



Onclusive

PR ATTRIBUTION™

Measurement & strategy for earned, owned and
newswire media to drive business outcomes



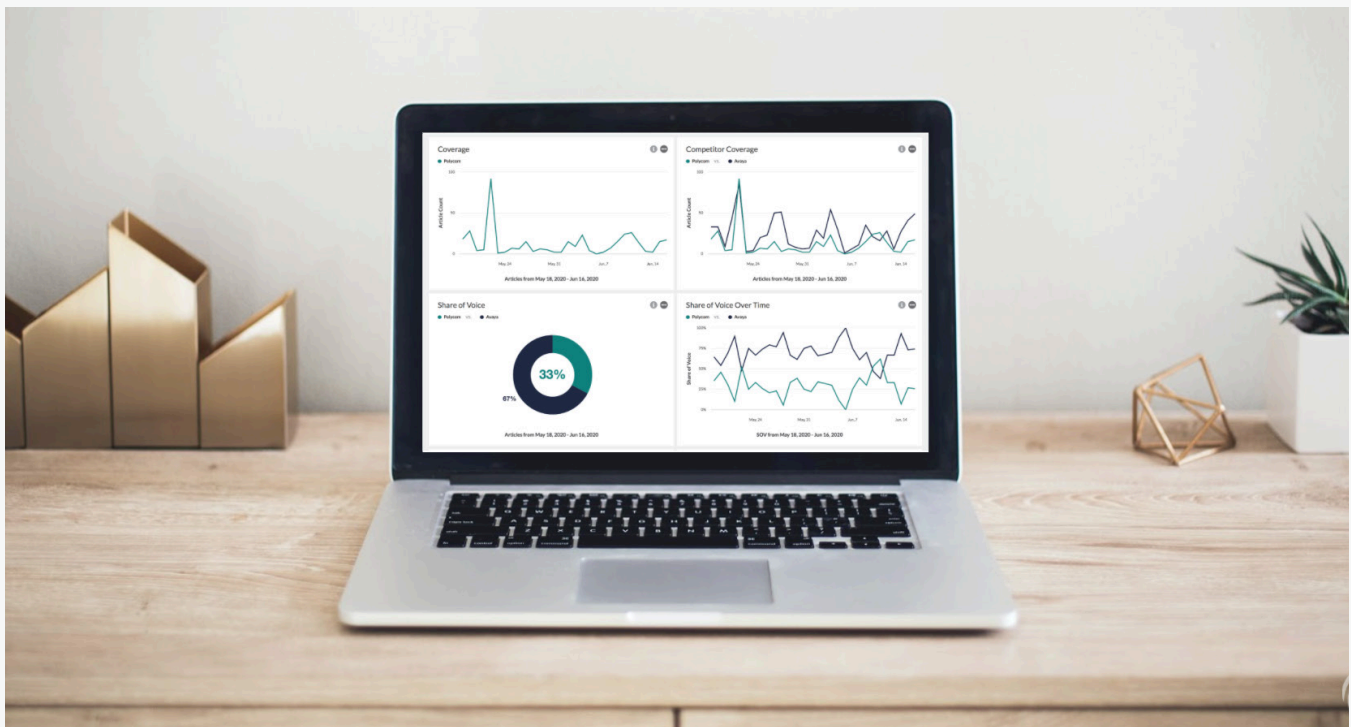
What is PR Attribution™?

For over a century, public relations has been in the business of telling a brand's story, building awareness, and improving reputation. However, in today's ever evolving digital landscape, communications and PR tend to be second fiddle to its big sister marketing during budget time. But why?

One word: Attribution.

PR Attribution™ shows how communications and PR efforts are helping a company achieve its actual business objectives.

It sounds easy enough, but few communicators have mastered the art (and science) of measuring the impact of a campaign on a company's business objectives. Attribution, defined as *"the action of regarding something as being caused by a person or thing"* has been a large focus of the marketing world for the past decade. For communicators, PR Attribution™ can be defined as *"the measurement of actions, such as visiting a web site, downloading content, signing up for a demo, and purchasing a product or service, taken by people after reading a piece of earned, owned, or newswire content."* Simply put, PR Attribution™ shows how PR efforts are helping a company achieve its business objectives.



Why Do We Need PR Attribution™?

For an industry with a history over a century old, some may wonder why attribution is suddenly at the forefront of conversations. What has changed?

