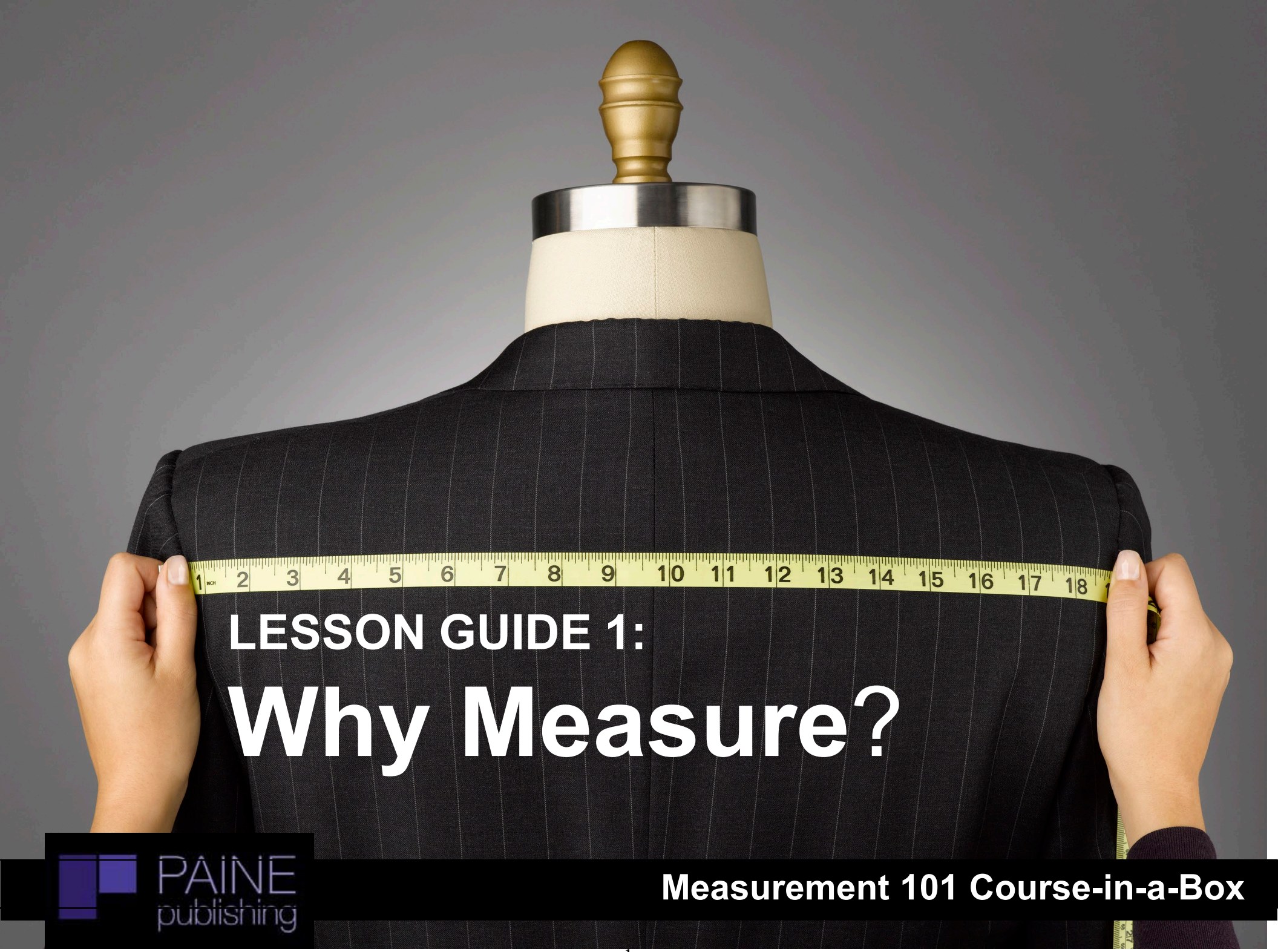


LESSON GUIDE 1:
Why Measure?

