

CISION®



THE COMMUNICATOR'S FUNNEL





PR and comms is a dynamic field that is still often stymied by a frustrating feedback loop of outdated tech and metrics that can't truly measure the value of your work, resulting in insufficient budget because you don't have that proof at hand. To truly prove the value of the work you're doing, you need access to the latest and greatest technology that can measure beyond press clips and metrics like unique monthly visitors, to *actual business impact*.

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.

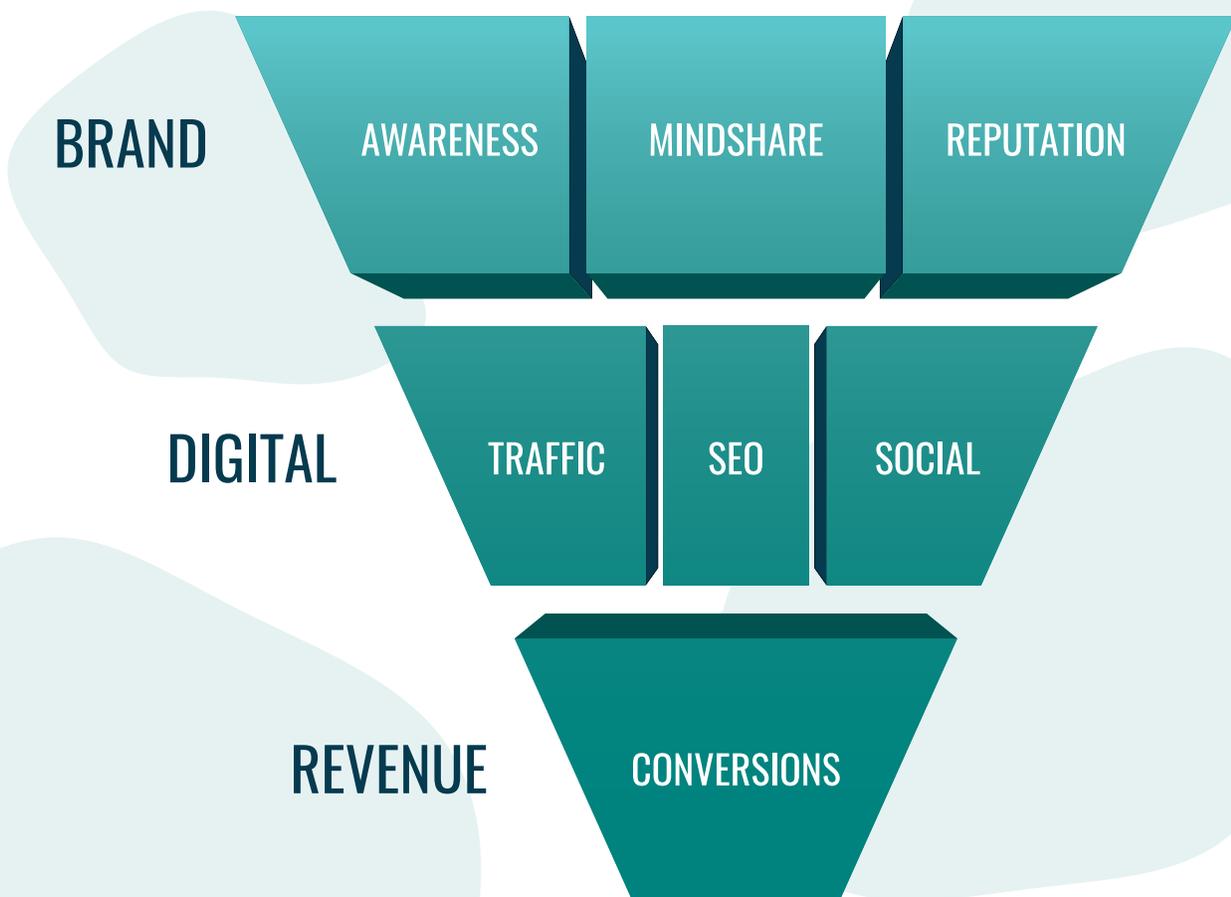
The following pages include a detailed description of a comprehensive measurement framework for PR and communications: what we call the Communicator's Funnel. Read on for everything you need to begin or improve your own earned media measurement strategy. Newly refined and updated for 2020 and beyond, the Communicator's Funnel is here to help you break down the valuable work you do for those who need to see how much you're contributing to business in order to give you the support you need to do even more.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR DECISION-MAKING IS DRIVEN BY DATA?

This guide discusses exactly which metrics can help you prove the value of your work in the age of modern comms. We'll dive into the concept of the Communicator's Funnel to help make things more concrete, in addition to real, actionable metrics, and the data behind them that you can use to justify your PR budget, spend, and decision-making.

And we'll be honest: Much of this can be made easier by using Cision, especially as we implement new capabilities across social media, influencer marketing, and more. But whether you're a customer of ours or not, the metrics we recommend are available to you if you're willing to do a little work. (We'll also make some free tool recommendations along the way.)

Let's get into it.



There's no reason we should still be relying on legacy PR metrics as the industry evolves; we can, however, build on the terms and metrics from the past to bring a clearer understanding to what we're doing with our work now in the present.