If public relations is “the relationship between an organization and the public,” then public relations as a profession is radically changing due to how that ‘relationship’ has changed in recent years, i.e., how today’s consumers consume information and ultimately reach buying decisions in the digital age. Marketers began embracing this evolution over the past decade, and attribution is now a main focus for any CMO.

- 1. Know your actual business impact.**
- 2. Get the credit you deserve and the resources you need.**
- 3. Optimize your strategy to real business outcomes.**

Without PR Attribution™, communicators only know the top of the funnel influence, in other words, the amount and scale of media coverage they are getting about their brand. But with PR Attribution™, PR pros—and executive leadership—can see how communications efforts impact goals and metrics aligned with the lower part of the funnel, such as website traffic, purchases, and revenue.

For communicators to keep their seat at the table, understand the effectiveness of their efforts, optimize their strategy in alignment with overall business and marketing objectives, and get the credit they deserve and the resources they need, knowing how content drives actual business outcomes has become a necessity rather than a luxury. However, if it was easy, everyone would be doing it. Truly understanding the customer journey from PR through to a engagement with a brand is a tough challenge that few technologies address.

Understanding Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned Media (PESO)

Recently, marketers began looking at the PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned) framework to define an overall integrated marketing strategy. This model helps brand managers understand how to best blend advertising (paid media), PR (earned media, including newswire) and original digital content (owned), cascading continuously via companies' websites, social platforms (shared), and other marketing channels.

However, one of the greatest challenges of the PESO model is attribution. Lines begin to blur when one attempts to identify which marketing strategy created a new customer or assisted in achieving a business goal. The four strategies in the PESO model work in concert and are often all involved in a single customer's journey. To leverage this completely, it helps to understand where each strategy fits into the sales funnel.

A sales funnel is a marketing system. It's the 'ideal' process you intend your customers to experience as they go from Prospect to Lead to Customer to Repeat Buyer. The typical sales funnel begins with Awareness and Interest, followed by Desire and finally Action. Earned media typically falls at the top of this funnel: when a potential customer is first becoming aware of a product or service and begins to express interest, earned media mentions are typically the greatest contributors. Owned and Shared media then grow in importance during the Desire period of the customer's journey as they begin to research and develop opinions. Paid then reinforces messaging and awareness prior to the Action at the bottom of the funnel.



When marketers use the last-click attribution model, most of the credit will go to Paid media efforts as the last line in the process. Understanding the impact of Earned media at the top of the funnel thus presents challenges in marketing attribution.

To further complicate the PESO model, each element of this ecosystem has undergone massive transformation in a new digital and social age. PR pros now have a greater responsibility, beyond traditional Earned media placement and newswire distribution, to Owned, Shared, and even paid efforts including the company's blog, social media assets, event coverage, and other content production and distribution.

Although marketers have multiple ways to attribute paid marketing efforts to the bottom line, in many cases earned media continues to measure success not by impact on business objectives but on impressions. However, according to a number of recently published Nielsen "trust in advertising" studies, earned and owned media sources remain the most credible, and consumers trust them more than paid advertising. The highest reported relevance levels are found in media where the consumer is actively seeking information. This, in turn, drives conversion rates and ROI.

In short, continuous storytelling by using owned and earned media enables brands to establish trust and credibility with both customers and prospects. Understanding audiences and how to engage them on behalf of your brand, coupled with proper attribution to business results, are the communications cornerstones of today.



A Brief History of PR Measurement & the Shift to Attribution

Marketing is frequently seen as a profit center because marketing metrics tie back to the bottom line (i.e., email campaign X generated 500 click-throughs and 30 leads, resulting in \$1.5 million in revenue). Up until now, PR has been seen as a cost center because of less tangible based on vanity metrics such as article numbers, impressions, or ad value equivalency (AVE).

The traditional way of measuring PR is through impressions, a metric that was originally created by and for the advertising industry. In advertising, the term “impressions” refers to the number of eyes that have seen an ad. In other words, the total viewership count of an ad. In PR, however, the impression metric corresponds to the viewership of the publication as a whole.

It doesn't take long to realize that impressions of the publication have little to no correlation with the number of people who actually end up reading an article, let alone the number of people who visit a company's website after reading that article or what those visitors do once they are on the website.

