



## Metrica and 3: Extinguishing Myths

3 became the first mainland third generation mobile network when it opened for business on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2003. Although 3 received favourable coverage during its launch there was a consistent undercurrent of negative sentiment from reports of poor network coverage as well as handset shortages which led to slow subscriber growth.

The end of 2003 had been set as the time by which 3 UK would be reaching 1 million subscribers. 3 found that tough targets and handset problems were being mentioned almost every time 3 appeared in the press. 3 had also been misunderstood and frequently billed as a cheap voice network rather than a data content provider.

Mark Rigby, Corporate Affairs Director at 3, challenged Metrica to design and build a media analysis programme that would allow him and his team to see exactly where bad press was being generated. Metrica would help isolate the problem areas for 3 to manage. Mark likened the process to fire-fighting - in his words: *“I want to see where the hotspots are – where are the myths that need extinguishing?”*

### Objectives

The media analysis programme had to be tied to 3's PR objectives and the findings needed to be fed back into the short and long-term strategy as quickly as possible. With the situation becoming increasingly serious, not only did evaluation have to be completed in record time, but the resulting data had to offer several levels of detail to Mark and his team.

The most important top-line information needed to be accessible at a glance, allowing quick reactions to kick-start the turnaround. Once the situation was under control the team would want more in-depth analysis that would provide added support and focus to the unavoidably reactive strategy that would come from the top-line results.

### Evaluation Approach

Metrica concluded that a two-tier approach was needed to the evaluation. Tier one had to give timely, easily accessible information on publications and journalists that were contributing to 3's negative coverage. This information could then be used to fire-fight by giving the team focus when building relationships with journalists and editors and re-educating them to view 3 in a positive light. Tier two had to give long-term focus to audience targeting, message delivery, brand awareness and brand strength.

To make the evaluation results easy to integrate with the PR team's long-term strategy, internal business areas and other marketing disciplines, all coverage was assigned a subject area in accordance with the brief. Metrica's standard four-point favourability scale was condensed into a three-point scale: favourable, neutral and unfavourable, allowing for speed and clarity in defining which media targets were to be hit first (negative), to be worked on over a 3 month period (neutral) and to be encouraged and supported to push back against 3's competition (positive).

Key messages were measured against the quantity and tone of the relevant business areas ensuring 3 could identify problem areas at a glance. A brief qualitative summary allowed 3 to spot the key drivers of negative coverage every month.

3 was experiencing a very varied reaction from different media types since each was concerned with the agendas of their own audience. Analysis by media type was an easy way to identify 'hotspots' very quickly, allowing 3 to prioritise its focus. National newspapers and trade magazines were generating high levels of negative coverage. However, more detailed

examination and cross-referencing revealed these were problem areas for different reasons. Metrica's analysis highlighted this difference and showed 3 the nature of the varying criticism, allowing the team to target the problem areas, knowing their grievances in advance.

### **Results**

Analysis identified 3's financial coverage as a negative 'hotspot' that needed urgent attention. By recognising this in the first month of analysis the team was empowered to concentrate resources on addressing criticisms particular to this subject area. Through the promotion of a positive financial key message the team was able to gradually influence the tone and quality of financial coverage. After four months, unfavourable financial coverage had fallen dramatically whilst deliveries of the financial message were rising.

Metrica's analysis showed national newspapers were consistently critical of 3. By interrogating the different layers of analysis, Metrica identified the newspapers' key areas of attack - subscriber, handset shortages and various financial aspects. Armed with this information, 3 responded by pushing the positive aspects of these areas and explaining the issues more fully to journalists. The direct effect was a drop in negative articles related to these subject areas.

### **Conclusion and the future**

3's Corporate Affairs Director had a very clear view of its PR strategy and what he wanted the media profile to be in a year's time. When he arrived in October 2003 he knew he needed to take fast action to fight the negative coverage that had gained momentum. Metrica was appointed to provide the analysis that would give bite to 3's strategy. Right from the start Metrica's evaluation highlighted key action areas on a monthly basis, giving Mark and his team clear tasks on which to focus their fire-fighting. Not only has the evaluation empowered the team to take control of 3's media profile, but it has significantly boosted morale as the team watches their coverage improve in both quantity and quality.

*"The PR professional's worst enemy is the art of self-convincing that everything is getting better. Metrica's independent, consistent clarity about what is really happening in the field of media is an essential tool in the increasingly competitive arena of the mobile communications industry. Their ability to record accurate analysis in addition to guiding us through the messaging maze has helped 3 to see more clearly and thereby improve the industry's understanding of our value proposition and great content services,"*

Mark Rigby, Corporate Affairs Director at 3.

*"The Platinum Award is given to the entry that, in the opinion of the judges, represents the outstanding entry. And this one certainly met that criteria. There was genuine consensus amongst us that this was the winner. We all learnt something from it, and it stimulated some lively debate amongst us. We all hope that it will be widely used within the industry as an example of best practice.*

*"Why did we award the Platinum Award to this entry? Four reasons:*

- We saw close integration between all parties involved in the evaluation process.*
- We liked the sensitivity (or granularity) of the measurement used ie, it picked up very small changes and reported on them.*
- The reporting took place in 'real time'.*
- Conclusively, the results were used to inform or influence the ongoing communications strategy.*

*"So often we see measurement being used after the event or as a post-rationalisation process. This entry was used as the all-important element that closed the communication loop between strategy formulation; execution and measurement of results."*

Simon Quarendon, Chairman of AMEC Judges, November 2004