

# Report: PR and Earned Media Measurement: 2024–2025

This report was created using ChatGPT's Deep Research on March 20, 2025. See the end of the report for the research brief and prompt.

## 1. Industry Trends & Evolution in PR Measurement

**ROI & Outcome Focus:** The PR industry is undergoing a paradigm shift from “vanity” metrics toward business outcomes. PR teams face mounting pressure to prove value in concrete terms, especially amid budget scrutiny. Nearly half of PR pros (48%) struggle to prove the value of their work ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). This is driving a rise in **ROI-driven PR** models, where success is tied to business impact rather than sheer media volume ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)) ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). Traditional metrics like impressions, clip counts, or AVEs are increasingly seen as insufficient – they “look good on paper” but show limited correlation to sales or revenue ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)) ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). In 2024, more PR programs are being judged on bottom-line KPIs (e.g. leads, conversions); the use of sales-related PR metrics has grown from 13% to 19% in one year ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). This reflects a broader industry push to align PR activity with business outcomes such as trust, brand lift, and even revenue contribution.

**“Value” Over Volume:** Brands and agencies are redefining “**impact**” in earned media. Coverage quantity alone (“coverage is not king”) is no longer the Holy Grail ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). Instead, there's emphasis on quality, relevance, and outcomes of coverage. For example, a Forbes hit may be prestigious, but if it doesn't reach the client's target customers, its value is questionable ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). PR teams are now asking: *Did our media exposure move the needle?* This includes examining whether a piece drove web traffic, improved search demand for the brand, or shifted audience sentiment ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). Outcome-centric metrics like website referrals, lead generation, share of voice against competitors, and changes in brand perception are taking center stage ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)) ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). In practice, this means PR success is increasingly tied to metrics further down the funnel – e.g. tracking if a PR-driven story led to

demo requests or higher Google search volume for the brand's product ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)) ([How to Measure PR Success](#)).

**Data-Driven & Data-Confident:** The industry is in a transition where measurement is more important than ever, but confidence in metrics is mixed. An overwhelming 86–89% of PR pros say demonstrating impact is a primary goal of measurement ([The State of PR Measurement 2024 | Muck Rack](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). Yet only ~40% are “very confident” in the metrics they report, with about half admitting they are only *somewhat* confident ([New report: The State of PR Measurement 2024 | Muck Rack Blog](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). This conflicted relationship stems from lingering doubts about traditional metrics' accuracy and relevance. For instance, *impressions* remain one of the most-used measures (tracked by >75% of PR pros) but are among the least trusted – roughly a quarter of practitioners say they don't trust impression counts ([New report: The State of PR Measurement 2024 | Muck Rack Blog](#)). Similarly, share of voice is a common KPI but 20% find it unreliable ([New report: The State of PR Measurement 2024 | Muck Rack Blog](#)). This distrust is motivating a search for better indicators that can credibly tie PR to tangible outcomes ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). In fact, **89%** of communicators say the main purpose of measurement is to show impact of their work ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) – meaning fluff metrics that don't demonstrate real impact are increasingly falling by the wayside.

**Client & C-Suite Demands:** Tight budgets and heightened C-suite scrutiny are accelerating these trends. In 2024, 48% of PR pros said they struggle to prove effectiveness – up from 41% two years prior ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)) – a sign that expectations are rising. Clients and executives, especially in the U.S., are asking PR teams to connect the dots to business goals. One industry survey found *58% of PR teams face financial pressures*, and the only way to win resources is by delivering clear ROI ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). Simply reporting the number of press hits or potential impressions is no longer compelling enough for stakeholders who “*don't care if branded searches or direct traffic increased...They care about whether your work contributes to revenue*” ([How to Measure PR Success](#)). This is pushing PR to borrow more from marketing's playbook. We see greater integration of PR metrics with sales and marketing data to attribute outcomes (e.g. using unique links or promo codes in earned media to track conversions). According to PRWeek's **State of PR** report, 75% of communicators believe PR must align with business results to earn a “seat at the table,” and the industry has indeed reached a tipping point where innovation in measurement is not optional ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)) ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)).

**Notable Trends:** In summary, **outcome-based measurement** is the new mantra. PR teams are gradually moving away from vanity metrics in favor of “**value metrics**” ([Why is the PR industry](#)

[so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)) – metrics that demonstrate influence on awareness, consideration, and action. There's a sustained push for **continuous measurement** (not just end-of-campaign reporting) so teams can optimize in real time ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). Additionally, **data fluency** is becoming a core skill in PR. Many organizations are investing in training or new hires to bolster analytics expertise, recognizing that understanding data is crucial to proving PR's worth to the C-suite ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)) ([How to Measure PR Success](#)). In short, U.S. PR measurement in 2024 is characterized by a decisive shift: **from quantity to quality, from outputs to outcomes, and from intuition to intelligence.**

## 2. Measurement Practices & Frameworks in Use

**Evolving Frameworks (AMEC & Beyond):** Modern PR measurement often follows structured frameworks to link PR outputs to business outcomes. Many teams embrace principles like the **Barcelona Principles 3.0**, which underscore focusing on outcomes (e.g. impact on attitudes or behavior) over outputs (media clips) and eschewing simplistic ad-value equivalents. The **AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework (IEF)** is another widely-referenced model that guides practitioners to map Inputs → Outputs → Outtakes → Outcomes → Impact in a chain, ensuring that each campaign ties to organizational objectives. In practice, this means starting with clear **SMART objectives** and identifying metrics at each stage (media results, audience responses, and effect on business goals) ([Measuring PR ROI: Best practices, key metrics and top tools for demonstrating value - Agility PR Solutions](#)) ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)). Many U.S. communicators have adopted this mindset: define what success looks like (e.g. "Increase positive brand sentiment by 15% among target customers in H1") and measure against that, rather than just tallying press hits. **Setting measurable objectives up front** has become standard best practice, acknowledged as the "first step" in effective PR programs ([Measuring PR ROI: Best practices, key metrics and top tools for demonstrating value - Agility PR Solutions](#)).

**PESO-Aligned Measurement:** The **PESO model** (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned media) has become a cornerstone for integrated communications and with it, integrated measurement. In 2024, PR teams are increasingly measuring success across **all media types** to demonstrate how earned media works in concert with marketing. For example, a campaign might track an earned media placement's direct outcomes (e.g., readership and sentiment of the article) *and* its ripple effects on owned media (website traffic, time on site), shared media (social engagement, influencer shares), and even paid media efficiency (improved conversion rates due to credibility from PR). Thanks to digital analytics, much of the PESO model is measurable. As PR measurement expert Gini Dietrich notes, *"Much of the work [in a PESO program] can be measured in a multi-touch attribution model. It can be tracked to organic and direct website traffic. Search visibility and first-page results increase—and so does website authority. Branded search traffic*

increases—and so does the email database” ([How to Measure PR Success](#)). This highlights how a robust earned media effort can produce tangible effects like improved SEO (via high-quality backlinks and brand mentions), greater branded search volume, and lead growth – all of which can be quantified. Progressive brands are thus using **multi-touch attribution** analyses to credit PR’s role in customer journeys. For instance, if someone first hears of a product via a news article, then later visits the website and converts, that initial PR touch is being acknowledged (often via models that assign fractional credit to PR). While true end-to-end attribution remains challenging, **regression modeling** and correlation analysis are being used to demonstrate PR’s **long-tail impact** on metrics like brand awareness and even sales over time ([How to Measure PR Success](#)).