AMEC (International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication) has created and revised the **Barcelona Principles** over the decade to begin to redefine how PR should be measured. Although the seven principles define some best practices for how PR measurement should be structured, it does not provide specifics on the tools, metrics, and technologies that can lead to distribution. The seven principles are:

Barcelona Principles

1. Goal setting & measurement are fundamental to communication & public relations
2. Measuring communication outcomes is recommended versus only measuring outputs
3. The effect on organizational performance can & should be measured where possible
4. Measurement & evaluation require both qualitative & quantitative methods
5. AVEs are not the value of communications
6. Social media can and should be measured consistently with other media channels
7. Measurement and evaluation should be transparent, consistent and valid

While the Barcelona Principles have provided an initial cohesive message that PR measurement needs to change, no specific framework or methodology has yet emerged as the source of accurate earned and owned media attribution.

Additionally, PR as a whole has experienced tremendous shifts. Instead of just looking for media placements, traditional PR has shifted to continuous storytelling. Also, today we need to measure the impact of earned, owned and newswire media across each stage of the consumer journey:



Content Quality:

article numbers and share of voice only give you “quantity” – isn’t it more important to understand the “quality” of your coverage?



Reader Engagement:

it’s good to get press, but is anyone even consuming it, and how much and for how long are they reading it?



Influence:

how did your content shape the opinions of the reader, how did it impact your brand?



Finally, Action:

what business outcomes did your content drive? Website traffic, sign-ups, content downloads, sales, revenue.

We call this new practice “GROWTH PR”

- Use technology to identify the right story
- Apply data and insights to inform where and with whom to tell the story
- Leverage advanced marketing technologies to deliver your most valuable content to its intended audience
- Measure the actual impact your content is having on your business



What Should Be Measured?

If not impressions, what should communicators be measuring? We talk about measuring against business outcomes, but what does that truly mean? Let's take a look at what works for marketing:

Marketers use attribution to credit conversions to various marketing channels and assigning them a cost. To further define, conversions are anything that is important to you (i.e., business objectives). It could be when a potential customer requests a demo via a lead form on your website, invites a friend to sign up through a referral program, completes a purchase, or writes a review. Channels are the types of earned, owned, shared or paid media that led to the conversion - for example, a Google ad, an article written about your brand in Forbes magazine, or a Facebook post.

Therefore, PR analytics become a great asset. Knowing true conversions to business objectives and how earned media contributed to those conversions is paramount to succeeding in PR Attribution™. But how can we access this data?

There are a variety of tools and technologies available to begin determining attribution for earned media. At the most basic, Google Analytics and Adobe Analytics are foundational. However, truly understanding the impact of earned media requires the filtering and analysis of large quantities of disparate datasets that aren't at the fingertips of most communicators. Moreover, there is no straightforward customer journey to trace with the increasing number of digital touchpoints that consumers encounter today.



The Power of PR Attribution™

Onclusive invented PR Attribution™ in 2011 to determine how many people, after reading a piece of content about a brand, visit the brand's website and which actions they take – including specific page views, content downloads, sign-ups and purchases.

We have analyzed billions of articles and content performance data over the last eight years, and what we found is that a blog post that goes viral can generate an order of magnitude more site visits and conversions than an earned piece in a top tier publication.

There are also many instances where an owned media article outperformed earned media because it was promoted the right way.

Sometimes trade publications have greater returns, too, due to their highly targeted audiences.

The impression metric fundamentally fails to capture any of this behavior. How many site visits did my content drive and how many of those site visits convert or perform an action on my website? Herein lies the power of PR Attribution™.

If PR pros can master this, more marketers will reconsider their thoughts around PR: I hadn't thought of PR as a serious driver of business outcomes.

Maybe we should...



PR Attribution™ Examples

Know which journalists and publications drive more of the behaviors you're after

Understanding the business impact of content written by different journalists in different publications can give insight into which direction or PR strategy should be employed. For instance, if articles written by journalist A or placed in publication B consistently drive more website conversions than journalist C or publication D, that may indicate it's a good idea to increase pitches to journalist A and publication B and decrease actions with journalist C and publication D.

Cutting the clutter in terms of the content pitched and published is a quick way to work more efficiently and prove to senior leaders that you're focusing on what works and doing less of what doesn't.



Discover which topics resonate the most with your intended audience

With the insights into the performance of the articles that mention specific topics (in tandem with mentions of your brand or company), you can focus on the topics and themes that actually drive business value for your brand. If you're seeing consistently better results when your company is mentioned in tandem with a certain topic, spend more of your pitching efforts there.