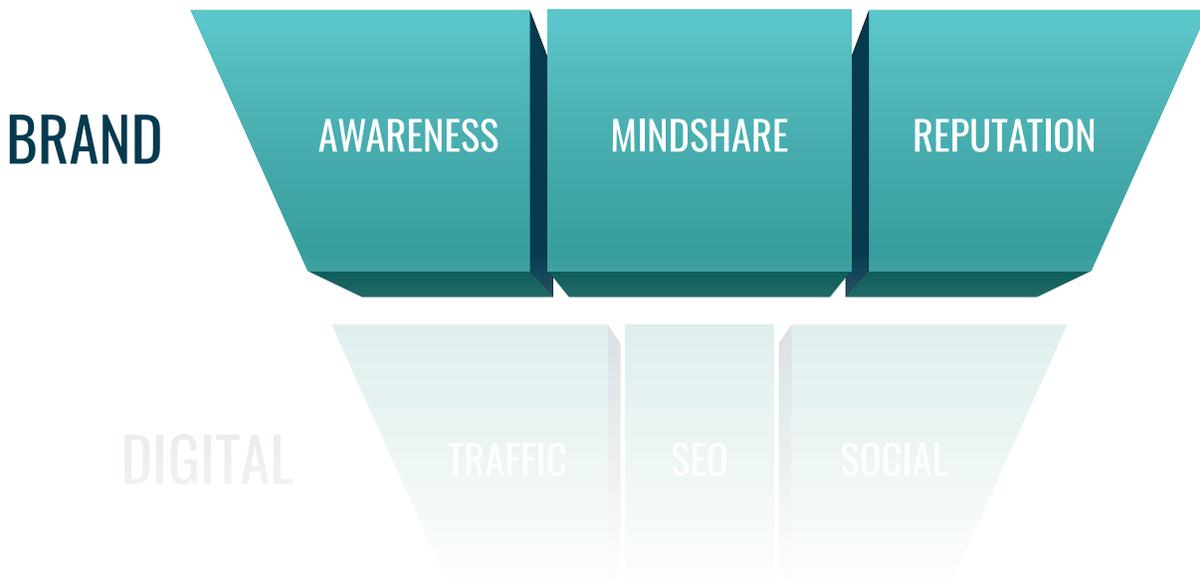
There is actionable data behind every article, journalist, and publication out there. However, the biggest struggle in a more data-driven PR strategy is organizing all this new information, second only to making sure you're tracking the right metrics in the first place.

To effectively track and measure impact, you need a detailed framework. Marketers use a marketing funnel or Buyer's Journey model to understand what their objectives and key metrics are at each stage.

Our goal is for PR and communications professionals to use the Communicator's Funnel in the same way. The Communicator's Funnel has three main concepts: It breaks ideas down in terms of your communication goals, asks the right questions, and matches metrics to those goals.

Let's break it down.





BRAND IMPACT

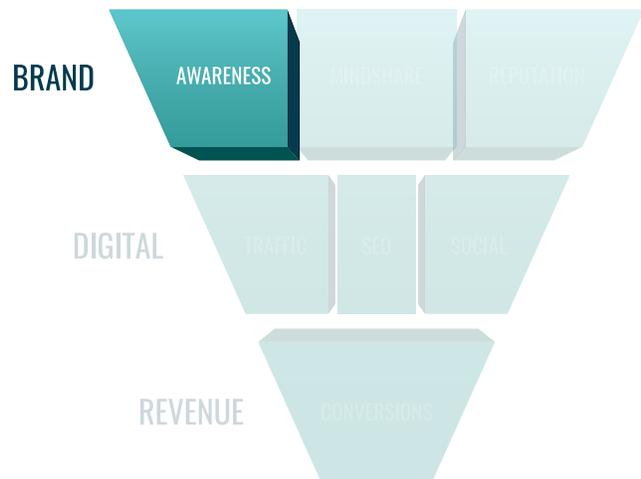
At the top of the funnel we have what most people think of when they think of the effect PR and comms pros have on a business: Brand-level impact. This is important, obviously, but it also isn't the entire contribution that you make. It's just the beginning!

Your brand is perceived in the marketplace -both in the minds of your potential customers and the general public- through things like awareness (do they even know you exist?), mindshare (when they think of your industry, how much do they think about *you*?) and reputation (good, bad, neutral?). Once people become aware of, and favorably disposed to your brand, they're more likely to engage with you. But measuring a campaign's impact on your brand is difficult; it's hard to say how a new campaign had positive impact on a brand, especially one that's well-liked or well-known.

We're approaching the understanding of Brand Impact with these three categories: **Awareness, Mindshare, and Reputation**. Let's dig deeper into each one.

AWARENESS

It's obviously increasingly difficult to capture any amount of attention- and therefore awareness- in today's increasingly fractured media landscape. How do you measure something as nebulous as people being aware that you exist- let alone people that are part of your actual target market?



Mentions have long served as a way to measure awareness of a brand because they're a simple way of capturing the attention your work is creating in the market. If you're tracking this metric on your own, it can get messy fast; you need to be aware of not only how many mentions you're getting, but the quality of them.

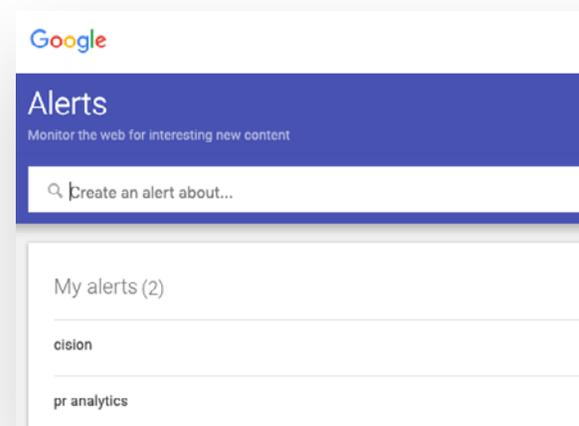
After three to six months of tracking mentions you'll be able to show a chart of concrete numbers to which you can tie success by showing an up-and-to-the-right trend — or not. There is always the possibility any metrics you're tracking are not going the direction you want, but don't be intimidated by less-than-stellar numbers. It's often the underperforming metrics that teach us more about the work we need to do to succeed.

Chances are you're already doing some work with awareness, even if it's a morning Google Alert review. Earned media mentions aren't exactly created equally, however, so the next step is looking at the publications and asking questions like:

- What is their readership?
- Do they hit your target demographic?
- Target geography?
- Or industry audience?