PAINE publishing

Measurement 101 Course-in-a-Box

Welcome to **Lesson 1** of Paine Publishing's Measurement 101 Course in a Box. The entire package includes:

- a **Syllabus**,
- a **Reading and Resources List**,
- six Measurement 101 **Lesson Guides** in pdf format
- A subscription to ***The Measurement Advisor Blog***

The six Measurement 101 Lessons include:

Lesson 1: **Why Measure?**

Lesson 2: **How to Set SMARTER Objectives**

Lesson 3: **Understanding Your Stakeholders**

Lesson 4: **How to Define the Right Metrics**

Lesson 5: **How to Select the Right Measurement Tools**

Lesson 6: **How to Get Insight From Your Data and Earn a Seat at the Table**

Introduction to Paine Publishing's Measurement 101 Course in a Box

Hello! I'm Katie Paine, CEO of Paine Publishing. I've been helping people to design and implement communications measurement programs for more than 35 years. Consider this six-lesson Measurement 101 Course in a Box your Personal Navigation System on the road to the perfect metrics. We take you right through the measurement process—from setting goals to interpreting results.

Welcome to Lesson 1...

Why Measure at All?

What is measurement?

Measurement is a way of giving your activities a precise dimension, generally by comparing your results to some benchmark. Measurement should never be used to justify your activities. Doing so erodes management trust and delivers little value. The most important outcome of measurement is evaluation, which allows you to determine the effectiveness of one campaign or tactic relative to another and thus continuously improve your processes.

Measurement should not be confused with *monitoring*, which is what you should do every day to keep tabs on what others are saying and writing about you.

Why does measurement matter?

In any organization, what isn't measured isn't managed, and isn't seen as valuable in the eyes of senior leadership. In today's environment you might be using any of a myriad of tactics and strategies to communicate. Measurement is critical to determining which of these are the most and least effective.

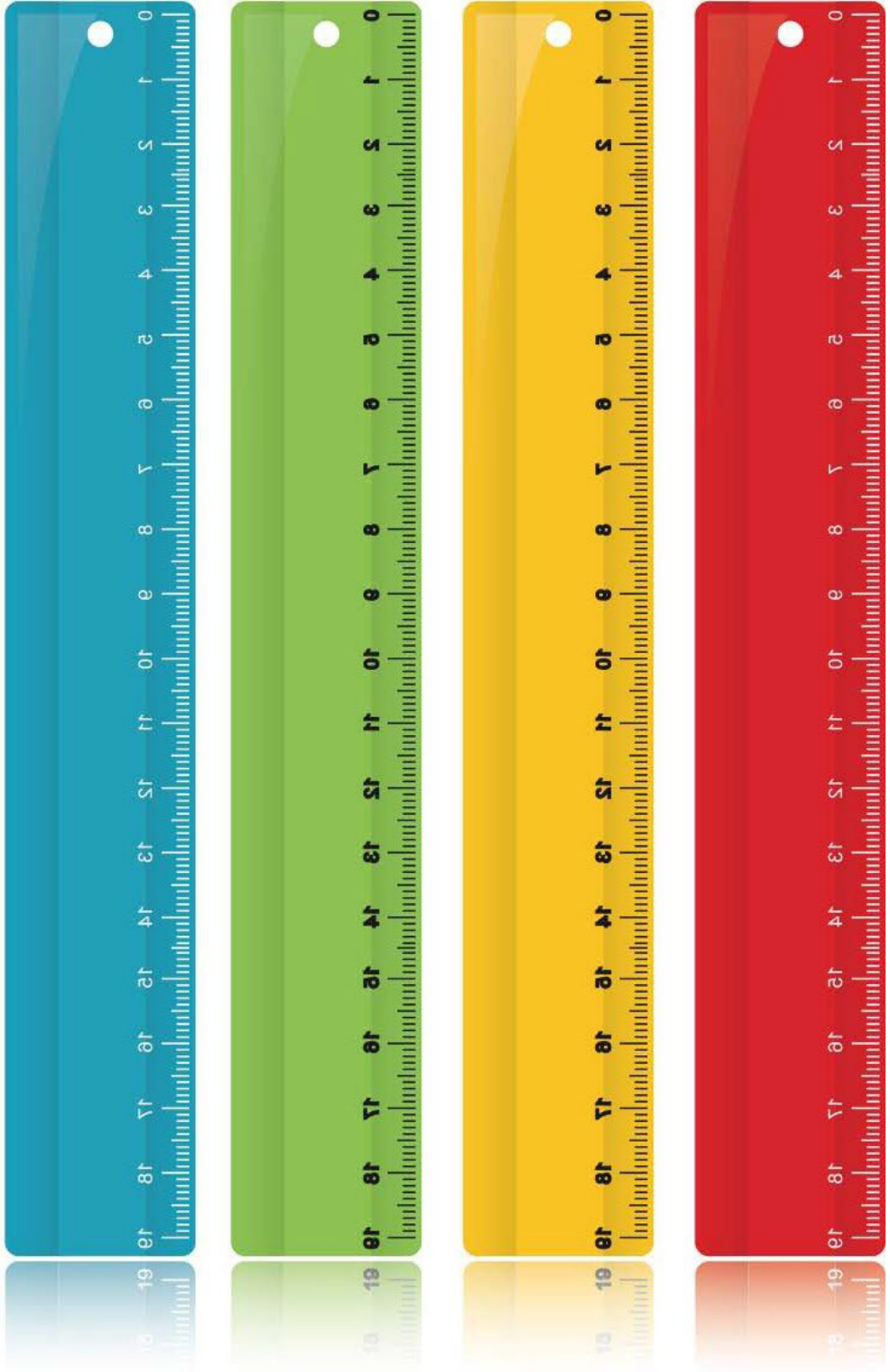
A better question is...