For example, the leading consumer genetics and research company 23andMe used key message tracking to identify "genetic testing" and "study" as the primary sound bytes that have driven not only social amplification, but also most importantly, their website activity. This intelligence has been incorporated into the company's earned and owned content strategy to better determine positive media moments for the brand.

Gain an understanding of which is performing better: Your Earned or Owned Media

It's important to know how your own blog content fares in comparison to earned or newswire content. Once you are able to see this, you will have a better understanding of how to move forward in a strategic way.

One of the biggest takeaways discovered by Experian, a global leader in consumer and business credit reporting and marketing services, since embracing PR Attribution™ is the potency of its various blog properties. Over the course of just one fiscal year, the company realized a 500% increase in content consumption and traffic to other parts of its website as a result of owned media efforts.



Identify insights and trends that can drive better decision making

Look for a PR analytics tool that offers data visualization features to graphically show you where certain business outcome metrics spike, and the technology that can correlate these spikes with specific communications efforts versus other marketing activity, like paid advertising, search engine marketing, social media, email marketing, etc. This will ensure accurate attribution, and provide insight into why those spikes happened and what you need to do to generate the next spike.

It's exciting that recent advancements in PR technology have enabled us to provide insight into the "why and how" of PR in addition to the "what". The industry needs a level change in measurement and embracing PR Attribution™ is a driving factor in getting there.

Capture the Missing Link

Until recently, capturing traffic back to a site driven by PR content was dependent upon the presence (and click) of a link. However, as we all know, in earned media it is rare that a journalist will include a link back to your website, and people often do not even take that direct route as they explore multiple touch points before engaging with your brand.

Onclusive bridges the gap by making the connection between published content and business outcomes even when there is no direct link from the article to your website. Thanks to our proprietary news crawler, advanced marketing technology and sophisticated attribution models, LinkOnclusive provides PR Attribution™ for both direct and indirect traffic that brands are otherwise missing.

As a result of analyzing billions of articles and evolving our attribution technology over the last eight years, Onclusive offers the most comprehensive and accurate PR Attribution™ solution available today.

Communicators can now have a complete understanding of the impact their earned media is driving. Products like Onclusive provide a clear picture of how PR is contributing to and impacting inbound interest and engagement.



A 5-Step Plan to Implementing PR Attribution™

While a theoretical understanding of PR Attribution™ is important, most PR professionals already have limited time to invest in a complex implementation of new measurement techniques and the sheer breadth of data alone can appear overwhelming. Here are five steps to implementing a successful PR Attribution™ plan:

Step 1: Understand Business Objectives

Identify business goals. These can be about increasing traffic, improving reputation, gaining meaningful brand engagement, and retaining customers, or tied to revenue and lead generation. Each of these business objectives will then lead to exactly what you need to measure.

Once business objectives and metrics are identified, tie them to PR metrics.

Set clear content goals at the outset of any PR strategy by answering the following three questions:

- 1. Content:** What format shall I choose based on the audience I'm trying to reach?
- 2. Channel:** What conduit am I using to deliver my content so I can best reach my target audience?
- 3. Measurement:** How am I defining success? Specifically, what do I want my audience to do after encountering the story?

These questions all revolve around target audience and rightfully so; target audience should always be at the heart of any PR work. This simple, three question exercise can exponentially increase the probability of PR success.



Step 2: Gain Executive Buy-In

One of the biggest challenges communicators encounter when changing measurement tactics is explaining to executives (or, for agency professionals, to clients) why change is necessary and investment beneficial. Using marketing attribution as an example of how PR can truly be tied back to business objectives and even revenue is the most effective case for investment.

However, immediate change can produce challenges in year-over-year reporting that is frequently important to executives, boards, and clients. It may be necessary to develop a 12-month plan to shift your measurement strategy. Impressions and engagement data that have been collected previously can continue to be collected in tandem with PR Attribution™, and both can be reported side-by-side for a year until everyone is comfortable with the new way of reporting.

Additionally, as mentioned above, PR Attribution™ can do far more for the executive team than just adjust PR reporting practices. Truly understanding PR Attribution™ and key messaging can drive overall company messaging and strategy and can shift goals based on what is resonating with your target audience. Financial investment in PR Attribution™ will aid success by providing better data, faster implementation and less time investment.