After that you need to look at individual articles to assess:

- Sentiment
- Audience engagement
- Social amplification metrics



You can see how just stopping at the number of mentions your brand is getting would be leaving a lot- and probably the most valuable things- out of the picture.

For example, [Alzheimer's Research UK](#) -one of the world's largest dementia research charities- turned to us at Cision to help increase their visibility, position themselves as key influencers in dementia research, and ultimately increase their brand profile.



They are now able to get a clear picture of where their communications stands and what to act on, allowing them to communicate more strategically - including with and through influencers with access to our wide and accurate influencer database.

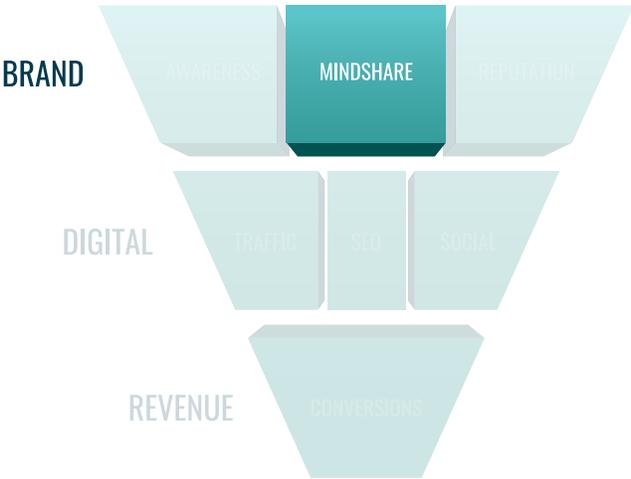
With Cision Insights, they can take a deeper dive into analytics to learn more about their targeted audience; something that wasn't possible at this level before.

A deeper understanding of their audience and a wider reach with their message means they can do more successful groundbreaking, lifesaving work. That's the purpose of our data-driven framework; enabling our clients to do their work better.

MINDSHARE

When it comes to mindshare, you're looking for trends in your mentions and particularly your featured mentions. ("Featured mentions" are mentions in an article specifically about your company or product, rather than a passing mention in an article that may be about another topic.)

You can also evaluate share of voice (SoV) versus competitors by counting their total or featured mentions versus yours, and benchmark against the companies in your industry or other industries that you might want to emulate. It's worth looking at this over time, rather than just in a snapshot, because the trendline can show if you're gaining, losing, or plateauing, and the impact of specific programs that you run.



In practice, mindshare as measured by standard media mention reporting includes article publish date, publication name, author, link to publication, article title, topic/ trend, and publisher domain. For a clear picture of mindshare, you need to record every mention during your given reporting time period.

GO DEEPER

If you don't have a tool specifically to organize your mindshare, you can still take your analysis to a deeper level by assigning a topic or theme to each media mention. Consider using labels like: Product launches, funding announcements, charity drives, industry topics, etc.

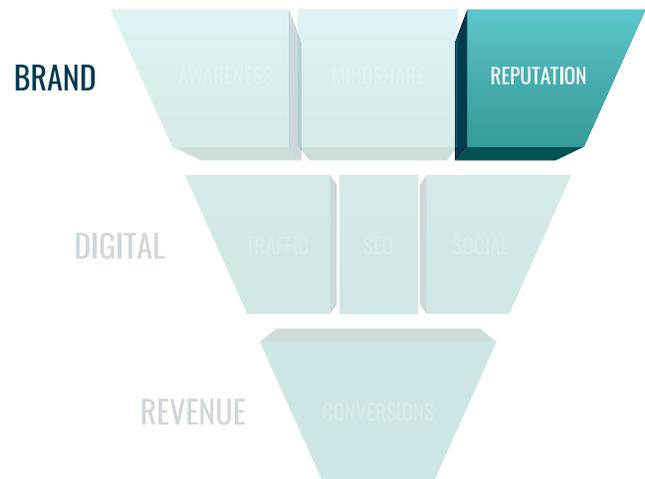
Researching, and recording data based on trends will help you spot patterns in coverage so you can adjust your strategy to fit any upward trends. You can also apply this in your competitive analysis to ask why, for example, your competitor got a huge bump last week. If you know the reason, you can then adjust your strategy to combat (or drown) their share of voice.

 **TOOL RECOMMENDATION**

Google News, but keep in mind you'll have to do a lot of manual filtering.

REPUTATION

Contrary to Joan Jett's assertions, we do care about our reputations and that of any clients we might be working with. Successful PR and comms pros consistently track coverage to ensure it's resonating with their target audience; social amplification is one way to do this, since social sharing can be a good proxy for audience engagement when you look at sentiment and key message pull-through.



These are the three elements you want to concentrate on for reputation:



- Audience engagement
- Sentiment
- Key message pull-through

If you're getting a lot of coverage, but the sentiment is poor or your audience isn't talking about the key messages you're trying to deliver, that isn't going to help achieve your goals. You can also compare specific event coverage- like product launches or crises- against your total brand coverage to get a quantitative metric for impact on your reputation.

Benchmarking those events against historical brand events, and those of other similar companies gives you a way of talking about the "seriousness" or success of an event- and can give you hints into where in the life cycle of a crisis you are, if that's a situation you're currently facing.

