications survey

Type: 100324 Executive Summary Report

Date: 1/04/2010

Total number of responses collected: 17

1: What is your organisation **currently doing to measure the performance of its communications functions?
Please tick all that are relevant.**

(Respondents were allowed to choose **multiple** responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Research to inform programme / campaign development e.g. identifying and understanding target audiences		52.9%	9
Message / concept testing		35.3%	6
Using research to evaluate / measure the success of programmes		41.2%	7
Using research to evaluate / measure the effectiveness of specific campaigns or activities within a programme		35.3%	6
Analyse other sources of data (hard measures) as indicators of programme or campaign success		35.3%	6
Other - please specify		11.8%	2
keeping a register of media enquiries		70.6%	12
Monitoring press clippings etc for mentions of your		76.5%	13

organisation			
Analysing press clippings etc to keep track of positive and negative mentions		58.8%	10
Other - please specify		11.8%	2
Gallop staff engagement survey - using Gallop standard survey questions		58.8%	10
Gallop staff engagement survey - using organisational specific questions relating to communications function		11.8%	2
UMR Mood of the Nation survey		17.6%	3
Your own survey amongst the New Zealand general public		23.5%	4
Your own staff survey		35.3%	6
Your own stakeholder / customer survey		58.8%	10
Other - please specify		11.8%	2
Website performance measures		52.9%	9
Publications performance measures		23.5%	4
Other - please specify		11.8%	2
Individual Communications staff performance reviews		47.1%	8
Other - please specify		11.8%	2
Nothing		0.0%	0
		Valid Responses	17
		Total Responses	17

2: In your mind, how effective is each of the following approaches in terms of delivering meaningful communications performance measurement for your organisation?

		1 - Extremely effective	2	3	4	5 - Not effective at all	Total	Mean	Std Dev
Research to inform programme / campaign development e.g. identifying and understanding target audiences	Count	3	5	1	0	0	9	1.778	0.667
	% by Row	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Message / concept testing	Count	1	1	0	1	0	3	2.333	1.528
	% by Row	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%		
Using research to evaluate / measure the success of programmes	Count	2	2	2	0	1	7	2.429	1.397
	% by Row	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%	0.0%	14.3%	100.0%		
Using research to evaluate / measure the effectiveness of specific campaigns or activities within a programme	Count	2	1	0	0	1	4	2.250	1.893
	% by Row	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	100.0%		
Analyse other sources of data (hard measures) as indicators of	Count	1	0	3	0	0	4	2.500	1.000

programme or campaign success									
	% by Row	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Other (specify)	Count	1	2	2	2	0	7	2.714	1.113
	% by Row	14.3%	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%	0.0%	100.0%		
keeping a register of media enquiries	Count	3	4	4	0	0	11	2.091	0.831
	% by Row	27.3%	36.4%	36.4%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Monitoring press clippings etc for mentions of your organisation	Count	2	4	4	2	0	12	2.500	1.000
	% by Row	16.7%	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%	100.0%		
Analysing press clippings etc to keep track of positive and negative mentions	Count	3	3	1	1	0	8	2.000	1.069
	% by Row	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	100.0%		
Gallop staff engagement survey - using Gallop standard survey questions	Count	1	3	5	0	0	9	2.444	0.726
	% by Row	11.1%	33.3%	55.6%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Gallop staff engagement survey - using organisational specific questions relating to	Count	0	4	0	0	0	4	2.000	0.000

communications function									
	% by Row	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
UMR Mood of the Nation survey	Count	0	3	1	0	0	4	2.250	0.500
	% by Row	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Your own survey amongst the New Zealand general public	Count	1	2	1	0	0	4	2.000	0.816
	% by Row	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Your own staff survey	Count	0	4	1	0	0	5	2.200	0.447
	% by Row	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Your own stakeholder / customer survey	Count	3	4	2	0	0	9	1.889	0.782
	% by Row	33.3%	44.4%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Website performance measures	Count	0	1	4	2	0	7	3.143	0.690
	% by Row	0.0%	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%	0.0%	100.0%		
Publications performance measures	Count	0	2	2	0	0	4	2.500	0.577
	% by Row	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Individual Communications staff performance reviews	Count	1	3	2	1	0	7	2.429	0.976

	% by Row	14.3%	42.9%	28.6%	14.3%	0.0%	100.0%		
Total	Count	24	48	35	9	2	118	N/A	N/A
	% by Row	20.3%	40.7%	29.7%	7.6%	1.7%	100.0%		