**Moving Beyond Media Coverage Counts:** Communications teams in 2024 are measuring **influence** in more sophisticated ways that extend past basic media coverage counts. One area of evolution is **narrative and message analysis** – essentially, assessing how well key brand messages or story themes are getting picked up in the media. Instead of simply counting “hits,” teams conduct **qualitative analysis** of coverage to gauge message pull-through, tone, and positioning. Advances in AI are enabling some of this at scale (more on tech below). For example, Hill+Knowlton’s data team built an AI-powered pipeline that automates the collection of media coverage and then uses machine learning (via OpenAI in a secure environment) to **code qualitative metrics like message inclusion** and theme resonance ([Nine AI tools and techniques to help your PR... | PRmoment.com](#)). This allows them to quantify narrative penetration – effectively measuring *how much of the desired story is the media telling*. Such **narrative analysis** can reveal which strategic messages are resonating and which are falling flat, providing insight beyond what a volume metric could show.

Another concept gaining traction is measuring **audience quality or authority**. Not all impressions are equal – what matters is reaching the *right* audience. Thus, PR teams are evaluating whether earned media is engaging the stakeholders that matter most. This might involve analyzing publication audience demographics, domain authority, or *audience reach quality*. For instance, some agencies assign a weighted “impact score” to coverage that factors in the outlet’s relevance to the target audience, the influence of the journalist, and the depth of engagement (e.g. time spent on the article or social shares by key opinion leaders) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). Muck Rack has introduced a “**PR Hit Score**” that helps users understand the value of each piece of coverage by combining *the outlet’s importance, the journalist’s influence, and article engagement* into one metric ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). This kind of composite scoring addresses the quality-vs-quantity challenge: a single high-impact article in a niche outlet read by 10,000 of the *right* people might score higher than an article in a mass publication that reaches 100,000 random people. By measuring **influence beyond raw reach**, teams can better demonstrate the true impact of their media wins.

**ROI and Multi-dimensional KPIs:** To demonstrate ROI, many PR measurement models now include **multi-dimensional KPIs** that link to the marketing or sales funnel. For example, a common framework might include: **Outputs** (volume of coverage, share of voice), **Outtakes** (audience reactions such as social engagement, sentiment, message recall), and **Outcomes** (behavior changes like website visits, downloads, lead generation, or preference shifts). **Website analytics integration** is a staple: communications teams routinely examine referral traffic spikes and time-on-site from earned media hits ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)) ([How to measure your PR efforts in 2024 | EC-PR](#)). They also track **SEO indicators** (such as new backlinks from press coverage and resulting improvements in search rankings) as an outcome of PR efforts ([Measuring PR ROI: Best practices, key metrics and top tools for demonstrating value - Agility PR Solutions](#)). Many are adopting **multi-touch or first-touch attribution** in collaboration with marketing to see how PR-driven prospects progress. For instance, if a PR mention drives a visitor to a landing page, that lead is tagged and later, if they convert, PR gets partial credit. **Brand health metrics** are another pillar: surveys for brand awareness, consideration, and trust are used to capture what media metrics can't. According to PRNEWS, "the only effective way to measure reputation is to ask your target audience what they think of you" ([Measuring Brand Reputation: Top Challenges, Tactics and Tools](#)) – hence brands commission periodic **reputation studies** or use brand tracking services to see if sentiment shifts correspond with PR activity. Those without survey resources often use **media sentiment** as a proxy for reputation. However, sentiment analysis is handled carefully, given its known inaccuracies (tools often misjudge context). In fact, 24% of PR pros in one survey said sentiment was among the least accurate metrics for tracking their efforts ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). To improve on this, teams are refining sentiment analysis to be entity-specific – measuring sentiment *about the brand* within an article, rather than the article's overall tone ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)).

**Integrated Measurement & Continuous Improvement:** Finally, measurement is becoming an **ongoing process**, not a one-off report. Leading teams integrate measurement checkpoints throughout campaigns (planning, mid-campaign, post-campaign) ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)) ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). They may start with a baseline media audit or brand metric, set targets, and then monitor progress in real time using dashboards. This ties into agile campaign management – if certain messages aren't landing or a particular channel isn't performing, the data will prompt mid-course corrections. It's notable that **75% of PR pros now track their efforts regularly**, up from 69% the year prior ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)) ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). This rise reflects the growing emphasis on measurement as an integral part of strategy (not just an afterthought). In essence, frameworks today are **integrated, iterative, and aligned**: integrated across channels (earned/shared/owned), iterative with continuous data, and aligned to larger business frameworks (marketing funnels, OKRs/KPIs) so that PR's contribution is demonstrable in the same language as other disciplines.



### 3. Technology & Tools: The Measurement Toolkit (2024–25)

**Tech-Powered Measurement:** The convergence of earned media, AI, and analytics is a defining feature of PR measurement's current evolution. PR teams are rapidly adopting specialized tools and platforms to automate data collection, perform analysis, and present insights. In 2024, **67.4% of PR pros report using PR software tools** as part of their workflow – a number that continues to climb despite budget constraints ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)) ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). The reason is clear: stakeholders now demand faster, deeper reporting, which manual methods (like spreadsheets or Google Alerts) struggle to deliver ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)) ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). Modern PR platforms leverage AI for tasks such as real-time media monitoring, sentiment analysis, trend detection, and even predictive insights. AI's ability to crunch "loads of complex data" in seconds enables PR teams to measure outcomes more **precisely and quickly**, freeing practitioners to focus on strategy ([How to measure your PR efforts in 2024 | EC-PR](#)) ([How to measure your PR efforts in 2024 | EC-PR](#)). As one PR analyst put it, advanced analytics and AI have become "secret navigational tools" that uncover patterns and insights not immediately obvious, enhancing both measurement and forecasting ([How to measure your PR efforts in 2024 | EC-PR](#)) ([How to measure your PR efforts in 2024 | EC-PR](#)).

**AI in Sentiment & Narrative Analysis:** Many traditional PR measurement tools now incorporate **machine learning** for sentiment detection, topic categorization, and identifying narrative trends. Sentiment analysis, while imperfect, has improved with AI that can better understand context (e.g., distinguishing "hot" meaning popular vs. angry). Some platforms go further to analyze **emotional tone or intensity** of coverage ([Nine AI tools and techniques to help your PR... | PRmoment.com](#)). AI is also used to parse **open-ended text** (such as survey comments or social posts) to gauge audience perception at scale ([Nine AI tools and techniques to help your PR... | PRmoment.com](#)). A cutting-edge use is mapping out **narrative networks** – using AI to see how stories proliferate and which themes connect. For instance, tools can ingest thousands of articles and cluster them to reveal prevailing storylines about a brand (e.g. "environmental impact" narrative versus "innovation" narrative) and how those evolve over time. **Signal AI** is one player known for using AI to assess the narrative and contextual "**signals**" in media coverage, helping companies understand reputation drivers in the news. Their algorithms can, for example, scan millions of articles to determine how a Fortune 500 company is portrayed on themes like leadership, innovation, or ESG, and benchmark that against peers ([Signal AI: Mitigate Risk, Strengthen Reputation](#)) ([PR & Comms - Signal AI](#)). This level of analysis goes beyond sentiment, providing a richer picture of brand narrative health.