Why should PR people care about measurement?

The short answer is that you have no credibility without it. The longer answer is that for too many years PR people focused on *activities and outputs* rather than *outcomes*. They evaluated their work in terms of "placements" or "impressions" neither one of which is an accurate indication of impact and are both misleading indicators of actual impact.

The result of these over-inflated metrics is that PR has come to be defined by what it shovels out, rather than the relationships it builds. It's no wonder that, to most people, PR means the somewhat shady process of getting the media to pay attention to whatever it is you're trying to push on them, while distracting them from whatever bad stuff your organization is doing.

Contrast that to PRSA's lofty definition: "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics." Behind this perception gap is decades of bad metrics and weak measurement. It's time to clean out the cobwebs and start fresh.



So how do you build a good measurement system?

You start with what matters to your organization. Things like reputation, market share, profitability, efficiency, strength in new markets, helping more people, increasing the donor base or employee retention—all things communications can impact.

In today's environment, having good relationships with your publics is more important than ever. The last decade has given PR the ability to talk directly to and build relationships with all your stakeholders, not just the media. Those relationships today are more likely to start via a post on TikTok, a connection on LinkedIn, or a video on YouTube as they are through traditional media channels.

Today's "Audience First" Measurement Process.

For years PR has been preoccupied by **channel-by-channel** frameworks — PR metrics for PR, social metrics for social, influencer metrics for influencers. But we were confusing activity for impact. Worse, measuring each channel in isolation is incredibly misleading. Today's audiences move fluidly across a vast and shifting constellation of sources — forming opinions through podcasts, peer networks, newsletters, short-form video, and channels we may not even be tracking yet. They don't experience your communications one silo at a time. They absorb everything, synthesize it, and arrive at a single, powerful perception of your message or your organization.

Which is why forward-thinking communications professionals are moving toward audience-based measurement. Instead of asking 'how did our content perform?' they're asking the harder, more important questions: 'How do our target audiences feel? What do they believe? Whom do they trust?

How do I put a value on intangibles like good relationships and trust?

Understanding how your audience feels and building good relationships delivers value to your organization by lowering your costs of doing business (see Fussell, et al.)

Good indicators of trust might be: Fewer opponents bringing lawyers to every meeting, or your neighbors supporting your expansion plans or your sales force spends less time explaining your company to customers. If you're talking to employees, your turnover rates go down and thus you spend less on recruitment.

Six steps to a perfect measurement system

Step 1: Define the goal(s).
What outcomes is this strategy or tactic going to achieve? What are your organizations measurable objectives?

Step 2: Understand your stakeholders
Who are you are trying to reach? What influences them? How do your efforts connect with those audiences to achieve the goal?

