

UVPM and AVE

THE (UGLY) TRUTH BEHIND PR'S GO-TO NUMBERS

It's time to rethink your PR measurement strategy

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Data. That has become the name of the game for so many, including the PR industry. Historically, PR and comms professionals have used metrics such as Unique Visitors per Month (UVPM) or Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) to showcase results and provide “ROI” to the c-suite. These metrics made sense in the pre-digital world and it’s only fairly recently (in the grand scheme of things) that technology has been created for PR professionals to truly measure the impact that their work brings to their overall business.

We are no longer living in a world restricted to newspapers and billboards where a very rough guess at views is acceptable.

Everything is digital – **everything** – even refrigerators and coffee machines are tracking consumer data. So, if PR wants a seat at the table (and a bigger share of the budget), they need to prove their impact with tangible and actionable KPIs.

UVPM

(UNIQUE VISITORS PER MONTH)

UVPM is the number of visitors that an outlet receives per month. It can also be referred to as UMV (Unique Monthly Visitors) or Readership.

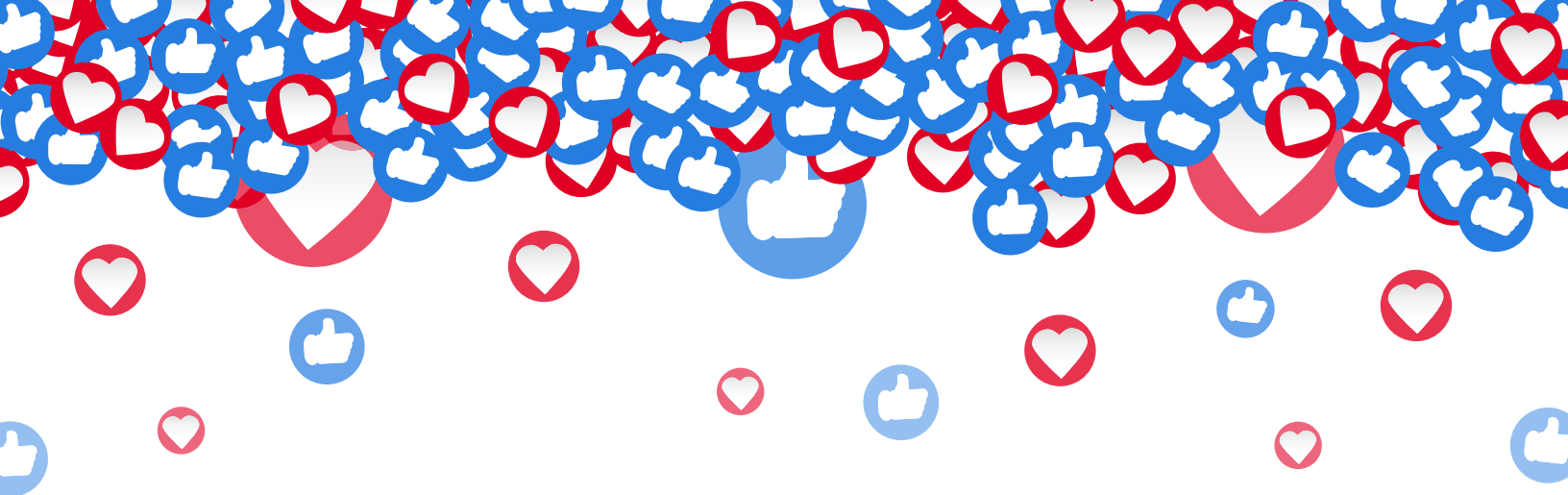


AVE

(ADVERTISING VALUE EQUIVALENT)

AVE refers to the act of putting an advertisement value to earned media content to show its “worth”.





■ BEHIND THE SCENES: A LOOK AT VANITY METRICS

You're so vain, I'll bet you think this song is about you, don't you? Don't you? Vanity metrics bear their name well; they're usually big numbers that sound impressive, but when used as a standalone metric, they bring little understanding to the success of a specific campaign.

The biggest thing to keep in mind is that *no specific value is always a vanity metric*; rather, the “vanity” term applies when numbers are provided out of context or do not serve a direct measurement purpose. A good way to sniff out vanity metrics is to ask: is this number just something that sounds “cool” to pass up to management? Or does it provide insight that helps make day-to-day decisions?

In PR, the “vanity” label is typically applied to values such as UVPM or AVE. If those are the only metrics your PR team is using, then it is fair to say they fall in the “vanity” category. As of 2017, many organizations including AMEC and CIPR have banned the use of AVE as a valid metric altogether. One of the pillars of the [Barcelona Principles](#) includes that “AVE are not the Value of Communication”.

Let's dive into why these metrics are so vain.

AVE (Advertising Value Equivalent): AVE is an attempt to quantify PR as if it got the spend of a paid advertisement, typically incorporating coverage, placement, and even credibility. One can appreciate the logic behind the concept – PR and comms teams should absolutely be able to quantify their coverage and justify the dollar value it aligns with just like their paid media counterparts. However, AVE is not a hard statistic by any means, and is a very poor standalone metric.