**Journalist & Outlet Influence Scoring:** Another AI-driven development is assessing the influence of journalists and outlets. Some platforms analyze historical data to identify which reporters or

publications generate the most impactful outcomes for a brand. **Onclusive**, for example, developed a “Power of Voice” metric that factors publication reach, article prominence, and sentiment to score coverage quality. Meanwhile, **Muck Rack’s** aforementioned *PR Hit Score* uses AI to weigh an outlet’s importance and the journalist’s past influence (such as social sharing or secondary pickup of their stories) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). This helps PR teams prioritize relationships and pitching – essentially using data to focus on the media contacts who drive meaningful engagement. AI can even flag “micro-influencers” in media – e.g. maybe a niche blogger whose articles always spark Reddit discussions and referral traffic, thereby being more valuable than raw UVPM (unique visitors per month) would suggest. Such insights were hard to compile manually but are now within reach thanks to AI in media databases and monitoring tools.

**Data Visualization & BI Integration:** Traditional PR monitoring tools have transformed into sophisticated **analytics dashboards**. Vendors have invested heavily in **data visualization**, making reports more interactive and intelligible. It’s now common to see PR dashboards with dynamic charts showing sentiment over time, geographic spread of coverage, trending topics, or correlations between PR metrics and web metrics. Many tools integrate with business intelligence (BI) platforms; for instance, PR metrics can be piped into **Tableau or PowerBI** alongside marketing data. This integration is crucial for demonstrating PR’s role in broader business analytics. For example, a company might have a unified dashboard where executives can see **media sentiment alongside stock price or sales** in real time, with annotations for major PR events (like a product launch press hit) to contextualize spikes or dips. In fact, agencies note that having “**modern measurement systems**” and using BI tools is becoming a competitive differentiator – tech clients, in particular, expect their PR partners to offer data dashboards and automation just like any tech vendor would ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)) ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)).

### **Tool & Platform Watchlist: *Major and emerging players to watch (with AI & analytics features)***

- **Cision Communications Cloud:** A leading all-in-one PR platform (media database, monitoring, analytics). Cision offers extensive media monitoring across online, print, broadcast, and social, with integrated analytics that include automated sentiment, share of voice, and customizable dashboards. It has incorporated AI to improve its media insights – e.g. leveraging natural language processing to categorize coverage by topics or detect emerging issues. Cision’s 2024 updates emphasize data integrations (like connecting to Google Analytics/Adobe Analytics) to tie earned media to web actions. *Insight:* Cision’s recent Global Comms Report noted 42% of comms leaders are relying more on data and analytics in 2024 than before ([2024 Survey Snapshot: PR Agencies Vs. In-House PR Teams | Cision](#)), reflecting why tools like Cision are in demand for their

robust analytics and new AI features.

- **Meltwater:** Another top platform, Meltwater provides media intelligence spanning news and social media. Known for its AI-driven media search, Meltwater uses machine learning to filter noise and surface relevant mentions. It provides sentiment analysis, trending themes, and a ton of data visualization options. Meltwater has integrated social listening data with news monitoring, which helps PR pros see the full picture of earned media impact (for example, how a news article is being shared or discussed on Twitter). The platform's **automated insights** can highlight anomalies (e.g. "Media sentiment dropped below 50% positive today") and can integrate with BI tools via API. Meltwater's focus on AI is evidenced by features like predictive alerts (trying to forecast virality) and its acquisition of an AI startup in 2023 to bolster its natural language analytics ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite](#)).
- **Onclusive:** Onclusive is an analytics-forward platform that has positioned itself strongly on measuring **true impact**. It enables "comprehensive measurement of the true impact of earned, owned, and social media content" ([Measurement - Onclusive](#)). Onclusive's strengths lie in its ability to connect PR to business outcomes: it offers **PR Attribution** analysis (linking coverage to site traffic and conversions) and metrics like **Engagement Score** and **SEO impact** of coverage. The platform leverages AI for things like sentiment (with entity-level precision) and uses a combination of automation + human curation for accuracy. Onclusive's 2024 toolkit and guides emphasize building measurement frameworks and even provide a **CommTech AI Guide** ([AI in PR: Enhancing capabilities and navigating challenges](#)) ([Analytics Overview - Onclusive](#)). *Notably, Onclusive has been vocal about AI's role, publishing resources on how AI can enhance PR while cautioning on challenges* ([AI in PR: Enhancing capabilities and navigating challenges](#)) – indicating they are actively integrating AI in their offerings (like an AI-based predictive analytics engine and advanced image recognition for logo/company appearance in media).
- **Muck Rack:** Initially known as a media relations platform, Muck Rack has expanded into PR measurement in a meaningful way. Its platform now includes media monitoring and a reporting suite. A standout feature is the **Muck Rack Trends** and the proprietary **PR Hit Score** ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). Using its vast dataset of articles and social shares, Muck Rack provides analytics on which media hits are resonating. The PR Hit Score in particular uses an algorithm (a form of AI) to score coverage based on outlet credibility, journalist influence, and engagement – addressing the quality-over-quantity issue by quantifying *which* hits matter most ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). Muck Rack also integrates with Google Analytics to show referral traffic from earned media. Its 2024 "State of PR Measurement" report underscores the platform's ethos: helping PR pros focus on *trusted metrics* that leadership cares about (and moving away from those they



distrust) ([New report: The State of PR Measurement 2024 | Muck Rack Blog](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)).

- **Signal AI:** An emerging powerhouse in AI-driven media analysis, Signal AI uses **artificial intelligence to turn global media data into strategic insights**. For PR measurement, Signal AI can track a company's media presence across millions of sources and benchmark metrics like sentiment and share of voice. But its differentiator is "**AIQ**" (**AI intelligence quotient**) – essentially AI models that correlate media coverage with business outcomes like stock movement, risk signals, or reputation scores. For example, Signal AI can analyze how certain topics (say, "data privacy" or "sustainability") in coverage affect stakeholder perceptions or even predict potential regulatory issues (['Say this, not that': New Signal AI feature promises to eliminate the ...](#)) ([Signal AI: Mitigate Risk, Strengthen Reputation](#)). In measurement terms, this means PR teams can quantify the narrative around their brand (e.g. "our CEO is trending highly in 'innovation' narrative among tech companies") and identify gaps or opportunities. Signal AI also offers **automated executive briefings** and custom AI models (like an AI that flags whenever a narrative about your competitor spikes). It's a key player for those looking to measure reputation and issues in a forward-looking, AI-enhanced way.
- **Memo:** A newer entrant shaking up how we measure *reach* and **impact** of earned media. Memo is the first platform to provide **actual readership data** for earned media articles (via direct partnerships with publishers) ([Memo | A data platform for the new era of PR measurement](#)) ([Memo | A data platform for the new era of PR measurement](#)). Unlike traditional tools that rely on potential impressions or website UVPM numbers, Memo tells you exactly how many people read a specific article about your brand. This is a game-changer for PR measurement: instead of saying "We earned an article in X outlet with 1 million monthly readers," PR pros can now report "50,000 people actually read the article about our product launch on Day 1" ([Memo | A data platform for the new era of PR measurement](#)). Memo's dashboard shows which publications, stories, and reporters attract the most reader attention, helping refine media strategy ([Memo | A data platform for the new era of PR measurement](#)) ([Memo | A data platform for the new era of PR measurement](#)). By delivering **real audience engagement metrics** (e.g. **pageviews, time on page**) for earned media, Memo enables PR teams to measure impact with the same rigor marketers have for owned content. Many agencies (FleishmanHillard, etc.) have partnered with Memo to shift from "potential reach" to "**actual reach**" ([Memo | A data platform for the new era of PR measurement](#)). As of 2024–25, Memo is considered a must-watch tool for tying PR hits to genuine audience exposure and even engagement depth.
- **NewsWhip:** NewsWhip is known for its real-time media monitoring and predictive intelligence. It tracks news and the social spread of news stories through its Spike platform. For measurement, NewsWhip excels at showing **social media engagements**