Step 3: Define your metrics.
What is your Kick Butt Index? What are the indicators to judge your progress?

Step 4: Define your benchmarks.
Who or what are you going to compare your results to?

Step 5: Select your data collection tool(s).
Collect your data.

Step 6: Analyze your data.
Turn insight into action, and measure again.

Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions about Measurement

There are many different ways to measure success. Which metrics would you say are the best?

There are no “best” metrics, because there is not one goal for all of PR. Some programs are designed to generate preference, others are created to generate awareness, still others may be designed to drive traffic to a website. The best metrics begin with clearly defined goals of your program or campaign. Then you can tie your efforts back to the organization’s business goals.

That all sounds kind of intangible, how do I put numbers around those things?

With a combination of measurement and analytics. We’ll get into the specific steps in later lessons, but you start with clear objectives. Get consensus around what constitutes success in your organization and then judge all your efforts against that definition of success.

One of the core principles of measurement is that you need to always be comparing your results to something -- whether it is your current program with prior programs, the competition (or opposition), or whatever keeps your board up at night.

I'm afraid that measurement will show that my program isn't working.

Do you really expect all programs to work equally well? Most programs work to some extent. You want to quickly identify those that *aren't* working? Measurement gives you a scale to judge your programs, from highly successful, to average, to poor. You'll learn a lot more from those failures than you will from your successes—and you'll very likely save time and money in the process.

Isn't measurement expensive? I don't have any budget for it.

Good measurement *saves* money. It saves your budget from being wasted on the things that don't work. With it, you identify the things that are working and shift your resources accordingly. Doesn't it make sense to spend 10% of your budget finding out whether the other 90% is working?

What's an A/B test?

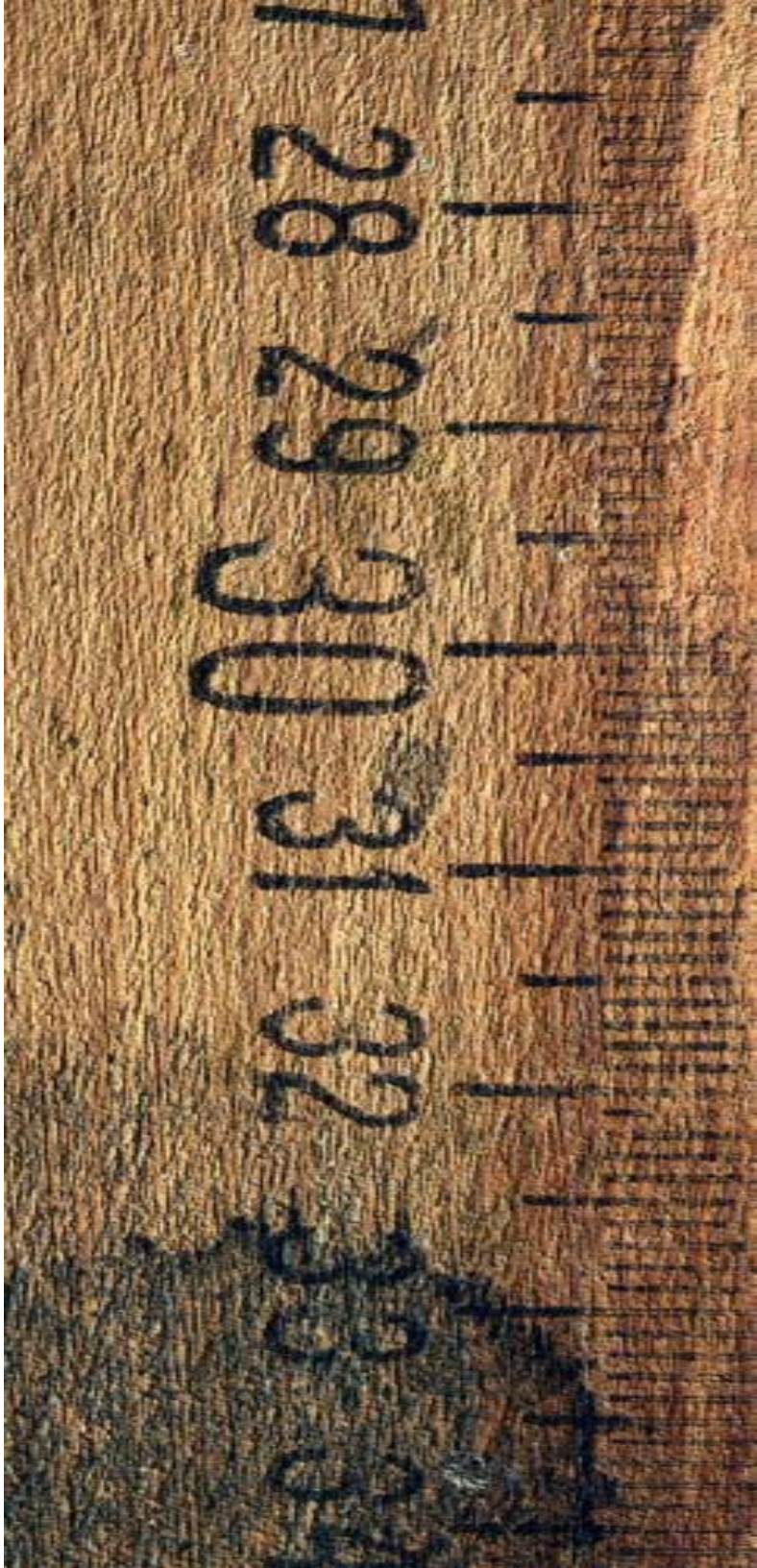
A/B testing, at its simplest, is a comparison of the results of two different campaigns or events. So you might do one launch with a social media component, and one launch without social media, and then compare the results to decide what worked and what did not.

