

The logo for Onclusive, featuring a stylized white 'O' icon composed of three concentric circles, followed by the word 'nclusive' in a white, sans-serif font. The background is a teal gradient with a white vertical bar on the left and a dark teal vertical bar on the right.

Onclusive

# **PR Campaign Planning: Why Analytics is Key to Success**

# PR Campaign Planning Is Not A Luxury. It's A Necessity.

An impactful PR campaign can attract positive media attention and influence brand awareness, reputation and sales for your brand for years to come. However, to generate that level of clout, PR campaigns require more than just a press release, media outreach or fundraising event. They must be carefully planned.

**A public relations campaign is a series of activities that are planned in advance to achieve a clear objective, such as improving brand reputation, raising awareness of a new product launch, or reaching a specific audience to influence desired actions.**

PR campaign planning provides a roadmap for internal communications teams and PR agencies to execute successful programs. Without a plan, it's difficult to be on the same page in the beginning and to measure effectiveness at the end. However, with planning, creativity and the expectation that you will need to adjust as you go, your PR campaign can become the next great success story.

*“ Our teachers were right: if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Planning is about finding the right way to connect with people to create communications that solve a business or organizational problem. Without a clear understanding of who you're trying to reach, why, and what you want them to do, how can you know what you should be saying, where and when? And without an understanding of your current situation and your ambition of where you need to get to and how you'd know you'd achieved it, how can you measure and evaluate whether it's been effective? ”*

**GEMMA MORONEY**

Co-founder and Behaviour Designer, SHOOK, and author of the [AMEC Primer: Introduction to PR Planning](#)

The purpose of this whitepaper is to help communications pros understand how to plan powerful PR campaigns using data and analytics. Our recommendations are based on the frameworks developed by [\*\*AMEC, the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication.\*\*](#)

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## Set Your Campaign Objectives

It's time for communications and PR to embrace assessment, goal setting and strategic planning in the same way that it's been used in business and marketing for many decades. Like most business activities, PR requires flexibility and a recognition that things will change over time. However, PR planning will make a measurable difference to your company's success.

PR campaign planning includes:

- Setting clear objectives that help drive measurable business impact and organizational success
- Identifying and understanding the appropriate audiences
- Developing a strategy to effectively communicate messages that resonate to these audiences
- Measuring how well these activities achieved the objectives

# 2.5%

PR planning has yet to be truly formalized – or revered – within the industry in the way it has in advertising or media. In fact, AMEC Chairman Richard Bagnall recently asked delegates at the PRSA International Conference, “Who here has a strategic comms plan for their campaign?” Three people in a room of 120 raised their hand. ([AMEC](#))

## Always start with situation analysis and research.

First things first: what's the context for your PR campaign? To understand this, you'll need to conduct research to determine where your brand is today relative to the industry, the competition and the environment that you're operating in. You'll want to know how your story will fit into the broader industry trends and what the media are currently interested in. It's also important to evaluate the past year of your PR activity, including reviewing media coverage and identifying what worked best.

Where will you find these insights? If you have a media monitoring solution, such as **Onclusive**, you'll discover a wealth of information in the big data analytics provided by these advanced technologies—from the current trends to the most impactful stories, authors, publications and messages that drove desired actions. Don't forget to research your competitors and other organizations that have been in a similar position before. You can also find a lot of information online, by consulting with experts, and of course, by listening and talking to your audiences.

**65%**

**65% of PR pros said the ability to quantify Big Data Analytics will be the most important skill to the future of the industry ([USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, 2019](#))**

The most critical insights you're looking for will be those that are likely to unlock the 'why' for your audiences and help you understand your unique brand value proposition. Whatever you discover, ultimately it's your role as a communications professional to use these insights as inputs for developing your winning PR campaign.

## Next, determine your campaign objectives.

What is the needle that needs to be moved and why? Your PR campaign should be designed to achieve a clear, measurable objective, which will help determine the strategy to get there. As we discussed in [The Executive's Guide to Building and Leading an Impactful Communications Team](#), this step should start with reviewing your communications goals, which should emerge from—and align with—your overall company goals.