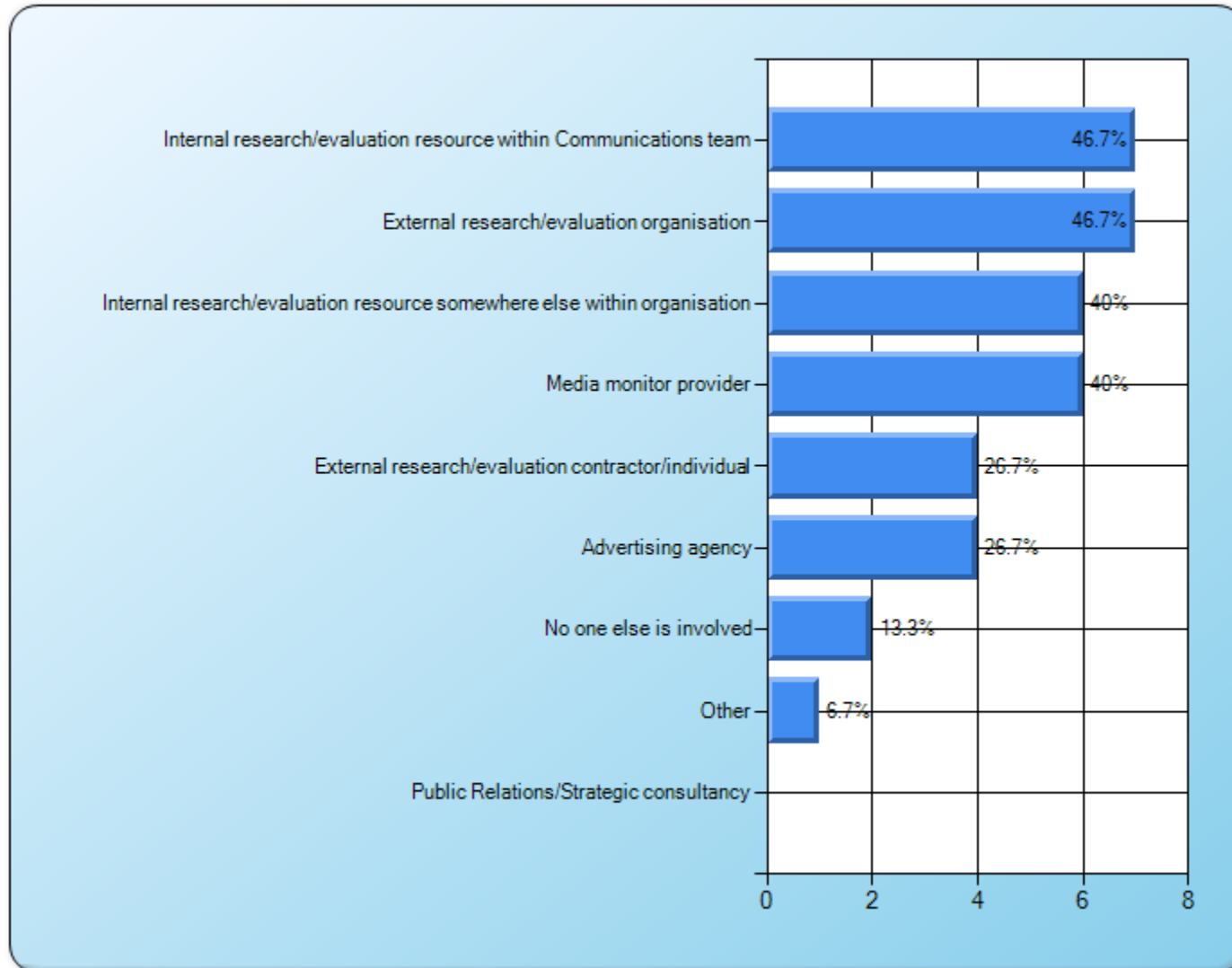
2: SUMMARISED AND RANKED BY EFFECTIVE (1+2)

									Summary	
		1 - Extremely effective	2	3	4	5 - Not effective at all	Total	Mean	effective	not effective
Gallop staff engagement survey - using organisational specific questions relating to communications function	% by Row	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4	2	100.00%	0.00%
Research to inform programme / campaign development e.g. identifying and understanding target audiences	% by Row	33.30%	55.60%	11.10%	0.00%	0.00%	9	1.778	88.90%	0.00%
Your own staff survey	% by Row	0.00%	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5	2.2	80.00%	0.00%
Your own stakeholder / customer survey	% by Row	33.30%	44.40%	22.20%	0.00%	0.00%	9	1.889	77.70%	0.00%
Using research to evaluate / measure the effectiveness of specific campaigns or activities within a programme	% by Row	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	4	2.25	75.00%	25.00%
Analysing press clippings etc to keep track of positive and negative mentions	% by Row	37.50%	37.50%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%	8	2	75.00%	12.50%
Your own survey amongst the New Zealand general public	% by Row	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4	2	75.00%	0.00%
UMR Mood of the Nation survey	% by Row	0.00%	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4	2.25	75.00%	0.00%
Message / concept testing	% by Row	33.30%	33.30%	0.00%	33.30%	0.00%	3	2.333	66.60%	33.30%
keeping a register of media enquiries	% by Row	27.30%	36.40%	36.40%	0.00%	0.00%	11	2.091	63.70%	0.00%
Using research to evaluate / measure the success of programmes	% by Row	28.60%	28.60%	28.60%	0.00%	14.30%	7	2.429	57.20%	14.30%

Individual Communications staff performance reviews	% by Row	14.30%	42.90%	28.60%	14.30%	0.00%	7	2.429	57.20%	14.30%
Monitoring press clippings etc for mentions of your organisation	% by Row	16.70%	33.30%	33.30%	16.70%	0.00%	12	2.5	50.00%	16.70%
Publications performance measures	% by Row	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4	2.5	50.00%	0.00%
Gallop staff engagement survey - using Gallop standard survey questions	% by Row	11.10%	33.30%	55.60%	0.00%	0.00%	9	2.444	44.40%	0.00%
Other (specify)	% by Row	14.30%	28.60%	28.60%	28.60%	0.00%	7	2.714	42.90%	28.60%
Analyse other sources of data (hard measures) as indicators of programme or campaign success	% by Row	25.00%	0.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4	2.5	25.00%	0.00%
Website performance measures	% by Row	0.00%	14.30%	57.10%	28.60%	0.00%	7	3.143	14.30%	28.60%
Total							118			

**4: Who is involved or consulted with in relation to measuring the performance of your communications functions?
Tick all that are appropriate.**

(Respondents were allowed to choose **multiple** responses)