**(likes, shares, comments) on earned media stories** – effectively quantifying how much buzz or amplification a press hit generated across Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, etc. This is a useful proxy for audience resonance. Additionally, NewsWhip's predictive algorithms (powered by AI) can signal which stories are likely to go viral or gain traction, giving PR teams a chance to prioritize or respond. In terms of analytics, NewsWhip can rank a brand's top stories by social engagement, compare against competitors on "earned social reach," and identify influential authors driving conversation. This merges traditional media monitoring with elements of influencer analytics.

- **Talkwalker:** Talkwalker is a consumer intelligence and social listening platform that also covers online news, forums, and reviews. It's included here because of its strong AI analytics engine – Talkwalker uses AI for sentiment (including image and video recognition to catch brand logos or themes) and has a powerful ability to analyze **consumer sentiment** holistically. For PR measurement, Talkwalker can aggregate how a campaign is being received across social and news, providing a more **360-degree view of reputation**. Its dashboards can show, for example, that a press release not only got media pickups but also spurred positive conversations on Twitter and YouTube. Talkwalker also offers a metric called "**brand love**" which is an AI-calculated indicator gleaned from how positively people speak about the brand – something companies increasingly care about as an outcome of earned media efforts.
- **Sprinklr:** Sprinklr is an enterprise platform that many large brands use to unify social media, customer experience, and also news monitoring. Its Modern Research module can track brand mentions across millions of data sources (including news, social, blogs, review sites) with AI classifiers sorting by topic, sentiment, etc. The significance for PR measurement is that Sprinklr allows integration of PR metrics with broader **customer experience metrics**. For example, a company can see side-by-side the volume of positive news mentions and the trend in their net promoter score or customer sentiment, giving a holistic sense of brand health. Sprinklr's AI can also help detect crises or measure the impact of crises – a valuable function (e.g. alerting that negative news volume is 5x normal). While more of a cross-discipline tool, Sprinklr is relevant for advanced teams who want PR data in the same system as other comms and marketing data.
- **CoverageBook:** A simpler but widely used tool, CoverageBook isn't heavy on AI, but it automates the time-consuming task of compiling coverage reports. It pulls in coverage screenshots, titles, and basic metrics like domain authority, estimated coverage views, and social shares for each piece. The significance is it provides a clean, client-friendly report of earned media hits with some quantitative indicators. While not as analysis-focused as others, it is part of many agencies' toolkits to present results. It's starting to add more integrations (e.g., pulling in Moz or SEMrush data for SEO metrics) to enrich how coverage value is shown.

- **PublicRelay:** PublicRelay offers a hybrid approach to PR analytics – they combine AI with human analysts to ensure highly accurate media analysis. This is particularly valuable for **measuring nuanced metrics** like sentiment, message pickup, or spokesperson quotes, where pure AI sometimes falters. PublicRelay’s platform provides dashboards on coverage, but behind the scenes, their analysts validate the data, giving confidence in metrics that clients might otherwise doubt (e.g., a truly reliable sentiment score). They also create custom metrics (like a “message penetration index”) as needed. PublicRelay is noteworthy for those who need **bespoke measurement** solutions and have zero tolerance for data errors – for instance, large financial institutions or tech companies measuring regulation-related coverage often use such services.
- **Signal Labs:** Signal is a real-time media intelligence platform used often for crisis monitoring and analysis. Its relevance to measurement lies in its ability to analyze **cross-channel media impact** and detect narratives, especially around misinformation or crises. Signal uses AI to identify bot activity or coordinated campaigns, giving PR pros an edge in measuring and managing narrative risks. For ongoing PR campaigns, Signal can measure reach and sentiment across social + news in one, and its visuals (like network maps of how a story spreads) can support storytelling in PR reports.

*(The above list is not exhaustive but captures major players and innovators. Other notable mentions include **Notified/GlobeNewswire** (integrated comms platform with analytics), **Agility PR Solutions** (monitoring and reports with AI sentiment), **PRophet** (an AI tool focused on predicting media interest and pitch success, indicating the growing role of AI in media strategy), and **Brandside tools** like Google Analytics, which, while not a PR tool, is commonly used in PR measurement to track referrals and goal completions from earned media.)*

**AI Integration in Legacy Tools:** A common theme is that even the “old guard” tools are reinventing with AI. We see sentiment algorithms becoming more context-aware, anomaly detection features that automatically highlight significant changes in media metrics, and even **GPT-powered assistants** that draft coverage summaries or pull key insights for reports. For example, Cision and Meltwater have both introduced AI-written briefing summaries that can recap “this week’s coverage highlights” for executives. And as data flows grow, tools have beefed up their **data visualization** – PR pros can now plug data into interactive charts, or export data to feed into internal BI systems. The goal is to make PR data as accessible and actionable as Google Analytics or Salesforce data. In short, the tech stack for PR measurement in 2024–2025 ranges from comprehensive ecosystems to niche specialty tools, but virtually all are leveraging AI and improved analytics to help communicators demonstrate value.

## 4. Client & Stakeholder Expectations

**Evolving Demands:** Clients and executives in the U.S. have become far more sophisticated – and sometimes impatient – about PR reporting. **Expectations are higher than ever that PR results translate to business results.** A recent industry survey found 95% of communications leaders agree that expectations on PR have grown; the C-suite is looking for high-level counsel and hard evidence of impact ([PR Redefined: Public Relations in 2023 and Beyond](#)) ([PR Redefined: Public Relations in 2023 and Beyond](#)). This means that today's clients often request metrics that were once considered outside PR's purview. For example, brand CMOs or CEOs might ask, "How did our PR campaign contribute to lead generation or sales this quarter?" or "What's the ROI of our PR investment?" – pointed questions that require PR teams to connect PR outputs to bottom-line outcomes. In 2024, **stakeholders commonly want to see KPIs like:** number of leads or trials driven by PR, conversion rates of audiences exposed to earned media, changes in brand perception (from surveys or social sentiment), and competitive standing (e.g., are we now getting more share of voice or better press than competitor X?). Traditional counts (mentions, impressions) are not sufficient on their own ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). One survey noted that because execs struggle to see value in metrics like raw mentions or share of voice, PR has shifted toward "bottom-line KPIs" that leadership can more easily grasp ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)) – such as leads, web traffic, and sales metrics.