First, the content itself is not comparable. A small paid ad, let's say two square inches on a screen, is jam-packed with value statements, logos, etc. to promote your brand. An article, however, spans an average of 12 square inches on a screen, and how often is your brand mentioned throughout? Also, what if it's mentioned in a negative tone or among competitors?

Second, people tend to put more trust in earned media than paid ads, so AVE has the potential to undervalue the impact of PR. On the other hand, a passing mention, or even a negative one, might be less valuable than a well-done ad, so you might be overselling PR's impact.

UVPM (Unique Visitors Per Month): UVPM is measured at the outlet level and provides the number of visitors that an outlet receives per month. PR historically adds up UVPM numbers from any outlet they were mentioned in and calls this their audience.

For example, let's say you were mentioned in *Daily News*, the *Pittsburgh Business Times*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

Big numbers may look fancy in your reports but there are two important factors that need to be considered with UVPM:

Daily News	16.6M UVPM
Pittsburgh Business Times	3.37M UVPM
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	4.77M UVPM
Total UVPM:	24.74M!

1. Just because your article appeared in an outlet doesn't mean every unique visitor per month has read it. *Daily News* may have over 16 million people visit their site per month but how many of those read your specific article?
2. These numbers are not deduplicated across outlets when combined. The odds that someone living in Pittsburgh has visited both the *Pittsburgh Business Times* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in a full month's time frame are, let's face it, pretty high. Adding these two statistics without the ability to identify individuals and determine overlap is highly inflating the numbers.

While your brand may have been mentioned in all three publications above, you cannot genuinely claim that over 24 million people saw your brand's name. That number, however, could be your very **top of funnel metric**, opening the door to many more metrics down the funnel.

Let's dive into the funnel to uncover some of the more useful metrics.

PR METRICS THAT MATTER

According to the [Gartner Annual CMO Spend Survey 2019-2020](#), “76% of marketing leaders say they use data and analytics to drive key decisions,” but many still struggle to evolve their measurement capabilities and balance the need for different key metrics.

So how do we go from reporting on “quantity eyeballs” to reporting on “quality eyeballs”?

We developed the Communicator’s Funnel to break down specific areas PR and comms professionals should focus on to showcase actionable metrics, drive data-informed decisions and justify your PR budget to the c-suite.

The concept is covered in depth in our [Communicator’s Funnel white paper](#), but here is the basic structure:

BRAND

AWARENESS

MINDSHARE

REPUTATION

DIGITAL

TRAFFIC

SEO

SOCIAL

REVENUE

CONVERSIONS

I BRAND IMPACT

Brand impact is PR's effect on how the brand is viewed by the general public and potential customers. Building a favorable impression in the marketplace is the key to engagement. Brand impact breaks down into three categories:

AWARENESS

Before customers can flock to your brand, they have to know that it exists. You can get a feel for the market's level of awareness of your brand by tracking the number of mentions over time (earned media and social mentions alike). The more frequently your name gets out there, the better your chances of becoming known to your potential buyers. But keep in mind that not all mentions are created equally. The impact varies based on the publication and the sentiment. Advanced media monitoring software can really come in handy when trying to understand awareness.



MINDSHARE

Mindshare assesses your brand's significance in the market. It can be evaluated in a number of ways, including the delta between mentions and featured mentions. (Featured mentions are articles that are about your brand or product specifically. Non-featured mentions are those where your brand is cited in an article about a broader topic.) Another measure of mindshare is share of voice, an analysis of your mentions and featured mentions vs. those of your competitors and other companies in the industry.



REPUTATION

If you have a bad reputation, awareness and mindshare can be dangerous. That's why it is important to keep a close eye on how the market views your brand. This can be evaluated by looking at social amplification, sentiment and key message pull-through.



DIGITAL IMPACT

Digital impact involves two components: driving traffic to your website and other digital properties – and then getting those visitors to take action when they get there. Marketers have long understood the importance of quantifying digital impact, and now PR professionals are starting to do the same. It does take a specific set of tools and a mindset that welcomes this more concrete way of thinking about- and assessing the effectiveness of- PR.

Digital impact can be measured in the following ways:

TRAFFIC

The foundation of digital impact is how much traffic PR is driving to the website, but that is not the only thing that matters; engagement is also critical. There's not much value in driving visitors to your site only to see them bounce. It is important to sort out the mentions and activities that drive action (such as content downloads, newsletter subscriptions, demo requests) vs. the ones that might spike your visitor number, but ultimately don't produce results. Do not overlook how long visitors stay on your website. It's a good indicator of interest in your brand and product.



SEO

Search ranking has a major impact on brands in more ways than the obvious. In addition to helping boost organic traffic, it also has an impact on media contacts (are they really going to go past the first page of Google to find you?). Our [Communicator's Funnel white paper](#) gets into the details on how [SEO impact](#) can be measured and improved.