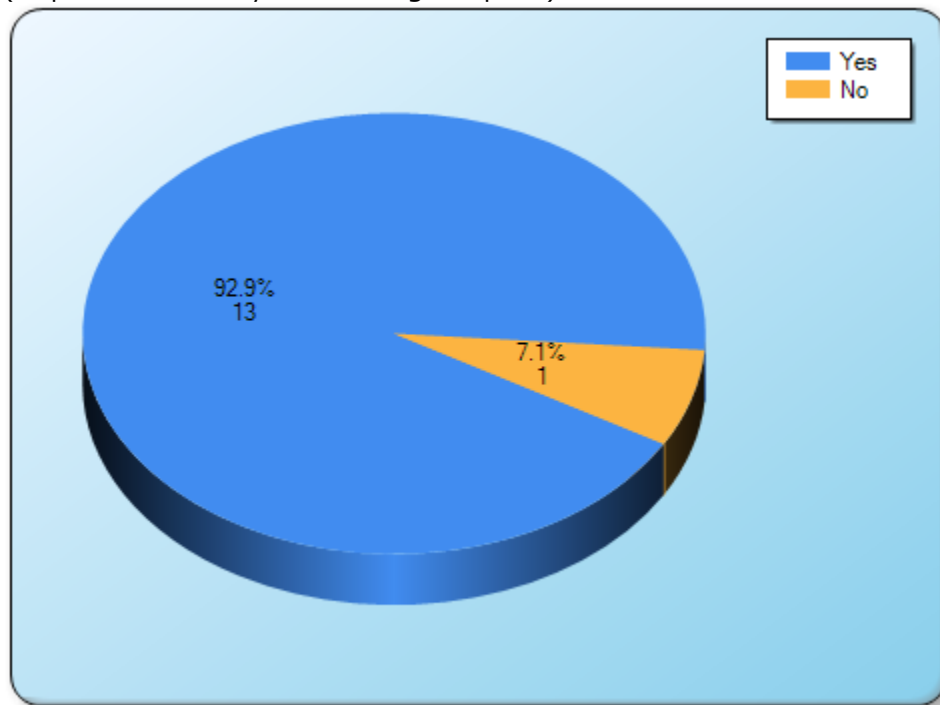


5: Early next year, we will be undertaking some further research to discuss in more detail how meaningful heads of Communications find the various communications performance measurement approaches they use.

This is likely to be performed face to face with a sample of those who complete this survey.

Are you willing to take part in such an interview early next year?

(Respondents could only choose a **single** response)



6: Please provide the following details: (Full name:)

(Respondents were limited to **brief** text responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
		7.1%	1
Antony Paltridge		7.1%	1
Christine Seymour		7.1%	1
Debbie Gee		7.1%	1
Jaewynn McKay		7.1%	1
Jason Ryan		7.1%	1
John Goulter		7.1%	1
justin brownlie		7.1%	1
Justine Gilliland		7.1%	1
Katie Mathison		14.3%	2
Mike Munro		7.1%	1
Rowan McArthur		7.1%	1
russell pilcher		7.1%	1
		Valid Responses	14
		Total Responses	14

6: Please provide the following details: (Email address:)

(Respondents were limited to **brief** text responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
		7.1%	1
antony.paltridge@govthouse.govt.nz		7.1%	1
christine.seymour@xtra.co.nz		7.1%	1
debbie.gee@dol.govt.nz		7.1%	1
jason.ryan@ssc.govt.nz		7.1%	1
jgilliland@linz.govt.nz		7.1%	1
john.goulter@ird.govt.nz		7.1%	1
justin.brownlie@morst.govt.nz		7.1%	1
katie.mathison@nzfsa.govt.nz		14.3%	2
mckja@tpk.govt.nz		7.1%	1
Mike.Munro@treasury.govt.nz		7.1%	1
rowan.mcarthur@customs.govt.nz		7.1%	1
russell.pilcher@police.govt.nz		7.1%	1
		Valid Responses	14
		Total Responses	14

Literature Review: Communications Performance Measurement

April 2010

Executive summary

A range of mainly United Kingdom (UK) and American industry association, government and not-for-profit websites were reviewed in January 2010 to assess their approach to public communications evaluation, with the view to determining models and tools which could be adopted for use in New Zealand.

Searches revealed that evaluation is regarded as a core communications requirement. However, much of the discussion covers the difficulty in evaluating, the lack of measurement in the sector and the variety of methods being used by practitioners.

Methodologies exist for evaluating campaigns which range from true experimental design and quasi-experimental design to simply examining trend data and being satisfied that the campaign activities were carried out and that the desired change occurred.

In reality, the existing methodologies are under used. A number of reasons are put forward; the impracticality and complexity of methodology (particularly for experimental design), vagueness of campaign design, lack of resources and know-how for evaluation, and the absence of an evaluation culture.

The international public relations profession has not agreed upon a common set of criteria or tools. Many use a wide range of tools and evaluation practices to overcome the limitations of each individual method. No one method is considered “most effective”. One area where there is more agreement is internal communications, which is considered easier to measure and monitor, by using staff surveys and feedback.

There is useful private sector information, and some best practice guides for evaluating campaigns, which cover the importance of evaluation, what to evaluate and the various methodologies. There is also a body of work which has been done for the not-for-profit sector in America.

In terms of government communication evaluation, the Government Communications Network (GCN) in the UK has some general evaluation information on its website and a best practice guide (focusing on evaluating campaigns) developed by the Home Office which elaborates further.

The Central Office of Information (COI), a UK government department which operates as a full service marketing and communications agency, has developed a tracking research database tool which can be used to help to set realistic targets for communications campaigns and benchmark against other campaigns in government.

COI does not provide examples of this or any guidelines on their website. The only way to find out more about this and other models or tools that they (and their clients) are using would be to contact them directly.

The Canadian government drafted a government communications policy in 2006. The policy sets out the expectations of the Government and has provisions in the appendix for detailed guidelines. However, it seems these guidelines have never been written. The Canadian Government does use a standard tool to evaluate major advertising campaigns: the Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool. Unfortunately the link to this tool isn't working. Again, the only way to find out more about this would be to contact them directly.

Some of the most detailed material relating to measurement and evaluation has been produced by the American Institute for Public Relations (IPR), which supports a Commission on Measurement and Evaluation. This website provides valuable academic (and dense) discussion on communications evaluation and theory. In particular, it introduces the concept of measuring relationships in Public Relations. However it would require further work to identify the most relevant information and simplify it.

Conclusion

The evaluation of public communications campaigns is a developing field. Standard and widely accepted guidelines for communications evaluation do not exist yet.

Most of the online discussion and literature focuses on describing the relative merits of tools (such as surveys, media analysis, and interviews), which can be used to evaluate the different stages and elements of specific *communications campaigns*.

Little information was uncovered on best practice for evaluating the performance of *communications departments*. Neither the GCN site, nor the Canadian Government site provides this information either.

A standard methodology is yet to emerge and it is also generally agreed that there is no right or wrong way to evaluate communications. Different evaluation needs and capabilities require different evaluation designs.

There is agreement that meaningful campaign evaluation is possible and there is relevant international material that could be adapted to produce guidelines for government communications in New Zealand.

However, there seems to be little publicly accessible, widely accepted "best practice measurement reporting tools" which could be used to provide standardised measurements across New Zealand government communications. Indeed some academic discussion refutes that this is possible or even desirable given that each organisation will have very different strategic objectives.

Recommendation

A guide to public communications campaign evaluation be developed which covers why, what, and how to evaluate and describes the different methodologies.