Making the case for an increase in budget can be a challenge, but utilizing data-driven examples of how other companies have increased revenue, saved time, and reached business objectives is a good start to gaining budget approval.

Step 3: Secure Tools & Technologies

The first step toward implementation of a PR Attribution™ model should be to examine tools that are already in your backyard. Working with your marketing team to determine which marketing automation tools are already in place (for example, Marketo, Eloqua, or Pardot) can give you initial indicators for PR Attribution™. Gaining access to your organization's Google Analytics or Adobe Analytics website tracking tools and understanding the goals that have already been set up there is another important step to success. By knowing the tools already available to you, you can kickstart your PR Attribution™ model implementation and provide consistent reporting with other teams.

However, to implement a PR Attribution™ model fully and properly, further technologies that marketers don't usually utilize are needed. Onclusive is the premiere tool for communicators to fully understand, implement, and report on PR Attribution™.

Onclusive tracks media activity and provides actionable insights into your public relations efforts to tell you what is driving engagement and moving the needle in terms of website traffic, engagement, conversions, and ultimately, revenue.

Step 4: Implement Your Plan

It takes time and resources to effectively implement a PR Attribution™ model, and it is important to identify responsibilities at the onset. Who will be needed to complete implementation of tools and technologies? Who is responsible for reporting? Will every member of the PR and social media teams be educated on the new model so they can utilize insights to drive content strategy?

By planning towards business objectives, choosing technologies, and establishing a team, the groundwork is laid for a successful launch. Once an implementation team is in place, decide on an effective transition date. You can then start to gather insights over a few months before beginning to report to executives or clients. It will, of course, take some time to fine-tune new tools and models.



Step 5: Iterate

Implementing a PR Attribution™ model is only the start. The true value of measuring PR Attribution™ comes with using the insights gained from the data to drive content strategy, key messaging, earned media efforts, and goal setting.

As time goes by, it is very likely that you will want to test new initiatives and adjust your strategies. The data provided by the PR Attribution™ tool will help you make these shifts much more intelligently and quickly.

And as you become more comfortable with your results, you can become extremely agile in making data-driven decisions about what messages and angles are most effective in your continuous storytelling cycle.

Understanding Your Competition

In addition to analyzing your own attribution and success, it's paramount to keep an eye on messages from your competition, as well. By examining key messages across your industry, there are a variety of insights and business decisions you can begin to determine:

- Are you capitalizing on the right topics?
- Are you inventing a new category or message?
- What are your current gaps in messaging versus your competitors?
- What are your current differentiators in messaging versus your competitors?

In addition to understanding your competitors' messaging, you can also measure your share of voice and content quality relative to competition over time across earned, owned and newswire media. What percentage of meaningful conversations with your target audience discusses your brand versus your competitors? Watching this impact over time can be an additional signal that your new data-driven decisions are moving the needle.

Bringing It All Together

The communications industry has undergone radical change over the past several decades as it has seen the explosion of social media, the end of news as an event due to real-time, aggregated customized content delivery to mobile devices, the rise of social influencers, and the big data boom. The unprecedented volume of data available today also brings more access to insights than ever. The next frontier of this revolution is in PR Attribution™.

MarTech and AdTech have forever changed the way marketers work and measure their success. The methods they use to attribute business achievements and even revenue back to marketing efforts have given birth to bigger budgets and new skills. Today, CMOs easily spend the same budget or even more on technology as CIOs.

"The price of light is less than the cost of darkness."

ARTHUR C. NIELSEN, Founder of AC Nielsen

To continue to stay relevant and have the resources necessary to carry out an effective public relations strategy, PR professionals need to figure out the measurement dilemma. Implementing a PR Attribution™ model is the most consistent, data-driven, accurate, and effective way to accomplish this.

As you begin to think through your PR Attribution™ strategy, remember to identify business objectives at the outset, gain executive buy-in, select the best tools and technologies, develop your implementation plan and iterate on your results. By following these steps, innovative communicators can lead the entire industry to the new frontiers.



Onclusive

Onclusive is the data science company for communications. We connect content to business outcomes for the first time, and leverage artificial intelligence to reveal which communications strategies drive actual brand engagement. The result is thousands of high-performance campaigns around the world. Onclusive developed the Power of Voice™ metric as a way to measure the quality of a brand's media coverage in relation to its competitors, and invented PR Attribution™ to measure the real impact that content is having on a company's bottom line. Onclusive was founded in 2011 and is headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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