A word of caution when it comes to sentiment measured by

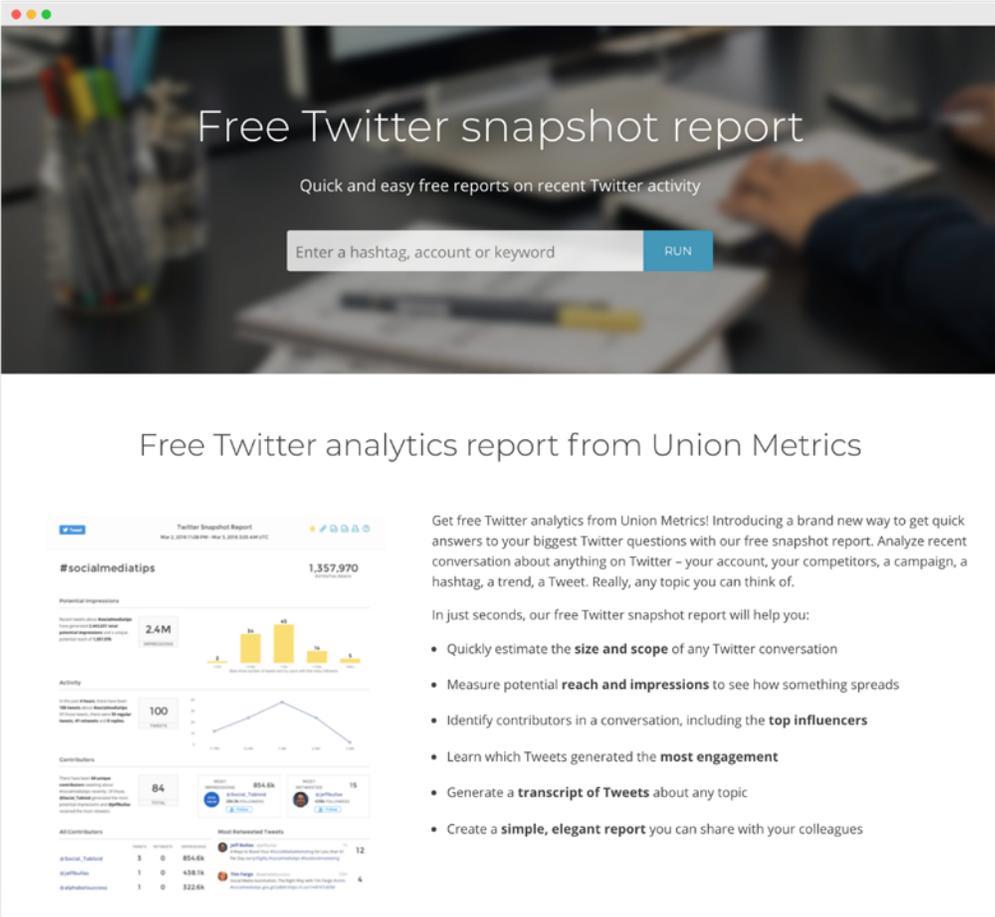
social amplification: It's easy to look at the number of times something has been shared across a social platform, but much more difficult to gauge the sentiment behind each of those shares at an aggregate level. After all, algorithms still aren't very good at sarcasm or the nuanced ways we use hashtags and emojis.



So even if you're using a tool with the best available sentiment technology built into it, you'll want to review shares with human eyes (and human sarcasm detection abilities) to confirm tone.

TOOL RECOMMENDATION

Try the [free Twitter Snapshot Report](#). While it isn't a deep dive into sentiment, it gives you a basic overview of your Twitter activity allowing you to easily read the overall sentiment of yourself or client. Plus you can search any hashtag, keyword, handle, or more for some quick social benchmarking in your industry or just around your particular brand.



Free Twitter snapshot report
Quick and easy free reports on recent Twitter activity

Enter a hashtag, account or keyword RUN

Free Twitter analytics report from Union Metrics

Twitter Snapshot Report
Mar 2, 2018 11:08 AM - Mar 3, 2018 10:00 AM UTC

#socialmediatips **1,357,970** potential impressions

Potential Impressions
2.4M potential impressions

Activity
100

Contributors
84 total contributors

Most Engaged Tweets

Contributor	Tweets	Impressions
@social_media_tips	3	854.6K
@socialmediatips	1	458.1K
@socialmediatips	1	322.6K

Get free Twitter analytics from Union Metrics! Introducing a brand new way to get quick answers to your biggest Twitter questions with our free snapshot report. Analyze recent conversation about anything on Twitter – your account, your competitors, a campaign, a hashtag, a trend, a Tweet. Really, any topic you can think of.

In just seconds, our free Twitter snapshot report will help you:

- Quickly estimate the **size and scope** of any Twitter conversation
- Measure potential **reach and impressions** to see how something spreads
- Identify contributors in a conversation, including the **top influencers**
- Learn which Tweets generated the **most engagement**
- Generate a **transcript of Tweets** about any topic
- Create a **simple, elegant report** you can share with your colleagues



DIGITAL

TRAFFIC

SEO

SOCIAL

DIGITAL IMPACT

Measuring digital impact answers the all-important question: “Is my PR coverage driving traffic to my website (or other digital properties) and if so, what action(s) are those visitors taking?”.

Digital measurement has made huge strides in its ability to quantify things once impossible to measure for PR pros. This includes things like the actions that target audience members take after reading a key piece of content, and specific demographic and firmographic information that can help craft even better strategies.

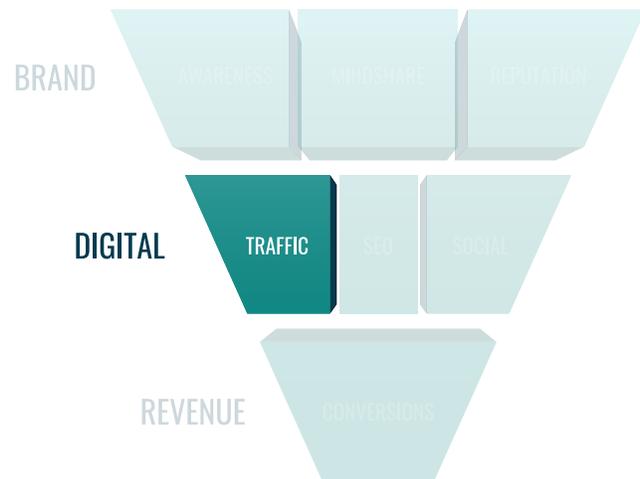
Pursuing an [Earned Media Management strategy](#) requires a different set of tools, and a different mindset. This mindset shift is worth pursuing, as it empowers PR pros to prove their value in the same way as their other digital marketing counterparts.

