

Media monitoring sucks

 By [Jaco Pienaar](#)

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Offering a media monitoring (or clipping) service should be easy. How difficult can it really be to provide clients with content relevant to them or featuring their brand and working out a value for that?

Yet given the state of the local industry, the question is far from moot. So many agencies have forgotten how to do the basics leading to a negative knock-on effect for the entire industry.

Showing clients the quality

With media monitoring already considered to be a grudge purchase, agencies cannot afford to add to the ire of those controlling the budgets. The truth is that public relation firms need to justify their retainers and must show their clients the quality (but more often than not, the quantity) of media coverage received. But if the monitoring service does not give any added value, what is the use?

On its own, media monitoring just does not work. A PR firm can easily get an intern to do the necessary slogging away and circumvent the need for an additional paid-for service. The unfortunate reality is that the majority of media monitoring agencies have gotten lazy. The corporate speak for that would be that they have grown beyond expectations and are now needing to manage multiple work streams while still retaining value in their bespoke solutions.

But putting lipstick on a pig does not make it less of a pig.

So what are PR practitioners supposed to do? For one, they need to carefully evaluate whether their monitoring agency is actually meeting their needs or only doing the bare bones to retain the contract. And I am not even talking about those hidden costs that suddenly appear when it comes time to sign off invoices.

Providing analysis

Media monitoring is just one piece of the puzzle. Granted, it is a fairly significant one especially given the sheer amount of print, broadcast, online, and social media available in South Africa today. However, an often neglected component is that of analysis.

Providing PR firms and their clients the analysis required to make sense of the coverage is critical. Some agencies make a lot of noise around having automated analysis in place. For all its promise, using computers to analyse coverage and make sense of sentiment just do not work. There is always going to be a need for the human touch to provide that additional layer

of understanding.

Part of this is to ensure the methodology associated with media analysis is credible and can be held up to international scrutiny. Such analysis is invaluable to understand how a company is placed strategically and competitively in the market and how this links to its internal activities, goals, and outcomes. The methodology should provide a multi-disciplinary approach to the understanding and contextualising of the presence of an organisation in the public space.

So if your media monitoring agency is not providing even what could be considered the most basic of services, can you really rely on it to be in a position to give you quality analysis?

ABOUT JACO PIENAAR

Jaco is an MA Information Science graduate who specialises in research, analytical framework development, and content analysis. His thesis was on Intellectual Capital measurement and he applies this to his framework developments as well as knowledge strategies. Professionally, Jaco has worked in the journalism field, academic environment, multi-national research environment, and media analysis environment. He is currently the Chief Knowledge Officer at Professional Evaluation and Research.

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