Here is an excellent example of aligning communications and commercial goals, presented by Sujit Patil of Godrej at the AMEC Summit in Barcelona:

*"We consciously aligned PR & Communications objectives to business goals"*

SUJIT PATIL

Godrej

Business Goal	PR & Communication Objective
Product/Service Sales	Awareness & Perception
Increase Market Share	Brand Preference
Enhance Corporate Reputation	Alignment Between Audience Perception & Desired Reputation
Employee Retention	Employer Brand
Crisis Management	Decrease Negative Impact On Reputation
Increase Market Cap	Positive Sentiment
Higher Valuations - P/E	Image Building, Branding

In other words, the communications function should support organizational success, and your PR campaign needs to align with it, as well. The best PR objectives include action verbs and answer the question of what you want to accomplish with the PR campaign.

*" For me, there is no effectiveness without creativity but there's also no creativity without effectiveness. Ideas or tactics, however well-executed, are not enough. They need to be grounded in business objectives and long-term ambition. "*

GEMMA MORONEY

Co-founder and Behaviour Designer, SHOOK, and author of the AMEC Primer: Introduction to PR Planning

AMEC and Onclusive both recommend setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely) objectives, which inherently include measurement and evaluation as a core component of the planning process.

Here is an example of what a SMART communications objective linked to a SMART business objective might look like. Let's say a car manufacturer wants to be #1 in safety.

**BUSINESS OBJECTIVE:** Become the undisputed leader in safety amongst car manufacturers by increasing our #1 position in safety by 10% this year.

**COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVE:** Increase endorsement of our safety credentials by key media and influencers by 30% this year. ([AMEC: Planning with the Integrated Evaluation Framework](#))

PR campaign objectives may include increasing awareness and driving sales for a new product launch, enhancing brand reputation by a certain percentage, or recruiting new talent in specific numbers.

Ask these questions to determine your PR campaign objectives:

- What are the communications objectives? How do they link to the business objectives?
- What is the problem you are trying to solve with the PR campaign? How does it fit into the communications objectives?
- How clear are your PR campaign objectives?
- Is each objective SMART?
- If you accomplish the objectives, will you be satisfied with your PR investment?

*“ If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about the solution. ”*

**ALBERT EINSTEIN**

Keep in mind that measurement and evaluation must be part of any campaign planning process, at the beginning (knowing what success will look like), during (knowing if the strategy and tactics are performing as expected) and the end (clearly evaluating what changed as a result of the strategic communications plan and how it impacted your brand).

At this stage, it's also a good idea to think about the investment. Every campaign needs resources and a budget to be executed successfully. The investment is important because it supports accomplishing the objectives and sets the parameters around what you can and cannot do.

**AMEC recommends planning to use at least 10% of your PR budget for measurement and evaluation. PR measurement and analytics technology, such as Onclusive, can be a great addition to your toolkit.**

#### **CUSTOMER EXAMPLE:**

In May 2019, Airbnb and 23andMe teamed up to launch a communications program promoting their “Heritage Travel” concept to drive consumers to engage more with their roots and book heritage travel experiences—either locally through cultural heritage Airbnb Experiences, or traveling to someone’s ancestral roots around the world.

They used Onclusive to measure how the campaign achieved their key objectives of owning the “Heritage Travel” theme as a joint platform to drive consumer engagement with Airbnb and 23andMe, increasing awareness for Airbnb Experiences, and driving website traffic and new customer engagement for both Airbnb and 23andMe.