To get started, you’ll want to break your approach down into the right components in order to understand how many visitors you’re driving (both from earned media coverage, and also how many are visiting your website in general, for context), if the links you’re creating are of value, and if your content is resonating with your visitors.

Website traffic, SEO impact, and social amplification are the way we’re going to break those objectives down for digital impact metrics over the next few pages.

TRAFFIC

Digital impact measurement starts with tracking how many visits your media coverage is driving to the website. It's not enough to just watch spikes in traffic, however. To understand PR's impact, you must map against your overall site traffic, and understand what percentage of total web traffic you're driving over time. Getting a visitor to your website is the first step, but you also need to understand whether they engage or "bounce" (exit the site within seconds).



Take the time to truly understand your visitors' behavior. Ask:

- How long do they spend on the site?
- How many pages do they visit?
- How long do they stay on those pages?
- What is their bounce (exit) rate?
- What content draws and keeps their attention?
- Are they new to the website or have they visited before?



By understanding that, you better understand the value of the traffic, because you can differentiate between articles that drive one-hit wonders, and articles that drive visitors who engage in a positive way with your site, and therefore your brand.

TOOL RECOMMENDATION

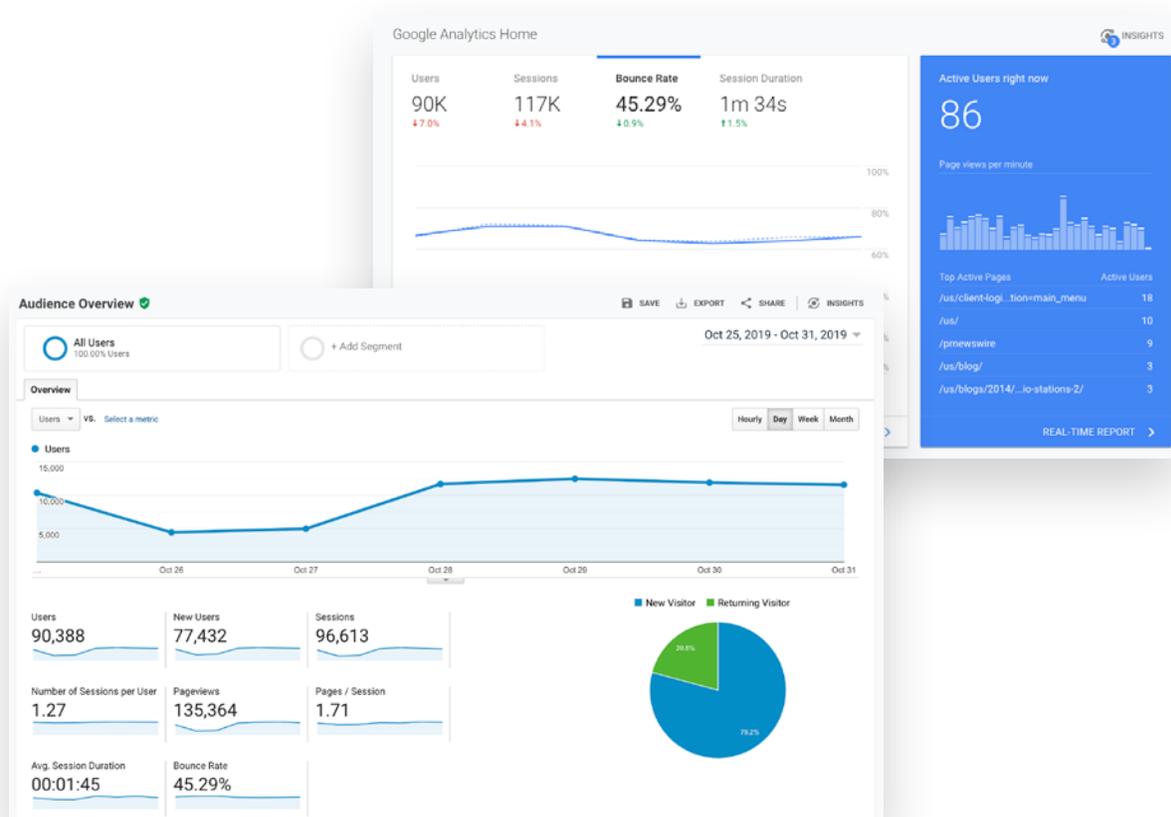
Ask someone with access to your company's Google Analytics (GA) account to export the data or for the credentials to log in and generate the reports you need. GA isn't the most intuitive tool, but it will give you a strong picture of web traffic, and you can build reports based on your PR metrics, and goals.

Almost every CMO understands the high value of a new site visitor, and the high cost of gaining that visitor through paid search or other traffic-building programs. You can use this data to show the real ROI of your PR in terms of website visitors, leads generated (B2B), or items purchased (ecommerce).

Be sure you pay attention to high value actions:

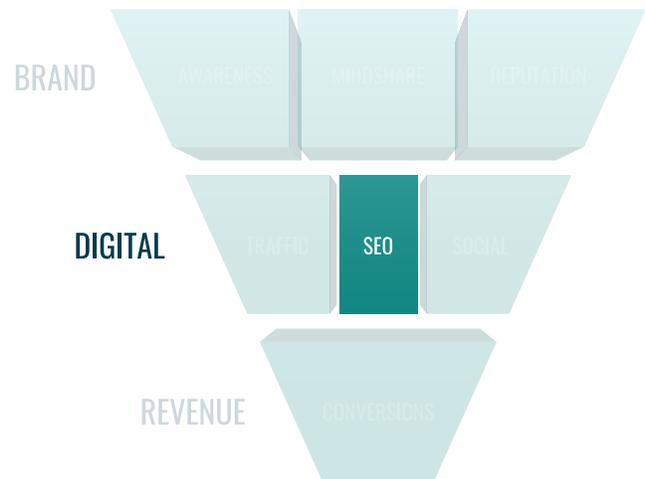
- Did the person interacting with your site complete a key form?
- Download info on the product?
- Or, if B2C, did they add something to a shopping cart?