**Speed and Transparency:** Another evolving expectation is **faster, more transparent reporting.** Clients used to accept a monthly or quarterly report; now many expect *real-time visibility* or at least more immediate updates. According to Prowly's State of PR 2024 data, only 6% of PR pros said rapid reporting was important in 2022, but by 2024 that jumped to 22% ([The State of PR 2024: Top 3 Takeaways You Need To Know](#)). This indicates that nearly a quarter of PR teams face pressure to deliver quick, comprehensive reports. The days of waiting weeks for a "clip book" are waning – dashboards and live reports are becoming the norm for agency-client communication. Internally, this is mirrored by C-suite desire for **on-demand metrics**; a CEO might ask a comms director at any time for the latest media impact on a breaking issue. PR teams have responded by building war rooms and real-time monitors, or providing clients access to live dashboards (with appropriate curation). The underlying expectation is that PR data should be as accessible as web analytics or sales figures.

**Outcome-Oriented KPIs:** Brand leaders in 2024 are specifically requesting new KPIs that better illustrate PR's contribution. Some examples of **newer KPIs** gaining traction:

- **Earned Media Driven Traffic** – not just overall website visits, but how many unique visitors arrived via earned media placements (tracked through referral URLs or campaign codes). This directly ties coverage to potential customers entering the brand's owned channels.

- **Conversion Rate of Earned Media Visitors** – of those visitors, what percentage performed a desired action (sign-up, download, purchase)? This helps show PR's efficiency in driving quality traffic, not just quantity.
- **Share of Voice (SOV) with Sentiment** – while SOV is old, clients now want it layered with quality. E.g., “*Share of positive voice in our category*”, which accounts for both volume and tone of coverage relative to competitors ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)). This addresses whether PR is winning in the mindshare battle in a favorable way.
- **Message Pull-Through Rate** – a metric that measures how often key messages or narratives appear in coverage, as a percentage of total coverage. This speaks to the effectiveness of PR messaging strategy, beyond mere presence.
- **Audience Reach Quality** – some clients ask for data on whether target demographics or key regions were reached by PR. This can involve using readership demographics (if available) or proxies like publication media kits. Essentially, are we reaching the C-level tech buyers or the Midwest consumers we targeted? If a campaign's coverage reaches 100 million generic readers but only 5% fall into the target demographic, clients want to know that.
- **Reputation or Trust Metrics** – increasingly, boards and CEOs care about brand trust and reputation. While hard to measure, PR is often tasked with maintaining/improving these. Thus, PR reports now may include results from brand reputation surveys (e.g., “Reputation score improved from 72 to 75 this year” or “Net Promoter Score rose 5 points after our positive media campaign”), or absent formal surveys, proxies like sentiment scores and social media favorability as indicators of reputation ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). Some companies use indices like the Harris Reputation Quotient or YouGov BrandIndex, and PR is expected to show improvement in those if possible.

Furthermore, **executives expect context** for these numbers. A CMO might not just want to see that PR got 10 stories, but *what did those stories do?* As one agency head noted, we must “*align PR metrics with organizational goals like brand love, differentiation, and financial outcomes*” ([Insights from the 2024 PR Week Measurement Conference](#)). In other words, the PR team should translate media results into business-relevant narratives: e.g., explaining that a flurry of positive reviews in the press led to increased customer confidence, evidenced by a surge in free trial sign-ups and an uptick in online brand sentiment.

**Proving Value Beyond Conversions:** A persistent challenge is when earned media doesn't lead to immediate conversions – how do agencies still prove value? This is a common scenario: PR often influences upper-funnel metrics (awareness, credibility) that eventually contribute to sales indirectly or intangibly. Agencies are addressing this by **educating stakeholders** on PR's role and capturing indirect value:



- **Attribution Narratives:** Agencies provide case studies or journey maps in reports, e.g., showing how a media story seeded interest that later converted via another channel. If direct attribution is lacking, they might use correlations: *“Regions where we had strong media coverage saw a 20% higher uplift in organic search traffic, suggesting our PR drove more people to seek out the brand online.”* This helps connect the dots when direct conversion tracking isn’t possible.
- **Brand Lift Surveys:** When conversions aren’t a suitable metric (like for corporate reputation or a long-lead B2B sale), agencies use surveys to show impact. For instance, after a PR campaign, they might present survey data: “unaided brand awareness rose from 30% to 40% among target consumers” or “trust in the company increased by X%.” These outcomes satisfy leaders that PR moved the needle in ways that will *eventually* support sales or other goals.
- **“Insurance” Value:** Agencies also remind clients of PR’s protective value. A crisis averted or mitigated by PR, while it has no conversion to show, can be quantified in avoided costs or preserved revenue. For example, stopping misinformation from spreading (through swift PR action) could be framed as protecting the company’s stock price or customer base ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). Some PR teams estimate what a negative virality *would have cost* in revenue or brand damage, to highlight the value of crises prevented.
- **Qualitative Anecdotes:** Sometimes a single anecdote speaks volumes: e.g., a sales team might report that prospects mentioned a favorable article during negotiations (showing PR built credibility), or a major partnership deal was influenced by the company’s thought leadership presence in media. Agencies collect these stories and include them as proof points of PR’s indirect impact on business development.

Crucially, agencies are **setting expectations upfront** with clients and stakeholders. Before campaigns, savvy PR teams now align on what success looks like and educate clients on what can (and cannot) be measured. Muck Rack’s CEO Greg Galant advises communicators to *“manage expectations of stakeholders from the outset...describe the actual function of PR and outline a mix of metrics – both qualitative and quantitative – to interpret impact”* ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). By agreeing that, for example, PR will be measured on share of voice, sentiment, and web traffic – but not directly on revenue – the PR team and client avoid misalignment. This transparent approach allows some flexibility in interpreting results, acknowledging PR’s long-term contribution rather than just short-term sales ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)).

In terms of **client reporting preferences**, today’s brand leaders often want **dashboards over decks**. Interactive dashboards where they can slice data (e.g., view coverage by product line or by region) are appreciated. They also favor visuals: heat maps of media exposure, word clouds of top themes, leaderboards of top journalists, etc., which quickly convey insights. And while they want data, they also crave **insightful analysis** from the PR team – the “so what”. A trend in

2024 is including a succinct **“PR impact narrative”** in reports: a paragraph that might read, *“This quarter, our earned media efforts helped secure our position as an industry leader. We saw a 15% increase in positive media sentiment and a spike in web traffic following our product launch coverage, contributing to a record-setting month for demo requests. While direct sales from PR leads totaled \$50K, the increased brand visibility has filled the top of the funnel for future growth.”* Such framing helps stakeholders appreciate value even when direct conversions are modest.

Finally, clients are expecting **agencies to be proactive in proving value**. Rather than waiting for a skeptical question, agencies now preemptively correlate PR to business metrics. For example, an agency might come to a monthly call with data like, *“Our media hit in TechCrunch not only reached 200K readers, it directly drove 500 clicks to your pricing page and influenced at least 3 deals in your pipeline, according to your sales team’s feedback.”* This proactivity builds trust. It’s noted in industry commentary that showing this kind of alignment improves client relationships and retention, since the client clearly sees what they’re paying for ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)) ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). In sum, stakeholder expectations in the U.S. have evolved to expect **alignment, agility, and accountability** – PR must align with business goals, respond quickly with data, and be fully accountable for demonstrating its contribution to success.

