

Leidar Insight: AMEC – Barcelona 2.0

Redefining the fundamentals of
communications measurement



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Measurement and evaluation in communications have long been viewed as enigmatic arts. Often misunderstood, regularly undervalued, and occasionally rejected altogether, measurement has traditionally been shrouded in uncertainty. But the growing importance of communications within corporations and organizations has put substantial pressure on communications professionals to develop and agree on ways to benchmark and present the results of their work to organizational leaders.

But the path to comprehensive measurement certainly hasn't been straightforward. Measurement began with clippings books and tracking the basic numerical outputs generated by each activity. Under pressure from marketing colleagues, communications professionals moved on to the so-called advertisement value equivalents (AVEs) – the biggest nonsense in the measurement industry. They were temporarily embraced because the metrics could be easily manipulated and let communications/PR present themselves in a better light than advertising in terms of ROI.

AVEs have several fundamental flaws: they do not incorporate any measurement relating to awareness, knowledge, perception or activation. Nor do they showcase the value of corporate reputation. Instead they are limited to documenting the activity levels of a PR/media relations team and the potential reach of publications.



The work done by AMEC (International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication) has been extremely important in the evolution of public relations measurement. In 2010, the organization managed to gather agency representatives, industry associations and monitoring services providers at a table in Barcelona to define and establish a mutually-agreed set of evaluation standards. And so the Barcelona Principles were born.

Soon after they were established, the Barcelona Principles were criticized for merely codifying obvious standards while lacking the requisite precision to make any meaningful impact on measurement. The principles also focused too heavily on the private sector and tying measurement to business results while somewhat ignoring not-for-profit organizations. There was too much emphasis on quantitative measurement and a failure to acknowledge the importance of qualitative measurement that ties into quantitative results.

Many of those most criticized aspects have been addressed in the second iteration of the principles launched last week: the Barcelona 2.0 Principles.

The changes are by no means revolutionary, but the adjustments will make it easier to develop and implement compliant frameworks. In addition, the Principles are now much more inclusive- they can be adopted by a broader range of communications professionals because they reflect the fact that public relations no longer stands on its own but must be viewed in conjunction with other channels.

Most importantly, Barcelona 2.0 Principles help communications professionals frame measurement in a more transparent, more accessible way.

These are the new-look principles:

Principle 1:

- Goal Setting and Measurement are Fundamental to Communication and Public Relations

Principle 2:

- Measuring Communication Outcomes is Recommended Versus Only Measuring Outputs

Principle 3:

- The Effect on Organizational Performance Can and Should Be Measured Where Possible

Principle 4:

- Measurement and Evaluation Require Both Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Principle 5:

- AVEs are not the Value of Communications

Principle 6:

- Social Media Can and Should be Measured Consistently with Other Media Channels

Principle 7:

- Measurement and Evaluation Should be Transparent, Consistent and Valid



At this point, it's clear the Barcelona 2.0 Principles have evolved to reflect the latest trends in the rapidly changing communications landscape. They also aim to break up the traditional silos between different communications disciplines. The rewording reflects much better the transformational and influential role communications can play within an organization. By linking communications' impacts more closely to overall organizational performance, we can achieve due recognition for the profession's growing maturity and importance.

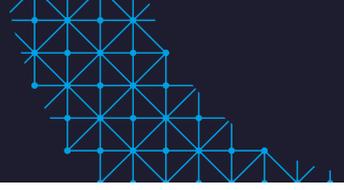
So, what does it mean for your next measurement strategy?

- Qualitative indicators should be viewed as integral to comprehensive measurement. While it remains essential to report metrics, human verification of results is required.
- The value of communications is not strictly limited to achieving business targets but should be linked to overall organizational performance. You should not only look at simple conversion in terms of ROI but also at things like process improvement/time saving and other potential benefits of communications.
- Not-for-profit organizations will find the 2.0 Principles more useful and adaptable to their work. That also means there no excuses for inadequate measuring.
- Social media measurement should be an integral part of a comprehensive communications measurement.
- All ingredients of communications should be analysed together – you shouldn't divide measurement strategy between owned, earned and bought media.
- Strengthening Principle 7 has reinforced the ethical aspect of measurement activities. You need to ask for compliance from all your data suppliers and analysts.

We believe silos should continue to be torn down and that the measurement of communications should be even more linked to organizational objectives and performance. The revised standards and principles are very useful for professionals that specialize in bespoke solutions, as opportunities for a "cookie cutter" approach are broadly eliminated.