The guide could be based on the GCN material and work done in the American not-for-profit sector by the Communications Network and the Communications Consortium Media Centre.

This general information could be enhanced by including examples of tools and case studies of campaign evaluation from New Zealand government departments.

Introduction

This report looks to support the implementation of Recommendation Five of the Communication Review:

“Drawing on GCN web resources, a set of best practice measurement reporting tools be developed and made available to all core public sector agencies. Such tools be trialled for one fiscal year and then be incorporated as agreed measurements in departmental statements of service performance.”

The first step in this process was designated as a *“literature review of communications performance measurement models, approaches and tools being used by the public and private sectors internationally with the view of identifying those with potential to be adopted in New Zealand.”*

Particular focus was to be given to the work done within this area by the Canadian Government and the UK’s GCN.

Methodology

The literature review involved assessing key UK and US industry associations, government and not-for-profit websites. The following websites were reviewed in January 2010:

UK

- The Government Communications Network (GCN)
- The Central Office of Information (COI)
- Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)
- International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) - global trade body and professional institute for agencies and practitioners who provide media evaluation and communication research.
- Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM)
- Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA)
- Intelligent Measurement blog – private communication evaluation practitioner’s blog

Canada

- Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

US

- Institute for Public Relations (IPR)
- The Commission on Public Relations Measurement & Evaluation – part of the Institute for Public Relations
- The Communications Network – communications advice in philanthropy
- Communications Consortium Media Centre

Note: for the purposes of this report the word “campaign” is used to represent a range of communications functions- not just social marketing or information campaigns.

The GCN information is included in its entirety in the appendix of this document.

Findings

Difficulty in evaluating

Most literature on communications performance measurement first covers the difficulty in evaluating, the lack of measurement in the sector and the variety of methods being used by practitioners.

An international survey of PR practitioners conducted by the UK IPR in 2009 found that 77 percent of respondents (n=520) claimed to measure their work, though this had risen compared with 69 percent in a similar survey five years ago.

Why aren't people evaluating?

Several reasons are frequently mentioned:

- It is very difficult to try to isolate the effects of communications on outcomes that have many competing influences and factors. Many public communications campaigns lack the ability to develop experimental designs to create control groups to check if the outcome would have occurred anyway.
- Limited resources – communicators often don't have enough money or staff resources to be able to use standard tools such as questionnaires and interviews to measure changes to knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of audiences.
- Lack of expertise and fear that others will question its value. For example, there is a lack of knowledge about what are appropriate outcomes for public communications campaigns. What are realistic objectives and targets?
- Fear that a poor result will reflect negatively on the team that has worked on the project or campaign.

What to measure?

Most literature describes different types of communications evaluation and while the terminology differs, the categories are similar.

The first category assesses the strengths and weaknesses of communications materials and strategies before or during a campaign's implementation. This is sometimes called **Formulative evaluation**.

This type of evaluation is used to understand what a target audience thinks about an issue, what messages work with what audience, what creative concept is most effective and who the best messengers/spokespeople are.

It commonly involves testing issue awareness and saliency through public polling or messages and materials through interviews and focus groups.

The second category of evaluation can be classified as **Process or Output evaluation**. This type of evaluation reviews the implementation – what and how much was accomplished. For example it may cover:

- How many materials have been put out?
- What has been the campaign's reach?
- Attendance at events.
- Visits to website.
- Number of mentions in the media.
- Number of calls to a phone number
- Requests for further information.

The third main category is **Outcome** evaluation to determine the intended short-term and intermediate outcomes. These may include changes in:

- Knowledge and awareness
- Saliency
- Attitudes and beliefs, norms
- Self efficacy
- Behavioural intentions and behaviour.

Impact evaluation is the final step and measures longer-term results or causation to determine whether the communication leads to the intended result (e.g. lower cancer rates).

Many campaigns have ambitious aims that are the equivalent of long-term impacts. Consequently they can be harshly judged as failing if they do not meet these aims quickly.

This is the most difficult area to evaluate and prove the contribution of the communications. The literature differs on how to approach this. Some recommends that instead of trying to measure “impact” a more realistic focus should be on outcomes and interim targets – what changes were achieved by the campaign in a shorter time frame such as knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of audiences.

Types of evaluation methods

Each method and approach has its limitations – for example social research relies on response to questions about likely behaviour and does not allow for conclusions about how people are actually going behaving.

The limitations of any one method can be overcome by using several methods and approaches in combination, known as triangulation. Similarly, the weakness of any approach based solely on output measures can be minimised by also taking impact measures and looking for relationships between output and impact.

Communications theory

Much of the literature suggests the first “tool” of evaluation is determining the relevant communications theory on which to develop the communication strategy and to use this same theory as a tool to help develop the evaluation programme. For example many campaigns use a form of behaviour change model as the basis of their planning.

Stages of change model:

1. Precontemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance

The theory of change can act as a guide for understanding where the evaluation should focus and what outcomes need to be assessed.

By detailing the aims of the campaign, its actions, the desired outcome, indicators and data to be gathered it pushes at the early stage to consider key questions such as “can we really change x with action y”.

Research

Opinion poll surveys, interviews and focus groups with target audiences can be used to measure changes to knowledge, attitude and behaviour, preferably before, during and after a campaign.

The most common method is to monitor audience response via pre and post tracking surveys. More sophisticated but costly analysis is heading in the direction of rolling surveys which survey audiences everyday throughout a campaign to isolate the effect of different interventions on responses.

The most rigorous research designs such as experimental ones, allow for more definitive conclusions about the impact of a campaign. However, they require random assignment of target audiences to treatment and control groups of conditions and require evaluation or research expertise to implement. Causal data is also sometimes criticised for setting unrealistic communications objectives, being non-action oriented and costly.

Econometrics

Is a form of analysis that looks at all the factors that influence results and disentangles their different effects. Using a model you can predict what would have happened if you hadn't run your campaign, taking into account everything else that was going on at the time. A highly technical and specialised discipline, it is considered best practice by the private sector to measure effectiveness.

Case studies

Brief or in-depth case studies amongst target audience to explore and detail correlations between communications activities and outcomes.

Media and web coverage measurement

Media monitoring (software or manual), web metrics software, media distribution statistics, content analysis (software or manual), counting mentions in media and or websites, visitor statistics to a campaign website, content analysis of mentions (tone placement, influence) can be used to assess the media and web visibility.