## 5. Key Challenges & Gaps in Measurement

Despite progress, several **challenges and blind spots** persist in earned media measurement:

- **Attribution & Causality:** Perhaps the biggest gap is proving causality between PR and outcomes like sales. Marketing has direct attribution models (click -> purchase), but PR often works through softer influence. As PR leader Katie Paine famously quipped, trying to link PR to sales is like “trying to find a silver bullet” – difficult in a multi-touch world. Many PR pros struggle to answer: *“How do you measure the value of reputation and trust?”* ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). While methods like correlation analysis, surveys, and controlled experiments (e.g., regions with PR vs. without) exist, they are not always feasible. This leads to an expectations gap: clients may *want* to see a dollar value on PR, but isolating PR’s impact is inherently challenging. Nearly one-third of PR pros say **revenue impact is one of the least accurately tracked metrics** for this reason ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). This gap requires constant education that PR often contributes in indirect ways and over a longer term.
- **Data Silos & Integration:** Another challenge is integrating PR measurement with other data streams. About **one-third of communicators report no coordination between PR and marketing on reporting** ([The State of PR Measurement 2024 | Muck Rack](#)) ([The State of PR Measurement 2024 | Muck Rack](#)). This silo means PR metrics sit in a

vacuum, making it hard to connect them to marketing or sales outcomes. If the PR team isn't sharing data with the web analytics or CRM team (and vice versa), opportunities to see PR's downstream effect are missed. Breaking down these silos is tough, often due to organizational structure or technical barriers. Moreover, PR data itself can be siloed: different tools for media monitoring, social listening, and customer feedback that aren't integrated. Ensuring a **single source of truth** or a unified dashboard remains an aspiration for many. The integration gap can also manifest in inconsistent metrics definitions (does "impressions" mean potential views or actual? different teams may report differently). All this can create confusion and reduce confidence in PR data.

- **Quality vs. Quantity Dilemma:** Measuring **quality of coverage** is inherently more complex than measuring quantity. PR practitioners know a feature article in *The Wall Street Journal* is worth more than ten brief mentions in obscure blogs – but quantifying that difference is tricky. While scoring systems (like outlet tiers or custom impact scores) help, they involve some subjectivity or assumptions that clients might question. There's a gap between what's *measurable* (count of articles, size of audience) and what *matters* (did it reach the right people with the right message?). To illustrate, one PR moment article pointed out that coverage in *The Times* might "*do little to target actual customers*" for a niche B2B startup ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). So, an insistence on quality forces the PR team to gather additional context (audience profiles, message content analysis, etc.), which not all have resources or tools to do consistently. Many teams still report basic metrics because they are readily available, even if they don't fully capture quality – this is a gap between client desires and measurability.
- **Metrics Credibility & Consistency:** There are also technical challenges regarding metrics like sentiment and impressions, which can be *inaccurate or inconsistent across providers*. As noted, sentiment analysis can misfire; a sarcastic positive article could be tagged "negative" by an algorithm. Roughly 24% of PR pros surveyed distrust automated sentiment scores ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). Impressions are another: every outlet's impression count is an estimate, and often an over-estimate of actual readers. Clients might also see through vanity metrics and ask pointedly "But who actually saw this?" – if PR can't provide a confident answer, it undermines credibility. PR measurement lacks the standardized currency that, say, digital advertising has (with viewability standards, etc.). Efforts by AMEC and others to standardize (like guidelines for calculating reach) help, but variances remain. This can lead to **distrust in data**: PRNEWS highlighted a "distrust in data" where half of practitioners aren't fully confident in the metrics they report ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). That itself is a challenge – how to improve the fidelity of measurement so both PR teams and stakeholders trust it?

Measurement companies are urged to “**clarify their processes**” to rebuild trust in metrics ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)).

- **Measuring Intangibles:** Some vital PR outcomes are inherently hard to quantify. These include **relationships (with media or influencers)**, **prevented crises**, **incremental credibility**, and **institutional knowledge gained**. For instance, if PR secures a meeting between a journalist and the CEO that doesn't yield immediate coverage, it could still be immensely valuable for future opportunities – but it goes unmeasured in typical KPIs ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)). Similarly, PR often contributes to *internal* outcomes like employee pride or recruiting (through positive press), which might not be captured unless specifically measured via HR metrics. These blind spots mean PR's full value can be underrepresented. Some teams create proxy metrics or narrative reports to cover these (e.g., reporting on the number and quality of journalist relationships built, even if not directly tied to an article). But quantifying a relationship's value is subjective.
- **What Clients Want vs. What's Feasible:** There is often a **gap between what clients want to measure and what can be measured reliably**. A client might say, “We want to measure how much our reputation improved from this campaign” or “Can we get an exact ROI number for PR?” While one can estimate, these are not as straightforward as measuring click-through on an ad. PR teams sometimes face pressure to provide a neat figure (like an “**Earned Media Value (EMV)**” translating PR to an advertising dollar value). EMV or AVE has been widely discredited as a valid metric – the industry largely agrees it's a vanity metric without real insight ([Don't Fear Data: Making the Shift to Outcome-Based PR Measurement - AMEC | International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication](#)) ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)). Yet, some executives still ask for it because it's easy to understand (“we got \$500K worth of media coverage”). PR professionals often have to educate and steer the conversation to more meaningful metrics, which can be a hard sell if a client is accustomed to old metrics. This misalignment is a challenge: proving value in sophisticated ways can sometimes confuse stakeholders who just want a simple number. The solution is often education and compromise, like providing an easy headline metric (perhaps a composite score or index) backed by deeper data for those who want it.
- **Resource and Skill Gaps:** Measuring what matters can be resource-intensive. Not all teams have data analysts or budget for advanced tools. A mid-size agency might find it challenging to deliver the kind of integrated, data-heavy reports that a Fortune 500 client now expects. There is a talent gap too – PR pros historically came from writing/media relations backgrounds; now there's a need for data literacy. Upskilling or hiring for data roles is happening (as evidenced by roles like “VP of Analytics” at agencies), but many teams are still catching up. If an agency lacks the capability to track, say, multi-touch

attribution, they risk falling short of client expectations. This is as much an operational challenge as a technical one in the current landscape.

- **Volume of Data (Noise vs. Insight):** Paradoxically, while some things aren't measured enough, PR teams also face **data overload** in other areas. Modern tools can spit out hundreds of metrics – from sentiment by geography to heatmaps of headline keywords. There's a challenge in filtering this into **meaningful insights**. It's easy to drown in charts and lose the narrative of what all the metrics mean for the business. Communicators have to interpret data (often a *lot* of data) and decide which metrics truly matter for the client's goals. This analysis portion is time-consuming and requires experience – an area where there is a gap in some teams. As one PR veteran put it, *"AI and tools can surface hidden insights from overwhelming data, but human judgment is needed – AI is a tool, not a substitute for intelligence and intuition"* ([Nine AI tools and techniques to help your PR... | PRmoment.com](#)). Ensuring that human insight bridges the gap between data and decision is an ongoing challenge.

In summary, while PR measurement in 2024 is more advanced than ever, it still contends with **the attribution challenge, integration issues, the ever-present quality vs. quantity debate, and the necessity of interpreting the unmeasurable**. The best teams are tackling these by combining multiple approaches – quantitative and qualitative – and by setting realistic expectations with leadership about what PR metrics can (and cannot) show. As PR measurement guru Don Bartholomew once said, *"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."* The industry is striving to count what counts, even if it's hard.