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If you would like to learn more about our approach, please contact Lukasz.Bochenek@leidar.com

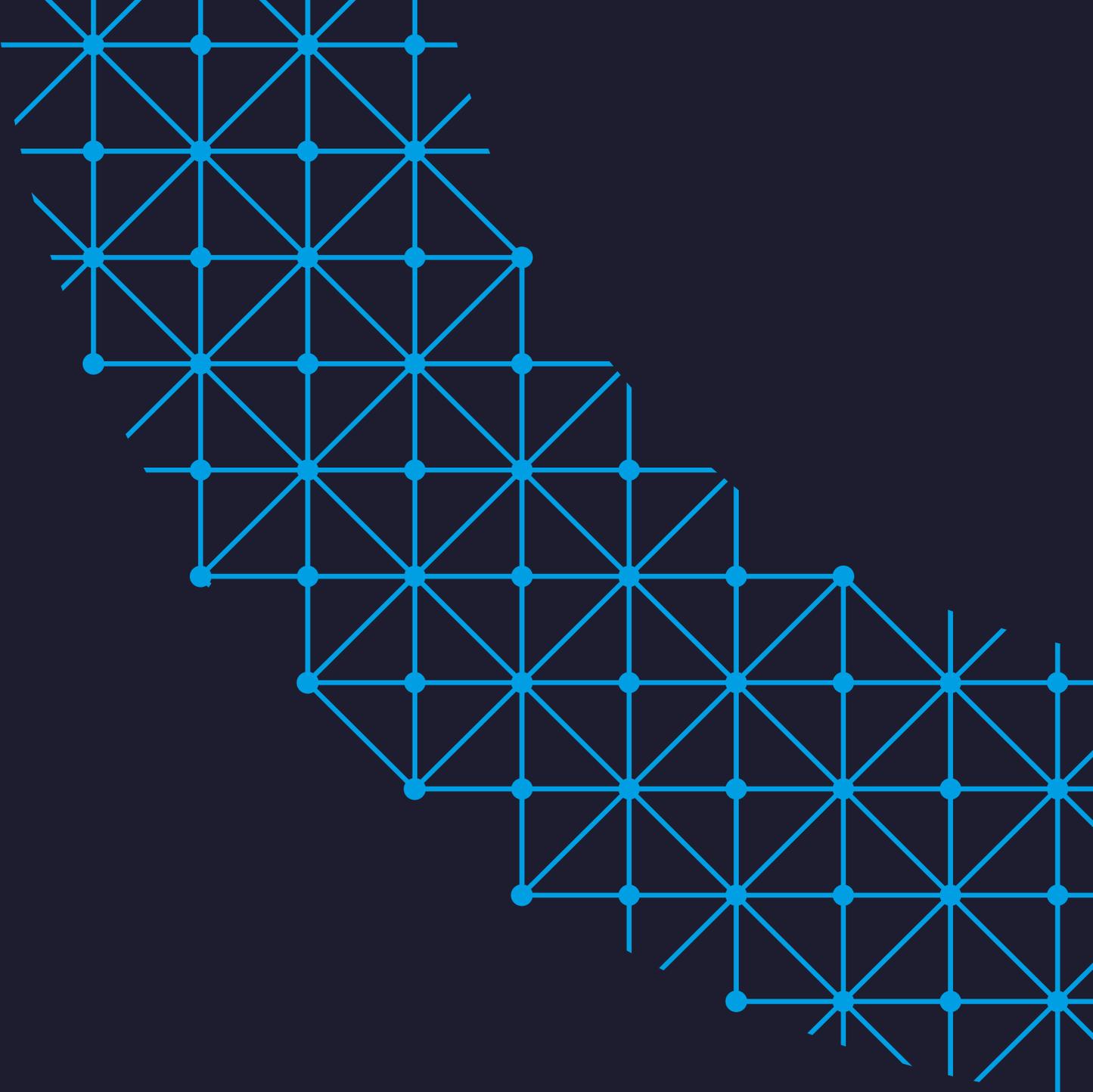


Leidar Measurement and Evaluation: concrete results demonstrate concrete value.

We define relevant frameworks and deliver on-going evaluation of communications performance across traditional and social channels, so companies can see what bang they're getting for their buck. We do so by:

- Defining organizational KPIs and targets.
- Selecting the most appropriate measurement and monitoring tools.
- Evaluating performance and reporting results.

Leidar works with multiple data and tool providers. We are free of any reseller agreements to guard independency of our counsel.



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