Measurement

Counting the activities that have happened such as the number of events held, advertisements placed, publications produced, press releases issued, radio interviews undertaken. Tracking mechanisms (such as registering the number of phone enquiries, and web metrics):

- Direct response
- Visits to websites
- Downloads
- Orders for fulfilment materials
- Calls to help lines
- Number of attendees at events
- Feedback

Proxy measures

Use existing data as indicators of change, such as analysing reports, media/web coverage and monitoring changes to the policies, activities and practices of targeted institutions, such as stakeholders.

What are people using overseas?

The 2009 IPR survey shows that internationally, the PR profession are not agreed on the best tools and methodologies and are using a wide range of tools and evaluation practices.

Clippings came out as the number one measurement tool, in terms of use and satisfaction. However the research revealed that many practitioners are using multiple methods to overcome the limitations of one, on average four tools, and no tool was scored as being “most effective”.

The main criteria used for evaluating external communications effectiveness:

- Hit target media
- On time, on budget
- Measures of message output
- Awareness/image
- Client satisfaction (for PR companies)
- Achievement of goals
- other

The main tools used:

- Clippings
- Internal reviews
- Advertising Value Equivalent
- Benchmarking
- Media evaluation tools

- Blog measures
- Dashboards
- Opinion survey
- Reputation index
- Focus groups
- League tables

Internal communications are easier to measure and monitor. Employee surveys are the number one measurement tool. Second favourite is feedback from colleagues. Employee surveys, internal reviews, feedback from colleagues and focus groups all get strong approval ratings.

Criteria

- Feedback from employees
- Achievement of goals
- Instinctive understanding
- Cost-benefit analysis

Tools

- Employee surveys
- Feedback from colleagues
- Internal reviews
- Employee focus groups
- Dashboards
- Benchmarking

UK Government communications evaluation

In the UK, two central government bodies support the government communications functions, GCN and COI.

GCN

GCN has developed extensive guides and best practice material which is stored in an online resource called the Knowledge Bank.

This resource is available on the GCN website to GCN members, which covers the majority of government communicators in the UK.

Within the Knowledge Bank, evaluation is covered along with a very brief overview of the marketing industry best practice methods. The site does not provide any standardised measurement criteria, reporting tools or models.

GCN recommends moving beyond pre-testing or tracking research to look at detailed analysis of the communications' true impact by analysing what changes would have occurred if there had been no communications. It considers the ultimate way to measure effectiveness is to use econometrics.

The site does provide a thorough guide to campaign evaluation produced by the Home Office Communications Evaluation and Research team. This resource is included at

the back of this report and would provide a useful starting point for any toolkit for New Zealand government communications practitioners.

COI

Is a government department which operates as a full service marketing and communications agency for the UK Government.

In general, most government departments will use COI in some capacity to assist with the majority of their communications work, from publications to social marketing campaigns and communications and brand strategy. COI provides many services directly (it employs over 600 staff) as well as managing extensive rosters of preferred supplier agencies.

Within COI, there are two units with specific knowledge on evaluation and measurement, the strategic consultancy service and research department. Both of these teams provide evaluation services and are in the unique position of having a cross-government view of what's happening in communications evaluation.

The research department in particular manages a framework of research agencies (including media evaluation suppliers) for all types of development and evaluation programmes across both communications and policy.

Tools and models

COI does not provide any examples of their work or guidelines on their website. The only way to find out what models or tools they (and their clients) are using would be to contact them directly.

COI has also developed a tracking research database tool which can be used to help to set realistic targets for communications campaigns and benchmark against other campaigns in government.

Canadian government communications

The Canadian government drafted a government communications policy in 2006 which is hosted on the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat site. The policy sets out the expectations of the Government and has provisions in the appendix for detailed guidelines. However it seems these guidelines have never been written.

The policy focuses on high-level fundamentals and processes. An example of processes covered in the communications policy:

Institutions must pre-test all major advertising initiatives – i.e., campaigns exceeding \$400,000 in media buy... Institutions are required to conduct a post-campaign evaluation of all major advertising initiatives exceeding \$1,000,000 in media buys.

Such testing, which can include focus groups and other forms of marketing research.

The policy does dictate a centralised approach to procuring and running opinion research. Institutions must work with a specialist government research procurement department and share the results with other government institutions, including back to

the central procurement and research teams. Final reports of pre-testing and evaluation are placed in Library of Parliament and the Library and Archives Canada within six months following the completion of survey fieldwork.

Tools and models

A standard tool is used to evaluate major advertising campaigns: the Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool. It consists of a series of standardized questions included at the beginning of a post-campaign survey. It allows institutions to measure the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and strategies for communicating with Canadians on government priorities, information and services. Results collected through this process are used to help inform future advertising plans and campaigns. Unfortunately the link to this tool isn't working.

Summary

The evaluation of public communications campaigns is a developing field. Standard and widely accepted guidelines for communications evaluation do not exist yet in either the for-profit or non-for profit world.

It is generally agreed that there is no right or wrong way to evaluate communications. Different evaluation needs and capabilities require different evaluation designs. The evaluation design, focus and methods should fit the information needs and available resources of those invested in the communications efforts.

It is best to design the evaluation early and in conjunction with the campaign as evaluation, like communications campaigns, needs to identify up front their purpose and intended audience. Difficulties can be minimised by close attention to planning and setting measurable objectives.

While there is universal agreement that the evaluation of public communications campaigns needs to improve, there is not complete agreement about what direction it should take.

Synopsis of reports reviewed

GCN knowledge bank

Set of basic principles and things to think about when doing evaluation. Useful to include as high-level information in any NZ guide, covering basics on why to evaluate and brief descriptions of the common research techniques. Focus on campaign evaluation. Basic descriptions of the different type of research techniques.

Evaluating communications: A best practice guide [PDF 434KB, 29 pages]

Evaluating Communications - A Best Practice Guide, developed by the Home Office Communication Strategy and Insight Unit Comprehensive guide assesses the pros and cons of various techniques and how they might be applied. Please note this document contains a number of internal Home Office links that cannot be accessed by other users.