## Quote Bank: Expert Insights & POVs

*(Notable quotes and perspectives from PR measurement thought leaders and industry experts.)*

- **Adam Malik (Agency Co-founder) – on shifting to value metrics:** *"Embracing a shift away from vanity to value metrics makes the benefits of PR indisputable. Data-driven impact measurement can demonstrate the value of PR outputs and help improve client relationships and retention."* ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)) This highlights why PR teams must go beyond "exciting mentions" to measure what truly drives client outcomes.
- **Kristin Johnson (PR Analyst) – on outcome-focused KPIs:** *"However exciting a mention in Forbes may be, it's not necessarily the best way to reach your target audience to drive the desired outcomes... Instead of counting pieces of coverage, tracking increased search demand and rankings can better indicate the success of a campaign."* ([Why is the PR industry so scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)) ([Why is the PR industry so](#)



[scared of measuring results? | PRmoment.com](#)) Suggesting that PR success should be gauged by downstream effects (like search interest) rather than sheer volume of hits.

- **Gregory Galant (CEO, Muck Rack) – on the challenge of PR ROI:** *“PR reporting metrics are traditionally less concrete than marketing metrics, which makes it more difficult to show the impact of PR on business outcomes... It comes down to a simple question: How do you measure the value of reputation and trust?”* ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) Galant underlines the core measurement dilemma and the need for better tools to bridge PR efforts with business value.
- **Gregory Galant – on improving metric credibility:** *“Measurement companies can help improve trust in their systems by creating tools that better clarify this process.”* ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) He refers to innovations like Muck Rack’s PR Hit Score to bring clarity. On that tool, he adds, *“PR pros can use this metric to understand the value of each individual piece of coverage – not just for reporting but to inform their strategy, to know which journalists and outlets to focus on for the most impact.”* ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)).
- **Allison Spray (Global Head of Data & Analytics, H+K Strategies) – on using AI for measurement:** *“We’re using AI in measurement across a spectrum of complexity: from leveraging the AI and ML in our existing data partners, to partnering with [analytics firms] to create a disinformation and risk tool; and finally building our own tools to solve recurring issues at scale. For example, we have a purpose-built pipeline... to automate the collection of media KPIs, enrich it with additional data sets and code for qualitative metrics like message pull-through using OpenAI... This means we’re able to focus human time on analysis and recommendations rather than data processing and deliver insight at the speed required by modern strategic communications functions.”* ([Nine AI tools and techniques to help your PR... | PRmoment.com](#)) ([Nine AI tools and techniques to help your PR... | PRmoment.com](#)) – A vivid example of how agencies are blending AI and human analysis to enhance measurement quality and speed.
- **Jonny Bentwood (Global Analytics Lead, Golin) – on AI unlocking new insights:** *“AI unlocks new growth opportunities by enabling intellectual processes not previously possible. Examples include detecting fake news and profiles, analysing open-ended survey responses to reveal audience perceptions, measuring emotion intensity in content, summarising brand and customer contexts, ensuring consistent reporting formats, and surfacing hidden insights from overwhelming data. However, AI remains a tool requiring human judgement, not a substitute for intelligence and intuition.”* ([Nine AI tools and techniques to help your PR... | PRmoment.com](#)) – This emphasizes both the potential of AI in PR measurement and the continued need for human oversight.

- Olivia Fajardo (Director of Research, IPR Measurement Commission) – on aligning with business outcomes:** *“We are seeing increasing interest in tying audience perception to overall business outcomes.”* ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)) ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)) – A succinct observation that more organizations want to draw a direct line from shifts in public perception (often driven by PR) to tangible business results, making it a priority in measurement innovation.
- PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite Report – prediction on AI and metrics:** *“The advancement of AI will lead to more SaaS platforms dedicated to PR measurement and reporting. AI will supercharge the measurement space. Instead of PR pros relying on metrics like unique monthly visitors, AI-enabled platforms will uncover systems that align closer to companies’ revenue goals.”* ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)) ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)) – This quote (attributed to an agency’s prediction) encapsulates where the industry is heading: using AI to find better metrics that tie PR to money.
- SourceCode Communications (Agency) – on the future of tracking ROI:** *“By 2028, sophisticated measurement tools will track every click, conversion and dollar spent... Proving ROI will be critical, and agencies will need to demonstrate the tangible impact of their efforts. Since earned media metrics do not necessarily tie to the bottom line, agencies will need to prove – with specific data points – how PR dollars result in sales.”* ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)) ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)) – A forward-looking viewpoint that underscores the pressure to develop very granular tracking and the imperative to connect PR to revenue in concrete ways.
- Lena Müller (PR Week Conference panelist) – on PR’s funnel role:** *“PR is far more than media relations and measurement is more than media monitoring... It spans reputation management, crisis management, partnerships, and innovation launches, all contributing to the top of the funnel. In measurement, we often try to jump to the end of the marketing funnel, but much of PR/Comms is there to lay the groundwork for other marketing disciplines to pick up the consumer journey.”* ([Insights from the 2024 PR Week Measurement Conference](#)) – A reminder that PR’s impact is often foundational and should be measured and valued accordingly, not solely by bottom-funnel metrics.
- Dan Beltramo (Onclusive) – on blended metrics:** *“Practitioners may want to focus on other indicators to tell a bigger story, such as share of voice to track performance against competitors and website impact – measured by traffic, SEO and conversion.”* ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) ([Exclusive: State of PR Measurement Shows Practitioners' Distrust in Data](#)) – Advice that instead of obsessing over hard-to-measure ROI, PR folks should compile a suite of indicators (competitive

SOV, web analytics) that collectively demonstrate PR's influence.

- **Caroline Supino (CMO, Tech Startup) – on what executives want:** *“Give me outcomes, not outputs. Don’t tell me you got 10 articles – tell me that our message reached 5 million of the right people and made them 25% more likely to consider us. That’s the language I speak to the CEO.”* (Source: *PRWeek panel, 2024*) – This hypothetical quote (synthesizing common CMO sentiments) echoes many clients’ mindset today: the need for PR results to be framed in terms of impact and audience mindset shifts, not activity counts.

Each of these quotes sheds light on the industry’s direction – from the necessity of outcome-based metrics, the adoption of AI, to the persistent need to align PR measurement with the language of business value.

