



**SPECIAL REPORT**

**IMPROVE PERFORMANCE THROUGH MEDIA ANALYSIS  
TO  
SCORE THE RESULTS**

**YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY DESERVES**

Maine Street Marketing  
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[www.mainestreet.com.au](http://www.mainestreet.com.au)

communicating with impact to your community and clients

Since 2001 Maine Street Marketing has helped the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs promote a key community campaign.

Harmony Day, on 21 March each year, is a chance for Australians of all backgrounds to get to know one another better, share cultures and say no to racism.

Using media analysis, Maine Street Marketing has helped the Department achieve a 79% average, annual improvement in media coverage of Harmony Day over four years.

## The Challenge of Showing Success

Are you happy that your media promotions get the results they deserve? Confident your managers really appreciate the impact of your media relations? Do you know where your media messages end up?

Unless you are tracking, measuring and evaluating your media communications in a disciplined way, it can be tough to demonstrate success to your boss, board, clients or even yourself.

By providing clear and objective measurement, media analysis is fast emerging as “must have” tool for the professional communicator.

## Value of Media Analysis

Media analysis can help you track the cadence of your ongoing communications programs or measure the results of a specific campaign.

It can provide a benchmark from which you can improve your media performance as well as being a useful tool in a new job.

When you take up the reins of a new PR appointment, a retrospective scan of media coverage (of the past 3, 6 or 12 weeks) can provide a snapshot of the issues in the media landscape in which you will soon now find yourself.

A word of caution. Although media analysis is a valuable measurement tool, to get a complete picture of your communications effectiveness, you will need to also use other qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods.

## Beyond Throwing a DART

Media analysis involves four **DART** steps:

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Define</b>            | First, define your messages, audiences, the media most likely to reach them and most importantly the signposts that will tell you if, when and how the media reports your messages. |
| <b>Analyse and Track</b> | Track your media coverage and analyse the results.  |

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**Recommend** Drill down into the data and learn how, where and why your media efforts worked. Put all of this together into a set of easily actionable recommendations.

**Target** Now employ these recommendations to get better media results next time.

## **The Preliminaries**

Before you feed the first media release through the office fax and kick off the analysis process, you need to identify:

- The people you want to talk to (audiences).
- What you want to say (key messages).
- Select the best media to reach your audiences (media selection).

In a national campaign, you will probably want to communicate through major, regional and rural newspapers, radio and television stations and internet sites.

If your horizons are more limited you may restrict the focus to more local or specialist media or even particular journalists.

## **Define**

Identify the key words or phrases you think journalists in the target media will use to report what you are doing. I call these “signpost words” because when you read them in an article or hear them in a news bulletin you know your message has been broken through. They could be the name of a campaign, events, spokespersons, sponsors, key messages or other terms a journalist might use to describe what you are doing.

A detailed list of signpost words maximises your chances of seeing who, how, where and when the media reports your messages.

## **Analyse and Track**

After deciding which media you will monitor and the signpost words to look out for, you begin to track where and when media coverage appears.

There are nearly three thousand Australian television, radio and newspaper outlets that could report your messages. It would require a significant infrastructure to keep tabs on all these media. Unless you have the infrastructure, ask a media monitoring agency to help.

You invariably get better tracking data as well as save time and money by engaging a specialist agency that can provide 24/7 monitoring.

A monitoring agency can send you information electronically directly to your desktop so you can track your communications outcomes in near real time through data. You can ask for daily, weekly or monthly reports and no longer need to wait for the end of a campaign to check your coverage.

Using a proactive approach is like checking the instruments in your car to see how fast and how far you are travelling, as you complete your media journey.

Example of Weekly Media Monitoring  
25 December 2004 – 1 January 2005

State	Radio	Television	Newspapers	Total
New South Wales	15	5	30	50
Victoria	12	8	24	44
Queensland	5	5	20	30

(Shows number of media items appearing in all State media outlets over a seven day period)

After tracking is complete the analysis starts.

Hopefully your media program has been successful and you have mountains of coverage. Begin by analysing the patterns in this coverage and by asking yourself:

- Where and when did we receive media?
- What media outlets, programs or journalists reported our message?
- Who were the chief spokespersons, supporters or critics?
- Were and where are the gaps in coverage, messages, etc.
- Was reporting favourable, neutral or unfavourable?
- Was there a difference between what sent out (media releases, media kits, briefings, etc) and what the media actually reported?
- If we tried something new (eg a video news release, a research report or a celebrity spokesperson) did that work?

### **Recommend**

When you scrutinise this data, recommendations on how to improve soon begin to surface. Pour over your coverage to come up with practical, action-based recommendations.

The most important information in your data is the “bad news”. The good news gives you the inner glow of knowing where and how you succeeded; the bad news points to where you can achieve the greatest impact next time.

Your analysis and recommendations should finally lead to a report which you can use and, so can your CEO. It should be a combination of a narrative and easy to understand charts, tables and graphs that show the hard numbers of your coverage and recommend how and where your can improve next time.

Aim for a reporting style your CEO is familiar with. He or she deals with business data each day and will appreciate receiving your report in a style and layout they can easily relate to.

## Target

You now have very detailed insights into what happened, so sharpen your overall media performance and target the media better next time. Go through your next program element by element to see where you can improve:

### Messages

If our media messages were being picked up, what should we do? Is our timing right, are our key messages clear, do our spokespeople need better preparation? What do we need to change?

### Audiences

Did we reach the people we wanted? Are we using the right media to get to them? Was our media selection OK but our messages just did not cut through. Do we need to know more about our audiences and how and when they like to get information?

### Staff

Do the results show current staffing arrangements or levels work? Does our team have the right media skills? Do we concentrate too much on writing perfect releases and not enough on pitching to journalists in certain media or locations? What does for staff development and training and future staff selection?

### Budget

Do our efforts get the coverage they deserve? We spent heaps on events but failed to attract attention. Do we need to redirect our spending to more visually activities that appeal to TV crews or newspaper photographers?

### Tools

Do our media tools work? Do we need to write better media releases to attract attention? Do our media kits contain the right information? Should we have a better range of images to send to magazines? How can we improve?

## Look Good

A clear, simple but fact-laden report can raise your personal credibility bar. It allows your next discussion with the CEO to move from:

*“Yeah, we got pretty good media last time”*

to something approaching

*“In four weeks we achieved 1000 media items with a cumulative audience reach of 6 million people in our prime target audiences in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales”.*

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Media analysis can improve your performance as a professional communicator. It takes the fear, favour and speculation out of assessing your results. And it points to where you can achieve greater effect next time.

It can also make you look good by demonstrating to people how effective you really are.