Are We There Yet, A Communications Evaluation Guide, The Communications Network, 2008. A guide for philanthropic organisations and nonprofits on a step-by-step process for developing an evaluation strategy. Covers why evaluate, what to evaluate and setting goals. Okay basic guide

<http://www.comnetwork.org/resources/downloads/AreWeThereYet.pdf>

Evaluation, A best practice guide to evaluating the effects of your campaigns.

Joint industry guidelines from the following UK trade associations IPA ISBA MCCA PRCA. Aimed a private sector consumer marketing. Would be most relevant for organisations that are able to track “sales”. Moves evaluation into the realm of econometrics to measure the financial returns of communications that include short-term volume sales, brand building and the effects on stakeholders.

<http://www.ipa.co.uk/Content/Evaluation-best-practice-guide>

Global Survey of Communications Measurement 2009 – Final report, AMEC, September 2009. Non-profit research project that provides insights on development of evaluating public relations and communication managements. International online survey of 520 PR practitioners , conducted From May –June

2009**<http://www.amecorg.com/images/public/Global-Survey-Communications-Measurement-2009.pdf>**

Measurement and Evaluation: Moving the Debate Forward, Chartered Institute of Public Relation, UK, 2005 Sets out the CIPR’s current thinking on measurement and evaluation in public relations practice and contains an extensive list of references. Sources are from the private sector, general management and PR guides, should contain useful information that may translate to the public sector. Further investigation may require the purchase of articles and books.

Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations, Childers, L. and Grunig, J, for IPR 1999. www.instituteforpr.org. Details the questions and areas to measure to determine the strength of an organisation’s relationships, which it considers to be the purpose of PR - building relationships.

Unlocking the Potential of Public Relations: Developing Good Practice, A report jointly funded by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Institute of Public Relations, November 2003. Provides extra useful research on what tools are being used by practitioners in the UK.

Guidelines for Evaluating Nonprofit Communications Efforts, April 2004, Communications Consortium Media Centre. Summarises the different types of evaluation, from output to impact.

Lesson in Evaluating Communications Campaigns Five Case Studies, Communications Consortium Media Centre, June 2003. Good case studies

Public Communication Campaign Evaluation, May 2002, Communications Consortium Media Centre. Summarises Examples of logic models and templates

Evaluating Public Information and Advocacy Campaigns. European Evaluation Society Biennial Conference 1-3 October 2008 Provides useful models
<http://intelligentmeasurement.wordpress.com/2008/12/23/communications-evaluation-2009-trends/>

Evaluating Communication Programmes, Products and Campaigns: 1 day training workshop for communications professionals, Glenn O'Neill
<http://intelligentmeasurement.wordpress.com/2008/12/23/communications-evaluation-2009-trends/>

The media evaluations project, the Communications Consortium Media Center (CCMC). The Communications Consortium Media Center (CCMC) has established, a multi-year Evaluation Project that aims to provide foundations and nonprofits with methods of gauging the effects of strategic communications campaigns both large and small.
<http://www.mediaevaluationproject.org/overview.htm>

Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, August 1, 2006.
<http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12316>
The purpose of this policy is to ensure that communications across the Government of Canada are well co-ordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public.

Essentials for Excellence, Researching, Monitoring and Evaluating Strategic Communication for Behavior and Social Change with Special reference to the Prevention and Control of Avian Influenza/Pandemic Influenza, 2008. UNICEF Detailed guide to evaluating Avian Influenza communications. Could be used as a case study but very complex.

Doing Measurement Right: One Organization's Experience Creating a Best-In-Class Measurement Program from Scratch, Mark R. Phillips, USO University of Maryland, Katie Delahaye Paine, KDPaine & Partners. An example of media analysis.

Sources not reviewed but which may be useful

Excellent Public Relations and Effective Organisations: A study of Communication Management in Three Countries, Grunig, J, Grunig, L. and Dozier, D. (2002), New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. A comprehensive study providing references to measurement and evaluation.

PRE toolkit, Institute of Public Relations, UK. Published by the IPR forms a core component of all IPR approved courses and within the professional development programme.

Evaluating Public Relations, Dr Tom Watson FCIPR and Paul Noble FCIPR. Book recommended by the CIPR and part of the professional qualifications. Includes case studies from around the globe and contains interviews with leading PR practitioners. Information on: the principles of public relations practice; evaluation and communication psychology; practitioner culture – why we do what we do; gathering and interpreting information; media evaluation systems; evaluation structures and processes; objectives and objective setting; measuring relationships and crisis communication; the challenge of the online environment; evaluation progress and future developments.

Public relations ROI, February 2004 the CIPR and Metrica Research Ltd. Research into the measurement and reporting of public relations ROI.

Econometrics Explained, IPA, February 2004 a beginners guide to understanding econometrics and measuring the payback from marketing communications. Written by Louise Cook and Mike Holmes (Partners, Holmes & Cook), and edited by Les Binet (European Director of DDB Matrix).

Profile Extra Article – need to be a member of the CIPR to access [Media measurement in new world](#), Michael Blowers *10/03/2009*. [Online article on Profile Extras](#) the online public relations magazine for the CIPR. Discusses a recent survey by the Council for Public Relations Firms which identified that PR practitioners need to become more quantitative and measurement-orientated

IPA Databank Online (IDOL: <http://idol.ipa.co.uk>) new online facility enables analyses of the 900+ case histories on advertising effectiveness in the IPA The data examines the characteristics, circumstances and objectives of the brands, the nature and scale of the campaigns that they ran, and the results that were achieved. IDOL free for members to use, and non-members for a limited trial period (until 11th June 2010).

Appendix: Communication evaluation, GCN Knowledge Bank, www.comms.gov.uk/engage

Why evaluate your communications?