## **The Results**

Data from Onclusive showed that during this campaign, Airbnb and 23andMe generated:

- Almost 200 pieces of consistent media coverage indicating a major trend
- 10,000+ social media engagements exceeding expectations
- 2,200+ website visits with unexpected insights, including the fact that local publications, lesser-known blogs, niche websites and 23andMe’s own blog drove significant website traffic on par with top tier media outlets
- Almost 3,000 website actions, including searches and accommodation bookings for Airbnb and DNA testing kit orders for 23andMe

[Read the full case study](#)





## Know Your Audience

Now that you've determined your business objectives, it's time to bring your PR campaign vision to life. However, before crafting your message or choosing the delivery channels, you must decide who you want to receive this message and how you're looking to impact them. The more specific you are about who you want to target to achieve the 'why'—the solution to the problem you've identified above—the more impactful your plan and creative execution will be.

Knowing your key audiences, their pain and passion points, what they need and how you can add value is essential for your strategic campaign planning. You should consider all members of your target audience, such as your customers, prospects and the people who influence them, media and perhaps even employees.

Ask these questions to better understand your audiences:

- Which audiences are you talking to?
- What do they care about?
- What do you know about them?
- What do you need to find out and where can you find it?
- What do you want them to do?
- Why are they not doing it now?

All of these insights into your audience will help you develop your strategy to reach your objectives and identify the tactics or the action items of the plan. In other words, they are the means used to achieve your objectives.

*“ You need to think beyond just demographics. What you need to focus in on is the audience’s pain points, their motivations, their desires. That’s how you segment and define your audience. And you’ll do that by blending attitudinal and behavioral data (typically gathered via surveys) with proper, face-to-face interviews. Just speaking to one or two people in your audience for 10 minutes and listening, really listening, is going to be so valuable in that process. ”*

**ALEX JUDD**

Head of Impact and Planning at Clarity PR

How can you summarize your strategy? There are a few common ways to do it, but perhaps the most common is GET/WHO/TO/BY. Here is one example written by Julian Cole ([AMEC: Planning with the Integrated Evaluation Framework](#)):

**Get** [target audience] / **Who** [consumer problem] / **To** [desired response] / **By** [one message/action]

**GET:** Gen Xers music lovers

**WHO:** Think Spotify is a music streaming platform designed for the youth

**TO:** Reconsider Spotify as a song library for all music listeners, including them

**BY:** Showing that Spotify allows them to reconnect with good times no matter how much the world may have changed



## Define Your Channels

After specifying your target audiences, you'll want to choose the best mix of platforms for delivering your message, including specific channels such as TV, top tier digital media outlets or social media, and specific formats such as a press release, a press conference or a series of videos. This information will help you strategize your messaging, find the right outlets and distribute to them effectively.

This is where knowing your audiences makes a big difference. Who you're targeting will determine the most effective tactics to grab their attention and the channels that they engage with the most to reach them where they are.

Ask these questions to define your channels:

- Which communications channels and formats are the right ones for your audiences?
- What data do you have to support this?
- Which content will be distributed where, and how will the content be adapted for each channel?

### TOOL TIP

Using a media monitoring and PR analytics platform can be instrumental in understanding which platforms work best for your target audiences. [Check out these tools from Onclusive](#) to see how we can help by automatically tracking all of your worldwide media coverage, including digital, newswire, print, broadcast and radio, and analyzing which types of content drove the most impact for your brand.

Regardless of the formats and channels you choose to connect with your audience, your website is always the home base for your PR campaign. Keeping in mind that most of us start our customer journey with a Google search or clicking on a link in a social media post, you'll need to make sure that your content, landing pages and all digital assets associated with your PR campaign are properly optimized.



## Set Your Messaging, Write The Story

Your messaging and your story are the heart of your PR campaign. Producing valuable, relevant content and releasing it at the right time and in the right place is key to building a strong connection with your audience, which is the prerequisite to the ultimate success of your initiative.

To start crafting your messaging, you'll need to take several factors into consideration. First, of course, is your overall PR campaign objective—what problem are you aiming to solve? Second is your target audiences—who are you trying to influence to do what? Third is your channels and formats—how do you adapt your core messaging to video versus social media versus an article in a target publication? All of these pieces build on each other to help you create a compelling story.