SOCIAL

Social impact happens when your audience extends your digital footprint by engaging with your content and mentions on networks like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and others. Your PR strategy should be informed by which articles or content types get the most engagement and which platform(s) are most appealing to your audience.



REVENUE IMPACT

PR pros are probably most comfortable with the top level of our funnel, Brand Impact. Many are becoming more accustomed to tracking Digital Impact. Revenue Impact, on the other hand, is a new idea to many.

When we talk about Revenue Impact we are talking about the number of sales driven by PR, how much business was influenced by PR, and whether PR sped the buyer's journey. For [PR measurement](#) purposes, here is how it breaks down:

INFLUENCED PIPELINE

The question to answer is, of all the opportunities in the pipeline, how many of them are there in whole or in part because of PR? This may seem impossible to measure, but it is doable by adding PR as a campaign or lead source in your marketing automation system.



CONVERSIONS

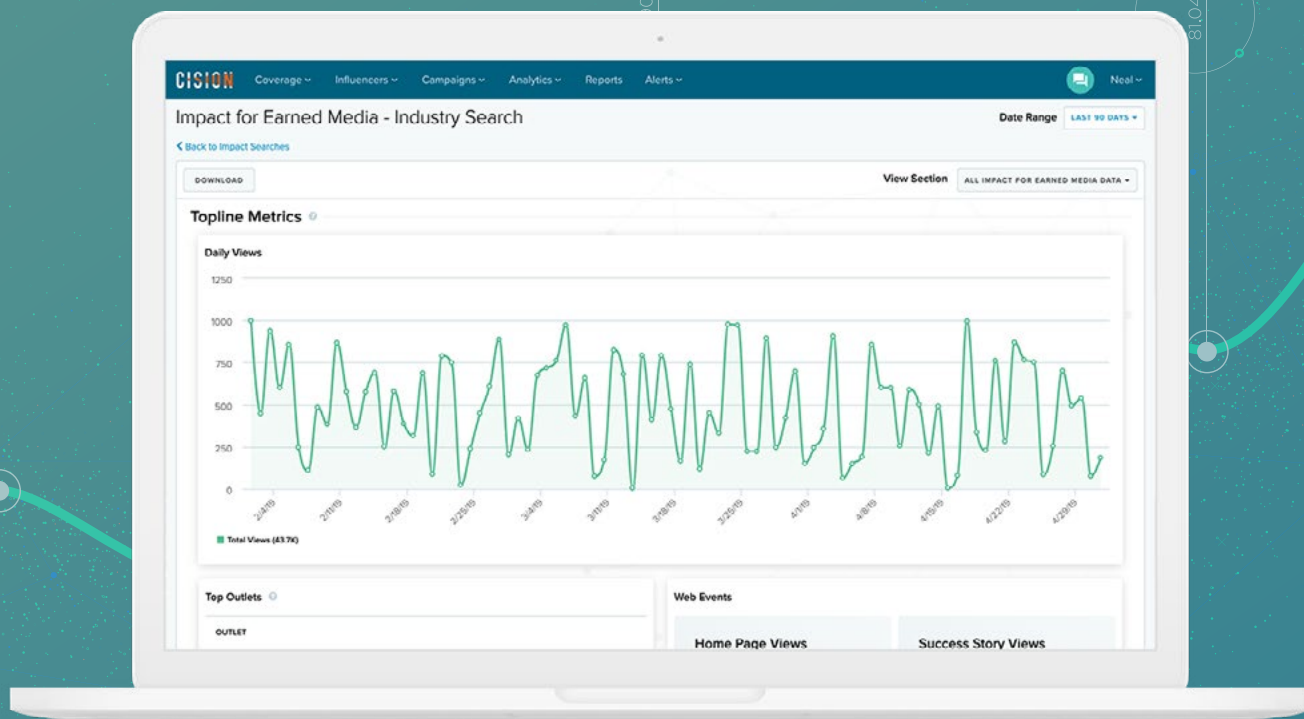
Marketers view conversions as a change in the status of a potential buyer. For example, if I click on your website, I am a “visitor.” If I download an eBook, I am a “subscriber.” If I fill out a demo request form, I am a “lead.” (Your marketing team may use different terms, but you get the idea.) Each of these events signals positive movement toward a sale. PR pros can use the same tools that marketers do to track and report on [PR-driven conversions](#).



REVENUE

If you are tracking conversions and you can assign a dollar value to each of them, understanding PR's impact on revenue becomes a simple math problem. [PR analytics software](#) makes it easier by assigning values to conversions and displaying them in a way that is easy to understand. If you are trying to justify additional or continued investment in PR, keep in mind that revenue is a language executives understand.





PR and comms pros should assess what metrics they are currently using and work their way down the funnel to truly access the full potential of their PR efforts. While this data can be aggregated from multiple sources into Excel for analysis, it is an extremely time-consuming process that eats up precious resources in order to develop meaningful PR reporting. Using tools like the Cision Communications Cloud™ can provide this data on-demand with customizable dashboards and shareable reports.



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