Evaluation addresses four key issues:

1. It assesses performance against specific objectives
2. It provides tangible evidence of successes and failures
3. It evaluates budget expenditure
4. It informs future activity

Key principles for evaluation

1. Evaluation is an integral part of all communications projects, not an optional extra.
2. Plan your evaluation at the start of a communications project, don't just leave it until the end; allow time for design and production of publicity material to be evaluated in research, if appropriate.
3. Set appropriate objectives. If your objectives are unclear, misdirected, or simply unachievable, this will obviously affect the evaluation.
4. Evaluation must be properly budgeted for: as a rule of thumb, 10 per cent of a project's budget should be allocated to evaluation.
5. All projects need to be evaluated - even small ones - and the scale of evaluation should match the scale of the project. You should not spend the same amount of money evaluating a £500 activity as you would on a £1 million project!
6. Be imaginative and use every occasion to listen. Evaluation is about gauging the success of initiatives, so why not ask people directly? For instance, structured questionnaires for stakeholders and small web-based surveys can be useful and cost-effective measures of how your initiative is performing.
7. A good test of the usefulness of an evaluation is to ask the following questions:
 - Does it effectively identify the success or failure of the project?
 - Does it effectively identify the reasons for the success or failure of the project?
 - Does it effectively gauge the cost-effectiveness of the project?
8. Ensure your own research department supports your work and adds credibility when you report findings internally.
9. It is important to ensure that any quantitative or tracking research is based on a statistically robust sample of the target audience to ensure representativeness and reliability. You can get guidance on appropriate sample sizes from research agencies or specialists in research planning, such as COI Research Unit or statistical teams within departments.

Evaluation is not about blame

People are sometimes reluctant to carry out an evaluation because they fear that a poor result will reflect negatively on the team that has worked on the project or campaign.

Evaluation is not carried out in order to blame or punish people. Communications is not an exact science nor does it operate in a vacuum. There are many factors that can influence the success or failure of a campaign, such as the social environment or events elsewhere in the world. Even the best thought-out and expertly executed communications campaigns have been known not to achieve their objectives. The important thing is that evaluation can help to reveal why a project missed its objectives and what factors affected the outcomes. This will help everyone to avoid similar pitfalls in the future

Unless evaluation is included in the communications plan from the beginning, it is often difficult or impossible to implement it effectively.

At the very start of a project or campaign, consider the following questions:

- Have you established achievable and measurable objectives?

You cannot evaluate accurately and effectively unless you set objectives that are relevant and appropriate to the activity itself. Take a look at the objectives section to find out more about setting SMART objectives.

- Have you allowed an adequate budget for evaluation?

We recommend that you allocate 10 per cent of the total budget to evaluation. This may vary depending on the nature of the project.

- Have you carried out any necessary pre-research?

Establish benchmarks that you can measure performance against. For example: before the campaign x per cent of the population understood the impact of climate change, compared to y per cent afterwards.

What if...you're trying to measure long-term behaviour change?

If your objective is to achieve long-term change, e.g. reduction in child obesity due to healthier eating, and you can only evaluate this months or years later, you will need to plan for long-term monitoring and reporting from the start of the project.

Commitment and continuity are crucial. Even if the original project members move on or change roles, there still needs to be an ongoing commitment to the long-term evaluation.

If this is not feasible, then you may need to review the objectives to set shorter-term ones, e.g. healthier dinners provided at all schools within a specific timeframe.

However, it is very important that these shorter-term objectives are linked to the longer-term ones. This ensures that all activity contributes to the overall aims.

The nature of the evaluation you carry out depends on the objectives you set at the start of your initiative.

However, it could include:

1. levels of awareness of the issue or message being communicated;
2. recognition of the campaign or communications themselves;
3. changes in attitudes;

4. changes in behavior;
5. claimed behaviour change or intention to change
6. measures of observed (real life) behaviour are more reliable but they are longer-term measures that can be more difficult to link directly to communications performance;
7. Response data and campaign metrics.

Evaluating campaigns

It is important that campaign evaluation is closely tied to the specific objectives of each phase of the overall programme. For example, the overall objective of a communications programme could be to increase awareness or to change perceptions or behaviours. But the objective of the press advertising element may be to announce the initiative, generate interest or to encourage the reader to apply for a more detailed information pack.

While raising awareness is often a necessary first step in driving attitude or behaviour change, it is important to remember that awareness is not the final outcome. An understanding of the drivers of (and any barriers to) achieving goals such as behaviour change is essential before setting the objectives of any communications activity.

For example: the overall objectives for a programme might be X per cent reduction in the incidence of mouth cancer among the Bengali community in England. But the objectives of the communications campaign would be:

1. Y per cent increase in awareness of mouth cancer among Bengalis;
2. Z per cent increase in the number of Bengalis who check their mouths for signs of cancer;
3. Q per cent increase in the number of Bengalis reporting early symptoms to doctors or dentists.

To evaluate the success of press advertising, or a suite of leaflets, against specific objectives, you would need to measure:

- awareness of the message;
- understanding of the issues;
- attitudes towards the issues;
- recall of the advertisement or leaflet;
- level of interest or inclination to respond; and
- actual response data, i.e. the number of packs requested and sent and the profile of respondents.

If the communications haven't been as successful as anticipated, the evaluation research will help you to understand why and to make changes and improvements for future activity.

Evaluation techniques

There are a variety of techniques that can be used for evaluating communication activity, we have detailed some of the most popular below.

Tracking research

Audience tracking studies are tailored around specific bursts of activity and concentrate on advertising awareness, recognition and communication of key messages. Unless a campaign is delivering on all these fronts, it is unlikely to achieve the intended shifts in attitude, knowledge or behaviour.

Attitudinal measures relating to campaign messages are also included in most tracking studies to evaluate changes likely to occur as a result of that particular communications activity.

When planning audience tracking, it is important to remember that research is based on a representative sample of the audience, which means that results include a margin of error. If your campaign is likely to generate a relatively small impact on the audience (e.g. due to a small budget or limited scope of activity), then tracking research may not be sufficiently sensitive to measure the response, unless the sample is either very large or very accurately targeted at the appropriate audience.

Response monitoring

Most campaigns have a response mechanism. Reply cards, coupons, telephone call centres, websites etc. can all provide essential details that help build a picture of how the communication is working.

A few simple questions and a basic response coding mechanism (such as tick-boxes on ethnic background, gender, age etc.) can deliver a lot of key data. The data you gather could range from a broad profile of the respondent to precisely which element in the overall campaign prompted their action. By examining a profile of the people who respond, you can see whether the campaign is appealing to the intended target audience.

Keeping a database of responders gives you valuable information that you can use to follow up and measure the longer-term effects of a campaign.

