



Metrica & Telewest: 'Using the PR scorecard for internal reporting'

Prior to 2005, Telewest focused its proactive PR strategy on generating national press coverage. In 2005, however, the cable company expanded its media strategy to include proactive regional media relations and, in doing so, recruited a second agency to cover the regional media and work alongside a national consumer PR agency. The in-house team wanted to gain an overall picture of the media landscape so they could firstly get an objective view of the true state of their coverage and, secondly, use key learnings from the evaluation to shape future strategy. At the same time, a clearer view of their key competitors' performance was needed to help set achievable objectives. Taking favourability, quality and competitor comparisons into account, the team put its vision into words: *"Deliver 'smart' PR that targets the right people with a relevant message, while making the most of our resources,"* **Telewest consumer PR team, January 2004.**

Strategy

The team needed to be able to glean the most important top-line information at a glance, allowing for quick reactions to capitalise on positive coverage, turn around any negative issues and feed headline successes to senior management. In addition, on a quarterly basis, the team wanted to be able to delve into the details, giving added support and focus to their ongoing strategy. Finally, they needed Metrica to design a top-level overview of key measures to satisfy their new and more frequent management reporting needs. In order to meet all of these objectives, Metrica worked with the Telewest team to:

- ◆ *Design and implement realistic and achievable targets to track improvements in favourability and message proliferation within coverage*
- ◆ *Benchmark current PR performance against that of key competitors*
- ◆ *Brainstorm ongoing analysis measures which would empower the PR team to implement sustainable strategic improvements and gain competitive advantage*

Execution/Implementation

Favourability: Analysing the tone of coverage by media type was a clear way for the team to identify *"hotspots"* very quickly, allowing them to react to negative publicity and promote particularly successful news stories. For example, in May 2005, Telewest suffered an unusually high volume of negative coverage in the national online media, after the company was placed on an internet spam blacklist. Media analysis quickly identified this news story as potentially damaging and the in-house team responded with a pro-active spokesperson-driven campaign. Telewest comment in these pieces included positive message delivery, stating that the company was contacting affected customers directly to help them clean their PCs, (delivering the message that it cares about its customers) and that they would be introducing additional security utilities for its customers, (delivering the message that they are forward-thinking industry leaders). The successful communication of proactive messages helped to limit the impact of the negative story.

Message delivery: By setting a target of 70% for the volume of coverage to be influenced by the PR team, the process of setting a message delivery target became very straightforward. The rule was that 80% of coverage was expected to deliver at least one key message. In the second quarter of 2005, an impressive 90% of coverage was influenced and 85% delivered at least one key message.

Audience reach to target audiences

- ◆ **Cultured professionals:** Outgoing, sociable, aged 24-44, earning over £20,000 with no children
- ◆ **Digital resisters:** People without digital TV, or an internet connection
- ◆ **Families:** Couples with children living at home
- ◆ **Grey couples:** Over 55's, married or co-habiting and no children at home

The nature of Telewest's franchise network and the regions in which it has a presence means that the regional press is a key element of the PR strategy. With this in mind, targets for audience reach figures for the whole of the UK were set realistically low (50%) since only around 20% of the UK population can receive Telewest's services. In April to June 2005, 48% of UK adults were exposed to Telewest coverage. Additionally, 94% of this coverage was favourable.

Competitor benchmarking

The Telewest team was keen to see in black and white how their performance compared with that of their key competitors - Sky, a realistic competitor and BT, an aspirational competitor. Benchmarking positive share of voice was a simple yet far-reaching exercise. The team was pleasantly surprised at how they fared, particularly against the telecoms giant, BT. This boosted the team's confidence and also provided them with objective evidence of this position, helping to build the department's influence in its new marketing support role.

Without this benchmarking exercise, setting a target for improving competitive share of voice would have been little more than guesswork. With a starting position the team was able to set a goal of achieving equal positive share of voice to BT and Sky. Although BT continues to prove a tough opponent, July saw Telewest Broadband achieve 7% more positive share of voice than Sky in the national press.

Conclusions

Following a thorough communications review and the commissioning of specialist media evaluation, the Telewest consumer PR team has a very clear view of its strategy and what it wants the media profile to be in a year's time. In fact, the team even has a document which outlines 'what success looks like'. In 2005 it became clear that because their proactive coverage was being generated by two separate agencies plus the in-house team, it was important to gain an overall and neutral picture of Telewest's coverage. Metrica was recruited to provide the analysis that would give credibility to the cable company's strategy in the form of considered targets. Not only has the evaluation empowered the team to take control of the company's media profile, but it has significantly boosted excitement as the team watches coverage improve in both quantity and quality.

After eight months, peaks and troughs in coverage can be acted upon faster, deliveries of positive messages are at a high (peaking at 95% of coverage delivering one or more positive messages in June) and the team is exhilarated by the change they have brought about. After the benchmarking stage was over, Metrica and Telewest shifted focus onto the long-term strategy. Now we are in a position to focus resources on specific target audiences and continue to increase the volume of favourable, high quality coverage. With such a well-planned evaluation brief, no changes were needed to adapt the analysis for the second, long-term phase of this project. The consumer PR department is now in a strong position to transform their readers into to target-hitting sales and subscriber figures.

"Metrica's independent and consistent evaluation of what is really happening in the media is an essential tool in an increasingly competitive broadband, phone and TV market. Their ability to accurately analyse our media coverage in an actionable and easy to understand format has helped the consumer PR team get a better understanding of the media's perception of the company and thereby improve the way we present ourselves to our external audiences."

Alexandra Legg, Consumer PR Manager, Telewest.