Ask these questions to create your messaging:

- What's the right angle?
- How will it break through the noise?
- Which messaging and stories worked best in the past?

Whether your story is major news such as a new solution to a big challenge or something smaller like an award, it must be interesting to the public. To determine the right creative angle, ask yourself—why would my audiences care about this topic? What's in it for them? The right editorial hook is often what makes someone want to learn more. At this stage, it is useful to go back to the insights about what's currently trending in your industry, what your competitors are talking about, and what is being covered by the media.

### TOOL TIP

How do you go about surfacing the current trends across the media universe? Onclusive's research tool, [Research Trends™](#), helps communications professionals understand what is trending in the media and on social platforms. Discover the most relevant conversations and topics, what's hot on social media, who is talking about it and where these discussions are happening.

It is also critical to understand which messaging and which stories worked for you—and others in your industry—in the past. Measuring the performance of your key soundbytes should be an essential part of your ongoing PR evaluation efforts. Knowing exactly which messages garnered not only the most media attention, but also the most amplification and interaction, is a key input into your story development.

You can also look at the amount of positive, negative or neutral coverage you received, as well as compare your results to those of your competitors.

### TOOL TIP

Gain insights into which soundbytes are actually performing with [NEO™ Messaging](#), Onclusive's message optimization tool. Measure your message pull-through from an article all the way through to conversions on your website and get automatic insights for optimizing your strategy.

Once your messaging is in a good place and you know which channels and formats work well for your audiences, it's time to look at the types of content you'll need to create (e.g. video, article, interview, etc). Contributed or "bylined" articles, customer case studies, speaking opportunities and video interviews are all great options to consider. Creating a library of content will help you set your editorial calendar and ensure the messaging of your PR campaign stays tops of mind for your audiences.

Before any content is created and anything goes public, it's always a good idea to review your brand image and what it stands for, and make sure that each message positively contributes to enhancing your brand reputation.



## Identify The Right Authors & Outlets

Now you're ready to think about who will tell your story. A solid media list is a foundation of any PR strategy and program, and media outreach in the form of pitching journalists and placing articles is one of communications pro's main responsibilities. Take the time to review your media database, including carefully researching and building a pitch list of key publications, authors and influencers who will be essential for your campaign.

Ask these questions to target the right authors & outlets:

- Who will be interested and why?
- Who are the most impactful ones based on past data?
- Which authors, publications, influencers that are most crucial to connect with and/or influence your audience?
- Which messages and content are you crafting for specific media and influencers to take into account the right style and format for them?

It's important to understand which reporters and outlets can play the biggest role in reaching your target audiences, including ones that drove the most impact in the past, and whether their sentiment was positive, negative or neutral. It's also useful to find out which reporters write for your competitors but not for your brand. Could this be an opportunity to add new authors and publications to your target media list?

Once you've created your list, the next step is to reach out to each author, build or nurture the relationship, and pitch the story. There are also ways to research publications' editorial calendars and offer your internal experts and insights as valuable sources of information on an ongoing basis.

### TOOL TIP

An AI-powered media database, such as Onclusive's [Author Intelligence™](#), is a great resource to help you identify which journalists, influencers and outlets can have the biggest impact on your business—driving the most website traffic, social amplification, brand interactions, and revenue. Discover who influential authors are, what they write about, how often, and in which publications so that you have an edge in your conversations with them.



## Distribute Strategically And Proactively

Congratulations, you're all set with the key pieces of your PR campaign! What's next? Campaign activation and distribution of your story to those authors and publications that you've identified in the previous step. At this stage, it's important to continue to build and nurture your media network connections and make sure it's a win-win on both sides.

You must also have a follow-up plan. Remember, your ultimate goal is to break through the noise, and sometimes it requires reaching out more than once and reiterating the newsworthy angles of your story. You can also include extra resources, such as customer reviews and testimonials, additional data and insights that only your brand can provide, exclusive photos or "sneak peaks" and other items of interest.