Response data can also help to identify which media channel resulted in the strongest response. This is, of course, just a small part of the complete picture, as it measures only the final stage of the response process. Other media might have played a greater role in creating the mindset that prompted the response.

Web statistics

If your communications aim to direct the audience to your website then web stats can be a useful and accurate way to evaluate the actual response. Measures can include:

- How many visitors visit your site?
- Which pages do they visit?
- Have visitors signed-up for anything, requested information or downloaded resources?

In-depth analysis

It sometimes isn't enough simply to monitor how people respond to communications with pre-testing or tracking research. This may not provide a detailed analysis of the communications' true impact.

Ask what would have happened without your campaign. Best practice analyses what changes would have occurred if there had been no communications.

Of course, we can never be sure what life would have been like without a campaign, but specialist agencies have three general approaches they use to paint a fairly realistic picture:

- **time-series analysis** asks what happens to behaviour over time when there are limited or no communications;
- **regional analysis** asks how behaviour changes in areas that have not been exposed to your campaign;
- **competitive comparisons** gauge the public's response to communications from other influencers.

However, the ultimate way to measure effectiveness is to use econometrics. This is a specialist analysis that the private sector uses to predict the effect of any combination of factors on sales. However, it can also be adapted for use on government communications.

Econometrics is a highly specialised field, and you should only use a suitably qualified expert for evaluating your campaigns. Find out more about econometrics by [downloading *Econometrics explained*](#), published by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.

Evaluating the media mix

It is very difficult to gauge how individual media have contributed to a campaign's success. Tracking research is not very reliable in this area, and can only give broad indications based on recall and recognition.

If research is to try to understand the contribution made by each media channel used in the mix, you should set this as a specific objective at planning stage. Sometimes this can be done as part of the normal tracking research, by increasing the sample size to boost the number of those individuals exposed to a particular element of the campaign.

In most cases, however, you will have to carry out a separate study. It will need to be tailored to one particular media type and include only people exposed to that element of the campaign.

Tools – will need minor amending

Media monitoring and evaluation ...are you getting the coverage you need?

Media monitoring and evaluation plays an important role in measuring the impact of government campaigns. Much more than a measurement of column inches, it develops greater understanding of what is of interest to correspondents and editors, improving your chances of hitting the news agenda and getting your message across to your target audience.

Media monitoring and evaluation ensures that you are alert to emerging issues and breaking stories and it provides an opportunity to evaluate the work of the press office and identify the most effective tactics and channels to use in the future. With news breaking every hour of the day, an effective press office operation must have robust

procedures in place to follow the latest developments and ensure a swift response to events and statements.

Evaluation should be an integral part of any launch or campaign. It can range from simple analysis of cuttings and transcripts to sophisticated tracking of the tone and content of messages against targets, trends over time and the impact on the reputation of a department. Increasingly, departments are using expert contractors to provide this sophisticated level of service.

Media tracking

Media monitoring and evaluation can also involve more systematic assessment of media outputs to generate reports that give an insight into the coverage your work has received. This can include continual tracking (monthly or quarterly, for example) or post-campaign reporting to measure results against targets.

This is usually conducted by specialist agencies, all of which use different methodologies. It is up to you to find an agency that uses the right methodology for your initiative.

You will want to measure against many criteria, but some examples include:

- the type of media the coverage appeared in;
- volume - the number of items, not column inches;
- whether images have been used;
- author analysis - have you reached key journalists?
- the favorability of your coverage; and
- return on investment - cost per person reached.

Monitoring and evaluation brief

There are a number of steps to take to create a monitoring and evaluation brief. Before you even begin to think about hiring a monitoring and evaluation agency, you must produce a tight brief that answers the following questions:

- **What are your objectives and information needs** and how can evaluation help you meet them?
- **Who are your key audiences?** This is particularly important if you want to assess how successful you have been at targeting hard-to-reach audiences, such as travelers or young people.
- **What are the issues** you want media analysis to address?
- **What are the key messages** you want to track? Do you need to track those being sent out by 'competitors'? For example, if you are trying to encourage sexually active young people to have protected sex, are youth magazines glamorising young, pregnant celebrities?
- **Which media are relevant to you?** This will be influenced by your target audience, your needs and your budget. Can you afford to track broadcast media, for example, which is expensive to source?
- How extensive will the **scope** of your coverage be? If you are communicating in several languages, for example, this will increase evaluation costs.
- Do you need to **benchmark** your media coverage? If so, against whom, and what scale of coverage do you expect them to achieve?

- **Will you provide cuttings and transcripts**, and do you want them back? Bear in mind copyright issues.
- **How often do you want reports or presentations?** What format do you want them in?
- **What time period** do you want to cover?

Research checklist - would need amending to suit New Zealand government uses.

Have you:

1. Set precise objectives?
2. Found out whether research already exists on similar campaigns or audiences?
3. Considered and planned the use of research at four different stages: strategic, creative, pre-testing and evaluative?
4. Ensured that sufficient time and budget for market research is allocated in all marketing plans?
5. Consulted your departmental survey control liaison officer before commissioning any market research?
6. Identified potential suppliers? COI has a pre-approved roster of research agencies.
7. Briefed and awarded contracts in accordance with your organisation's procurement guidelines?
8. Allowed time for design and production of publicity material to be evaluated in research, if appropriate?

What types of research are there?

Desk research

What is it?

The collation of existing research results and data from already published secondary sources for a specific, often unrelated, project.

What is it used for?

A useful way to ensure that when further research is commissioned it supplements existing knowledge, rather than reinventing the wheel.

Mystery shopping

What is it?

A collection of information from retail outlets, showrooms, etc, by people posing as members of the public, and recording their experiences objectively to help improve performance.

What is it used for?

This type of research might be useful in the public sector for assessing service delivery, for instance in places like Jobcentre Plus or Armed Forces recruitment centres.

Omnibus surveys

What is it?

A survey covering a number of topics, usually for different clients. The samples tend to be nationally representative and composed of types of people for which there is a general demand. Clients are charged by the market research agency on the basis of the questionnaire space or the number of questions required.

What is it used for?

This type of research is useful when your target market is close in profile to the general population, and when you have a small number of questions to ask them.

Econometrics

What is it?

A specialism connected to research and other marketing service disciplines. It involves analyzing economic systems containing supply and demand data using statistical models.