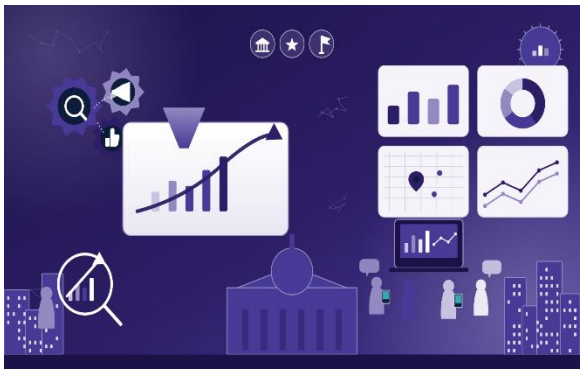
PUBLIC VOICE, PROVEN IMPACT



A Practical Guide to Measuring Success for Government Communicators, Public Information and Public Affairs Officers

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Introduction

Whether you are working for a small town, a major metropolitan area, a county, state, national or international organization, effective communication doesn't just *support* public service — it ***is*** a public service. In times of crisis, clear communication can save lives. In daily operations, it can reduce inefficiencies and help small teams make a big impact. Whether you're explaining a zoning change, guiding a community through a natural disaster, or advising a local community through a scandal, how you communicate often matters just as much as what you're communicating.

Regardless of whether the sign on your desk says, "Public Information Officers," "Chief Muckety-muck," ultimately your success is defined by whether the audience received your messages, believed them, and might be inclined to do whatever it is you need them to do. Today's PIO isn't just sharing updates or issuing press releases — they are building trust, improving services, and strengthening the connection between institutions and the people they serve.
But the importance of good communications today is equal to the importance of knowing whether your communications are in fact clear, effective and impactful. Public Affairs, if done effectively, has enormous impact on the success of the entire organization. Done badly, at best, it's a waste of resources. At worst, it destroys community trust.

There is no doubt that communications deliver measurable results. It informs residents, empowers participation, and reinforces transparency. It reduces confusion, prevents misinformation, and fosters a shared understanding of policies, programs, and public responsibilities. All of which are measurable and the following pages will show you how.

A Word about Wording

Throughout this eBook I use the term "organization" to mean the entity that you are working for -- including everything from a local non-profit, a national advocacy organization, or a County House Authority.
Similarly, the term "community" is used to include all the audiences you serve. That includes residents, voters, donors, partners, constituents, recipients of your largess, or beneficiaries of your non-profit.
For simplicity's sake, I use the term Public Information Officer (PIO) to mean any communications professional working in local, county, state, national or international public relations.

The fundamental question most PIOs today are asking: How do you know whether your program is effective? The answer is to develop meaningful metrics tied to organizational goals. Which is why every public communications effort today requires a measurement system that assesses the impact on your community. This eBook will help you create that meaningful measurement system. In it you'll find:

- Chapter 1. Reasons why you need to read this ebook TODAY!
- Chapter 2. Getting started: tips before you measure anything
- Chapter 3. Seven steps to a perfect measurement program
- Chapter 4. Case studies: real-world measurement programs from federal and national agencies, international organizations, advocacy groups, and local and municipal government
- Chapter 5. The Public Information Officers essential tool kit
- Chapter 6. How to measure the authenticity of your community communications
- Chapter 7. How to make sure measurement stays in your budget

We hope you'll find it helpful. And now, it's time to start your measurement journey.

Chapter 1. Why Now? What's Changed and Why You Need to Read This eBook Today!

These days, with a few keystrokes, everyone — your community members, voters, officials, partners, donors, members and vendors — has virtually instant access to whatever information you're trying to get out there (or keep from getting out there). When combined with rapidly changing, uncertain, unsettling times, there is increased pressure to deliver metrics and results that show impact — not vanity metrics.

In this first chapter, we'll explore the core benefits of strong communication and how they shape measurable outcomes across all organizations. From trust-building to crisis response, these foundational principles guide the approaches and metrics outlined throughout this book.

Why Measurement?

Well-measured communications achieve the following:

- Builds public trust by demonstrating transparency, consistency, and integrity.
- Boosts community engagement by making services, programs, and policies more accessible.
- Supports crisis management through timely, clear updates that inform and calm the public.
- Saves time and resources by reducing confusion, complaints, and repeated inquiries.
- Strengthens community relations by showing the government is listening and responsive.
- Elevates policy success by aligning public understanding with agency goals.

No matter what your goal, measurement best practices require a basic framework that starts with seven basic steps, which remain the same regardless of what activity, campaign, or program you are measuring. In the next chapters you will find specific instructions for measuring the effectiveness of whatever it is you are communicating. Those six basic steps are:

Step 1: Get consensus on clear, actionable and measurable goals and objectives
Step 2: Define your audience
Step 3: Agree on Proxies and Metrics (the journey from communicating to results)
Step 4: Build Your Kick Butt Index (KBI)
Step 5: Agree on a benchmark
Step 6: Select the tools
Step 7: Collect and analyze data and report on insights

However, before taking those steps, there are a few steps you can take to make the process easier. We will outline those in the next chapter. In Chapter 3 we will go into detail about each of those seven steps. Chapter 4 is full of case studies demonstrating how a wide range of real organizations — federal agencies, international bodies, advocacy groups, and local and municipal governments — have put this framework into practice, in their own words. Chapter 5 contains everything you need to build out your essential tool kit for measurement, and Chapter 6 tackles a question every communicator eventually faces: how do you measure something as intangible as trust and authenticity? Finally, knowing that budgeting for any measurement is a challenge, Chapter 7 provides a guide on how to budget for measurement AND keep it in your budget. We hope you'll find it helpful. And now, it's time to start your measurement journey.

About the Author Katie Delahaye Paine, CEO of Paine Publishing

Katie Paine, also known as the Measurement Queen (queenofmetrics), has been a pioneer in the field of measurement for roughly three decades. She has founded two measurement organizations and has written three books. Her current organization, Paine Publishing (established in 2013), is the first educational publishing firm entirely dedicated to making more Measurement Mavens.

Its bimonthly newsletter, The Measurement Advisor, is the industry's most comprehensive source of information about best practices in communications measurement.

In her consulting practice, Katie designs measurement dashboards for some of today's most admired organizations. She has also been a leading promoter of standards in the PR and social media measurement field, most recently as the initial organizer of The Conclave, which released social media measurement standards (#smmstandards). Katie is a Senior Fellow and Advisory Board member of the Society for New Communications Research (SNCR). She was also a founder of the Institute for Public Relations Measurement Commission (IPRMC).

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