Also, don't forget to include owned and social media in your distribution plan. Blogs and social media channels have become an integral part of communications strategy because they offer a way to have an active conversation with your audience. They are also excellent vehicles to control your message. In addition, partnering with other organizations, such as developing syndication networks, contributing to others' blogs or asking others to include links to your content on their blogs and social media, can be a great thought leadership tactic.

## CUSTOMER EXAMPLE:



Edmunds owes its extraordinary PR success to its proven thought leadership strategy, which positions the brand as the authoritative source of automotive industry insights, and its robust distribution engine. The company publishes 20 vehicle-related content pieces weekly, proactively distributes its automotive industry trends to journalists and promotes all of this content on its owned media. In addition, through its unique content partnership with the Associated Press, Edmunds syndicates out thousands of expert editorials to the AP network across the country, including hundreds of local and national print and online publications—from The New York Times to the O.C. Register.

In response to the COVID-19 health and economic crisis, Edmunds leveraged all of these unique strengths to quickly pivot and launch the “COVID-19 Response” campaign addressing the most pressing customer needs. The campaign provided highly relevant content and advice to consumers in a way that felt like talking to an expert car shopping friend—covering topics such as financial payment relief and car price fluctuations during the pandemic. Edmunds’ PR and communication teams worked with Onclusive to measure how their “COVID-19 Response” strategy achieved their key objectives, focusing on a combination of press coverage quality and performance against competition.

## The Results

Based on the data and insights from Onclusive, Edmunds:

- Demonstrated its dominance of the media with the highest quality coverage (57% share of voice, 59% Power of Voice™)
- Blew out the competition with the 68% Share of Social Amplification
- Captured the largest competitive share (43%) with its target media placements

[Read the full case study](#)





# Measure Success

Don't leave the evaluation until the end of a PR campaign. You'll need to decide how you will measure success early on in the campaign planning process. If you have a clear objective, your primary success metric would be achieving this objective. Also, there will often be secondary metrics that you will need to track before, during the after your campaign.

Keep in mind that your leadership team wants to see metrics that matter to the business—like website traffic, actions driven and ROI. How will you show that your strategic PR campaign contributed to meeting your communications and organizational objectives?

[AMEC's Integrated Evaluation Framework](#) is a helpful tool that uses the concepts of out-takes, outcomes and impact to prompt your thinking about each element of your PR campaign planning process, including your desired results and metrics associated with them. We have also added key PR metrics that we recommend tracking for every measurement bucket:

Outputs	Out-takes	Outcomes	Impact
Basic measures of the volume of your activity, e.g. posts, social shares, event attendees, potential media coverage readers.	Response and reactions of your target audiences to the activity, e.g. audience attention, recall, understanding of the topic, audience engagement.	Effect of the communications on the target audience, e.g. changed attitudes, increased trust or preference, increased brand consideration.	Business impact of the communications, e.g. improved reputation, increased sales, change in policy, or improved social change.
What media and influencer activity has been generated by your PR campaign?	What do you want people to <b>think</b> differently as a result of your PR campaign?	What do you want people to <b>feel</b> differently as a result of your PR campaign?	What do you want people to <b>do</b> differently as a result of your PR campaign?
<b>Example metrics</b> Number of articles Readership Share of voice Power of Voice™ Message pull-through	<b>Example metrics</b> Brand awareness Audience reach Reader Engagement	<b>Example metrics</b> Brand sentiment Brand consideration Brand Impact	<b>Example metrics</b> Website traffic Website actions Info / demo requests Sales / orders New talent hired

*“ It’s really important to measure the quality of your media coverage and the effects it had within social media and search engines too. Search in particular actually, because PR can have a big impact on the number of people searching for a particular brand or topic (which is a really valuable action). That way you get the full picture and you get to learn what’s working and where you need to improve within your execution..Who did we reach, and with what messages? What did they think as a result? And what did they do? If you have the answer to these three questions, you’ll be in a great place. ”*

**ALEX JUDD**

Head of Impact and Planning at Clarity PR

Ask these questions to evaluate your PR campaign effectiveness:

- What were the results of the PR campaign?
- What has worked well against your communications objectives?
- Which activities, stories, channels, authors, publications have driven the best results?
- What did not work in the way you expected? Why?
- What should you continue to do in the future? What should you start doing? What should you stop doing?