Tracking these types of high value actions from your PR efforts is key to your reporting.



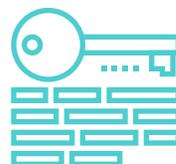
SEO

Skip this section if you're familiar with the basics, because that's where we're starting: SEO (search engine optimization) is how a domain is found when people search in Google or other search engines. PR can be a big SEO asset, but some publications have a higher level of SEO impact than others.



You want to start by looking at the Domain Authority of your referring domains to help assess whether they're helping increase your rankings for desirable search terms. This is important because not all links are created equal. A single link from a high-traffic, highly-regarded website can have a big impact on where you rank in search engines- and consequently, an impact on how easy it is to find your content. Links from lower-traffic, less-important sites still improve your search rankings, but to a lower degree.

Quick note: While most links are helpful, Google considers some links from low-authority publications to be “toxic links.” If you know that, you can disavow those links so they don't undercut the valuable SEO contribution PR can provide. SEO Impact is a loaded metric, so let's break it down even more by diving into Domain Authority, and backlinks.





DOMAIN AUTHORITY

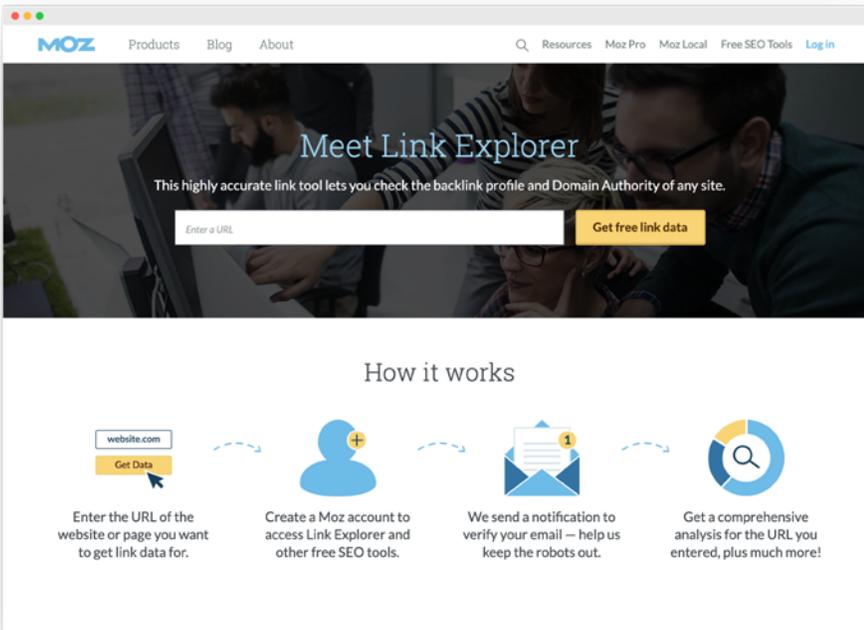
Domain Authority, developed by Moz, is a score (on a 100-point scale) that estimates how well a website will rank on search engines. A well-established publication with quality traffic, informative content, and strong audience interaction will generally have higher Domain Authority.

Obviously this means you'll want to include publications with high Domain Authority when evaluating and placing content. This adds a dimension to the research you already do when planning pitch strategy; start by researching the top publications and journalists in your market, then ask which publications have the strongest Domain Authority and which journalists have the highest impact.

TOOL RECOMMENDATION

Check out Moz Open Site Explorer, and the Mozbar to get a stronger picture of Domain Authority, and the information you need to record in tracking your PR impact.

If you're wondering how to go about this, there are different ways to measure a publication's Domain Authority: Uncover content and link-building opportunities, and track your site's link profile over time, comparing it to competitors for intelligent, targeted link-building using free tools like Moz.



The screenshot shows the Moz Link Explorer website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'MOZ' logo, 'Products', 'Blog', 'About', and search options. The main heading is 'Meet Link Explorer' with a subtext: 'This highly accurate link tool lets you check the backlink profile and Domain Authority of any site.' Below this is a search bar with 'Enter a URL' and a 'Get free link data' button. The 'How it works' section is divided into four steps:

- Step 1:** Enter the URL of the website or page you want to get link data for. (Icon: website.com, Get Data button)
- Step 2:** Create a Moz account to access Link Explorer and other free SEO tools. (Icon: person with plus sign)
- Step 3:** We send a notification to verify your email — help us keep the robots out. (Icon: envelope with 1 notification)
- Step 4:** Get a comprehensive analysis for the URL you entered, plus much more! (Icon: magnifying glass over a pie chart)

With this information, you can focus your PR efforts on the publications and journalists that are going to have the greatest positive impact on your brand by doing things like driving more traffic to your digital assets and bringing more quality eyes to stay and read them, which hopefully turn into warm leads that are easier to close.



BACKLINKS

One of the primary goals of PR pros is to land backlinks in your PR coverage, since ultimately you want an engaged reader to visit your website to learn more about your brand. If industry influencers or high-readership publications are talking about you, and linking to your website, then Google deems you more credible.

Additionally, if you're frequently linked to on social media or influential blogs, Google sees that as organic interest in your brand, which has a positive impact on your company's search engine ranking. Google specifically gives priority in search to companies with the greatest number of relevant backlinks, and PR is one of the best sources for generating strong backlinks from relevant sources.

GOOD



Your company's name is mentioned in a story, but not hyperlinked.

"I like Second Bar, and Kitchen."