OK, you've convinced me to measure. Where do we go from here?

First, walk through our Measurement Compass to get a top-level level of your metrics,

Then download Katie Paine's PR Measurement Checklist, a handy cheatsheet for your measurement process.

Then sit down and watch the rest of these Lesson Guides.



Lesson One Study Questions

1. What keeps your board and/or leadership team up at night? How does communications help them sleep better?
2. What are some ways you can get value out of your measurement program so that it becomes a net revenue gain rather than an expense?
3. What does your leadership team receive from other departments for their measures of success? How does yours compare?
4. List some of the programs you've done or tactics you've used in the past year. Rank them in order of what you perceive is their relative success. Now put a dollar or resource figure next to each one. How would you evaluate each one's worth?
5. Where can measurement improve your program(s)?
6. How might measuring relationships with your stakeholders improve the effectiveness of
7. your communications strategy?
8. Do you need outside help to get started?
9. Do you need help defining results and SMARTER objectives, developing a robust strategy and tactics, or focusing on specific metrics? How about setting up systems for data collection and a method for generating insights? Go on to the next lesson.

Lesson 1 Suggested Readings

Chapter 1: Paine, K.D. (2011). *Measure what matters: Online tools for understanding customers, social media, engagement, and key relationships*. Wiley, 2011. amazon.com — search: Paine Measure What Matters

Chapters 1, 3, and 4: Kanter, B. & Paine, K.D. (2012). *Measuring the networked nonprofit: using data to change the world.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. amazon.com — search: Kanter Paine Measuring Networked Nonprofit

Barcelona Principles V4.0 (2025), AMEC https://amecorg.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Barcelona-Principles-V4.0-%E2%80%93-FINAL30.6-compressed.pdf

You, Too, Can Show How PR Drives Business Results, in The Measurement Advisor: painepublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/UsingResearch_DriveBusiness2.pdf

New Year's Resolutions for PR People Who Want a Promotion, in *The Measurement Advisor*: http://painepublishing.com/measurementadvisor/2014/01/16/new-years-resolutions-for-pr-people-who-want-a-promotion-or-at-least-to-keep-their-jobs-in-2014/

What is Paine Publishing?

Paine Publishing is an educational publishing company that helps organizations establish effective, evidence-based communications measurement programs aligned with the Barcelona Principles V4.0 (2025) and AMEC's Integrated Evaluation Framework.

- We publish *The Measurement Advisor*, the only newsletter dedicated entirely to communications measurement. .
- We offer measurement education packages that include specific case studies, white papers, presentations, and checklists. Please visit our website www.painepublishing.com

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