A major PR campaign can define your brand for years to come, for better or for worse. That’s why it requires careful planning and preparation before, tracking and adjusting during, and thorough evaluation after.

Going through the planning process will not only help generate new ideas and opportunities for you and your brand to shine, but it will also give you peace of mind and enable you to maintain your focus once you have launched your initiative. Having a framework in place will allow you to be flexible and adjust for any unexpected twists and turns. By the way, you can also monitor your competitor’s PR campaign in the same way and inform your brand’s strategy from that perspective.

One final note: don’t stop at the end—improve! Document what worked well and should be continued in the future, what didn’t work and should be abandoned, and experiment with new ideas going forward.



## About Onclusive

Onclusive PR software empowers communications teams to save time with automation, and measure the business impact of their work. The inventors of PR Attribution™ and Power of Voice™, Onclusive’s media monitoring platforms are built upon a proprietary global news-crawler which analyzes millions of earned, owned and newswire content daily in over 100 languages. [Onclusive has been an AMEC member](#) since 2015.

Leading global brands and agencies including Airbnb, Intercontinental Hotels Group, 23andMe, Experian, and FleishmanHillard partner with Onclusive to improve their communications. For more information, visit [onclusive.com](http://onclusive.com) and follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

T: (415) 545-8247  
E: [info@onclusive.com](mailto:info@onclusive.com)

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### Onclusive Reviews & Product Details

Validated Reviewer | Verified Current User | Review source: Invitation from G2

★★★★★ Dec 18, 2020

#### "Sophisticated reporting of the future"

**What do you like best?**  
The sophisticated reporting function allows you to pull of detailed reports of your campaigns that show how they are performing, these are also available to download and share with the wider team

**What do you dislike?**  
There are a few bugs sometimes in the system that can show incorrect data but the support team are quick to fix

**What problems are you solving with the product? What benefits have you realized?**  
We are solving the issue of being able to see how effective our PR campaigns are against those of our competitors and we can track this over time. Also as a business we work across multiple divisions and Onclusive has the ability, by using advanced keywords, to split our coverage by division so we can see this data in silo. Onclusive also uses a number of bespoke algorithms that can track users reading content online, in which we are mentioned, that then visit our website at a later date (ie not via a direct link). This helps us to better report ROI as we can quote the number of these 'potential customer' metrics to show how PR is driving traffic to the website.

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#### Onclusive Pricing

Pro Media Monitoring

**Starting at \$4,999 Annually**  
5 Users

Enterprise PR Analytics

**Custom Pricing**  
Unlimited Users

See all 2 Onclusive pricing levels

#### Onclusive Features

**Highest-Rated Features**

- PR Planner - Media and Influencer Targeting  
9% above average
- Version Control - Media and Influencer Targeting  
7% above average
- Impact Measurement - Media and Influencer Targeting  
7% above average



## About AMEC

[AMEC is the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#). It is the world's largest media intelligence and insights professional body, representing organizations and practitioners who provide media evaluation and communication research.

AMEC has grown from 7 members to nearly 200 in its 25th Anniversary year, representing organizations based in 86+ countries worldwide, and more than 1,000 professionals dedicated to measurement and evaluation best practice across the globe.

AMEC thinks and operates internationally, forming working groups from different countries to work together on new initiatives, all reinforced by its vibrant Chapters in Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America.

AMEC's pioneering work in the field has included the development of the [Barcelona Principles](#), the launch of the [AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework](#) and the Measurement Maturity Mapper.