Good: Your friend has created a positive impression of Second Bar, and Kitchen. If you want to go there, though, you have to search for it yourself. In the PR world, a mention of your brand may create a favorable impression, but the only way for a visitor to take action is to do the work to find your site.

BETTER



Your company's name is mentioned in a story. It is hyperlinked so that readers who click on the name go directly to your website.

"I like [Second Bar, and Kitchen](#) at 200 Congress."

Better: You don't have to pull out your phone to find Second Bar, and Kitchen, because now you have the address, so you can go there easily. In the same way, a reader who clicks on your name in the story is taken directly to your site.

BEST



A search term (product, service, or idea that you want to rank for) is mentioned in a story. It is hyperlinked so that readers who click on that search term go directly to your website.

"I like the Seared Faroe Island Salmon at Second Bar, and Kitchen."

Best: You've been given a compelling reason to visit Second Bar, and Kitchen, and your friend is building Second's reputation for a signature dish. Similarly, if you have links with anchor text in your press articles, you'll gain greater authority in search engines for those specific search terms.

Not all links are created equal, however. You will want to categorize each link by the following three measures:

- A mention (good)
- A mention with a backlink (better)
- A backlink with anchor text (best)

TOOL RECOMMENDATION

Use Google Search Console to quickly find all backlinks that are pointing to your site and the quality of those backlinks, if your company doesn't have access to a professional SEO tool.

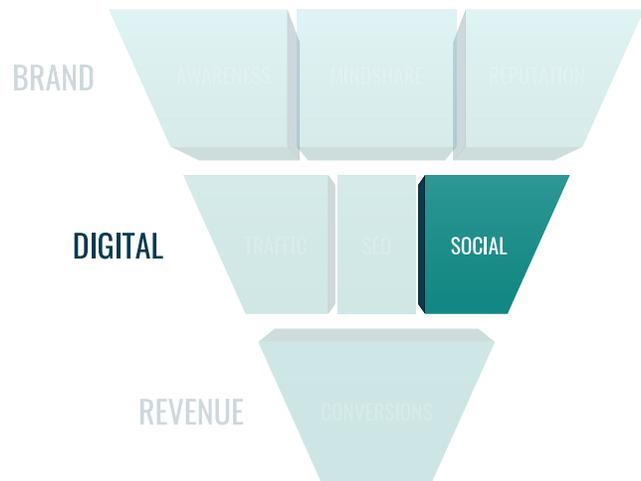
Consider each type of link in terms of a movie recommendation. You've asked your friends what movie you should go see. In evaluating the answers, you'll consider how credible each of your friends is on the topic. This is kind of like Domain Authority, as it evaluates how trustworthy a recommendation is based on who the recommender is. Also consider how complete, and helpful each answer is. Do they give you all the information you need to make a decision, or take some other kind of action? This gives us an analogy for links and helps us understand the difference between mentions (good), backlinks (better), and backlinks with anchor text (best).

Just remember that link diversity is important in today's SEO world, so don't worry if you're simply getting a naked link or a mention — they all help improve your overall link profile.

SOCIAL

The third element of Digital Impact is measuring your impact on social media, or how readers are extending your digital footprint across social platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Metrics like reach, shares, and likes aren't a bad place to start when measuring, but they don't give a complete picture of how a piece is being engaged with- or, more importantly, if it's being engaged with.

(We've all been guilty of sharing something we haven't actually read, or read deeply.)



Social engagement metrics tell you which content is resonating with an audience enough for them to not only share it, but comment on it or even bring others into the conversation by tagging them. You see this behavior in Quote Tweets on Twitter or friends tagging each other in the comment section of an Instagram post. By paying attention to these metrics- which do vary slightly across platforms- you can break social amplification into its component parts so you understand what is driving impact, and where to focus your efforts.

If you're not using a PR analytics platform with social capabilities, it will take some time to build up enough data so that you can see trends. You'll have to create your own spreadsheet of social shares, for example. But an exercise like that will give you a good starting point. If you do it for a number of articles, you can start to get a sense for which coverage resonates with your readers, and which coverage they ignore. Coverage that is socially amplified tends to be coverage that connects with your audience on an emotional level, or coverage that they find so useful that they just *have* to share it.





INFLUENCER AMPLIFICATION

Influencer marketing is growing out of its adolescent wild west phase, and into a serious, established form of marketing- when done right. The key to a successful influencer marketing partnership or campaign is for a brand to have clear expectations set out between them and the influencer prior to launch, including which metrics will speak for success.

For example, if a brand is partnering with an influencer to boost brand awareness, they're tapping into the social amplification the influencer provides, and will want to start with reach and impressions.

Engagement metrics are a more complete indicator of interest in a brand, however, just because an influencer post got 10,000 likes doesn't mean that the people tapping out those 10,000 likes are going to buy your product. The people leaving comments asking detailed questions are the most likely to convert, and they're the ones you should be paying attention to and engaging with from your own brand when appropriate. For more on influencer marketing, download our [Social Media and Influencer Marketing for PR eBook](#).

Free Instagram account checkup from Union Metrics

Want to see how you're doing on Instagram?

Get free Instagram analytics from Union Metrics! We borrowed a few clever algorithms from our paid Instagram analytics to provide a free Instagram account checkup that will put you on your way to Instagram health.

In just two minutes, we'll help you answer questions about your Instagram account like:

- What's the best time to post to Instagram?
- What hashtags should you use to get more reach?
- What should you post more (or less) of?

TOOL RECOMMENDATION

Try the free [Cision Instagram check-up](#) to see at a glance if an influencer is a good fit for your brand.



DIGITAL

TRAFFIC

SEO

SOCIAL

REVENUE

CONVERSIONS

REVENUE IMPACT

PR measurement has typically focused on only the top third of the Communicator's Funnel, covering Brand Impact. But more PR teams are beginning to measure, and report on Digital Impact in the age of modern communications. The end game, though, is measuring bottom line impact. How many sales did PR drive for an ecommerce retailer? How many donations to a non-profit started with PR activity? How much business was created or influenced by PR?

That's what the Communicator's Funnel is here to ultimately help you find out - proving your value, and ultimately helping you increase it.

INFLUENCED PIPELINE

Without a PR analytics platform this metric requires a bit more work, but it's worth it.

Think of pipeline as all the business that, in a perfect world, you could close. These are potential customers who are aware of you, and who are engaged in shopping activity or, for B2B, in an active sales cycle. If this sounds like a hard number to get to, don't be intimidated because it probably isn't.

You have colleagues on the demand generation or marketing team who use systems like Hubspot, Marketo, Pardot, or Eloqua. (Or, if you're a marketer at a smaller company, you may use these systems yourself.)

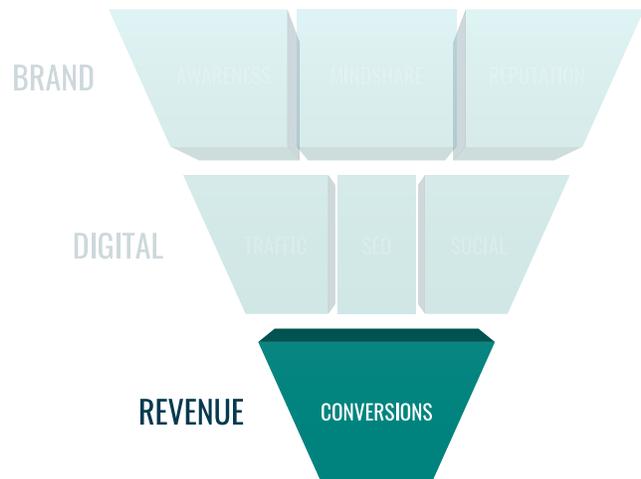
Engage with that team and learn how they measure pipeline activity. When a new prospect enters the sales pipeline, the marketing team tags the prospect with a lead source or campaign. By adding PR as a campaign or lead source, you'll soon be able to run reports showing which prospects were influenced by PR activities. Spoiler alert: It's almost certainly more prospects than you- or your CMO, and CFO- might suspect.

CONVERSIONS

There's more to digital marketing than just getting visitors to the site or getting them into the sales pipeline. At some point you need to close some business. Google Analytics makes it possible to report on this by tagging "high value activities" or "conversions."

You can think of a conversion as a "change in status." When you browse on any shopping site, you're a prospect. When you click "Add to Cart," and make a purchase, you have changed (or been "converted") into a customer.

When you dive into your marketing team's goals, you'll find that they monitor a number of high-value activities such as conversions. It may be downloads of sales collateral, or online purchases, or donations, or sign-ups to a list. Those are all measurable conversions. Use Google Analytics to understand both how many conversions you've had in a given time period ("we had 2,017 prospects download this eBook, and convert into eBook readers"), and conversion rate ("of our total site traffic, 2.3% downloaded this eBook, and converted into eBook readers").

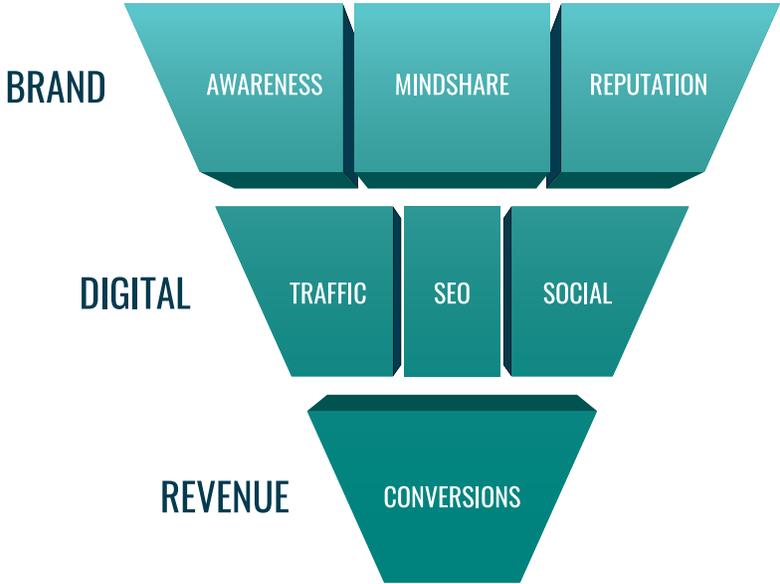


REVENUE

For years, PR professionals have relied on questionable metrics to prove actual financial impact. Metrics like ad value equivalency look respectable on the surface, but when digging into them further you may find that the numbers are hard to tie to actual sales and revenue. Web analytics tools like Google Analytics make this easier.

Think about the high-value activities that we measure as goal conversions: Downloading an asset, or purchasing a specific product. A good marketer will have an idea of the value of each of those activities. An online retailer will know how much an average shopper spends per transaction. A B2B marketer will know the cost, and value, of an additional opt-in to the list or an additional download of content (like this eBook) based on how often those visitors convert to customers. A non-profit executive will know the average value of an additional donor.

In each case, if the value per conversion is known, the total revenue number can be calculated through simple math. Google Analytics makes this easier by calculating the value right in the dashboard, based on the dollar value assigned to each goal. A PR analytics platform can make it even easier by pulling that value right into your PR dashboard. But the concept, and math, is very simple: **Average value per conversion event x number of conversion events.**





CONCLUSION

With the organization of the Communicator's Funnel, and definition of strong metrics, the PR pro can leave behind conceptual conversations, and focus on data-driven reporting. From reiterating PR theory to detailing actionable metrics (including suggested free tools), we've discussed the resources you need to build out the reporting system to elevate your success and get the PR person or team the recognition you've already earned. You're already doing the work; let us help make it easier.

Click the button below to get a personalized demo that can show you exactly what Cision can do to help make your efforts clearer to those that matter most.



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