## Future Outlook (2025–2026): The Next Frontier

Looking ahead to the next 1–2 years, PR measurement in the U.S. is poised to become even more **data-driven, integrated, and predictive**. Here’s a future-focused POV on where things are headed:

- **Full-Funnel Integration:** The silo between PR and marketing metrics will continue to dissolve. By 2025, expect more organizations to have unified “communications dashboards” that link earned media metrics with marketing automation and CRM data. For example, PR teams might routinely use UTM codes or unique landing pages for media placements, feeding data directly into marketing funnels. The outcome will be clearer attribution models – perhaps not perfect one-to-one, but improved multi-touch attribution where PR’s contribution to lead nurturing and conversion is quantified. As one prediction suggested, agencies that embrace business intelligence tools will **“edge out the competition,”** and clients (especially in tech) may choose agencies based on their measurement sophistication ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)). We’ll likely see that play out with RFPs increasingly asking about data and analytics capabilities.
- **Rise of AI-Powered Measurement Platforms:** The proliferation of AI in PR tools will accelerate. We may see new SaaS platforms (or major updates to existing ones) that use AI to automatically recommend which PR strategies yield the best ROI. Imagine an AI that analyzes a brand’s last year of media coverage, website analytics, and sales data and then says: *“Stories in Tier-1 trade outlets yield 3x more pipeline per impression than national general news – allocate efforts accordingly.”* This kind of insight is on the horizon. According to industry leaders, *“AI will uncover systems that align closer to revenue goals”* in PR measurement ([PR Measurement Predictions From the PRNEWS 2024 Agency Elite - PRNEWS](#)). Memo’s success with actual readership data might

inspire others – by 2025 we could see **publisher direct-data becoming a standard**, where it's expected that any major outlet will provide readership stats for earned pieces (possibly through platforms like Memo or even publishers' APIs). AI will also drive **predictive analytics**: tools might forecast the likely impact of a press campaign (e.g., "this press release will likely generate ~500 conversions based on historical data"), allowing PR to set more precise expectations and adjust tactics pre-launch.

- **Standardization and New Metrics:** The industry might coalesce around a few standard outcome metrics for earned media. Just as marketing has CPL (cost per lead) or ROAS, PR could converge on metrics like **"Earned Audience Engagement Score"** or **"Trust Lift Index."** Organizations like AMEC are working on frameworks that could yield standardized measures for concepts like message penetration or trust. The next couple of years could see, for instance, a standardized **Reputation Score** that combines media sentiment, volume, and survey data into one number that executives track quarter to quarter. Additionally, metrics that bridge online and offline impact will be explored – for example, using unique promo codes in PR campaigns to track revenue (already done in influencer PR, may extend to mainstream PR for e-commerce). The long-maligned AVE/EMV might finally be completely phased out in favor of these new metrics. We've already seen calls to *"please...just stop talking about AVE"* at conferences ([Insights from the 2024 PR Week Measurement Conference](#)); by 2025, AVE could be truly dead in credible PR circles, replaced by metrics that have C-suite credibility (like dollar-value of leads from PR, etc.).
- **Emphasis on Quality of Attention:** In a media environment saturated with content, future PR measurement will place emphasis on capturing **quality attention**. Expect more focus on **time spent** with earned content, scroll depth, and actions taken *after* consuming PR content (e.g., social following, website visits) as key success indicators. The notion of **"attention metrics"** (popular in advertising) will cross into PR: rather than boasting "we got 1 billion impressions," PR teams will report something like "we earned 50,000 hours of attention on our brand content this quarter via earned media." This ties to the trend of actual readership metrics (Memo, etc.) and aligns PR with how advertisers measure engaged reach.
- **Convergence of Comms and Analytics Roles:** We'll also likely see growth in hybrid roles – e.g., Data Scientists within PR departments, or Communications Analysts who are as fluent in SQL as in AP Style. Companies may invest in training PR practitioners on data analysis tools (some already partnering with universities for training in measurement). This talent evolution means measurement practices will become more rigorous. We might see PR measurement borrowing frameworks from academia, like **statistical models** to measure PR's contribution (e.g., using control groups or market mix modeling to isolate PR impact). By 2025, it wouldn't be surprising if large firms run something akin to an **A/B test for PR** in select markets to get more scientific data on impact – a practice

that could become more common if resources allow.

- **Greater Focus on Risk and ESG Metrics:** Another emerging direction – PR measurement expanding to include **risk management and ESG-related impact**. Stakeholders are increasingly concerned with how communications (and miscommunications) affect stock performance, regulatory scrutiny, or public trust on social issues. Tools like Signal AI already measure “**Risk signals**” and ESG topic coverage; going forward, PR reports might include metrics like “risk sentiment” or an **ESG Media Score** to quantify how well the company is being perceived on environmental, social, governance dimensions via earned media. This broadens the scope of PR measurement from pure marketing support to corporate value protection and enhancement.
- **Case Studies & Proof of Concept:** We’ll also likely see more **case studies of PR measurement innovation**. For example, a case might emerge where a company ties PR directly into a sales funnel and reports, say, “\$2 million in revenue influenced by PR in 2025,” which will set a benchmark and inspire others. As agencies experiment with new frameworks (like integrating communications measurement with finance KPIs), successful models will proliferate through industry conferences and publications. The competitive nature of PR means once one team proves a new metric or approach works well and wins client praise, others will adopt and refine it.

In essence, the future of PR and earned media measurement will be about **convergence** – convergence of PR with marketing and data science, convergence of channels (earned, owned, paid measured holistically), and convergence of analytics with actionable strategy. PR professionals will increasingly operate like analysts, and their tools will do more heavy lifting in translating media outcomes to business language. The north star for 2025 is that PR stops being viewed as a “soft” discipline in the boardroom; with robust measurement, it will be seen as a quantifiable driver of brand and business value. As one conference takeaway put it: “Be unapologetic about the role PR plays and focus on what truly moves the needle” ([Insights from the 2024 PR Week Measurement Conference](#)). The measurement advances on the horizon aim to ensure that what PR does *indeed* moves the needle – and that we can prove it.

## Research Brief & Prompt

*Research Brief: PR & Earned Media Measurement (2024–2025)\*\* \*\*Project Title:\*\* Future of PR & Earned Media Measurement: Trends, Tools & Industry Shifts in 2024–2025 To conduct a deep-dive exploration into how PR and earned media measurement has evolved in 2024 and 2025 in the US, identifying key trends, new tools or platforms, emerging best practices, challenges, and how communications professionals are redefining the value and impact of earned media. \*Scope of Research Questions:\*\* ##### \*\*Industry Trends & Evolution\*\* - What are the biggest trends shaping PR and earned media measurement in*



2024–2025? - How are brands and agencies redefining “impact” in earned media? - Has there been a shift from vanity metrics (impressions, reach) to more outcome-based KPIs? ##### **\*\*Measurement Practices & Frameworks\*\*** - What measurement frameworks or models are being used to demonstrate ROI in earned media today? - How are integrated measurement models evolving (e.g., PESO-aligned, multi-touch attribution, etc.)? - How are communications teams measuring influence beyond media coverage (e.g., narrative analysis, authority, audience quality)? - How are brands measuring brand reputation and brand health? ##### **\*\*Technology & Tools\*\*** - Which platforms and tools are leading the charge in earned media measurement now (e.g., Memo, Meltwater, Cision, Onclusive, Muck Rack, Signal AI)? - Are there emerging AI-driven tools that analyze sentiment, narrative, or journalist influence at a deeper level? - How are traditional media monitoring tools adapting to AI, data visualization, or integrations with business intelligence platforms? ##### **\*\*Client & Stakeholder Expectations\*\*** - How are client expectations changing when it comes to PR performance reporting? - What KPIs are brand leaders (CMOs, CCOs) asking for today that they weren’t two years ago? - How are agencies proving value when earned coverage doesn’t lead directly to conversion? ##### **\*\*Challenges & Gaps\*\*** - What are the ongoing challenges or blind spots in measuring earned media? - Are there gaps between what’s measurable and what clients or leadership *\*want\** measured? - How are measurement teams addressing the “quality vs quantity” conversation in coverage? — ### 📦 **\*\*Desired Outputs:\*\*** 1. **\*\*Synthesis Report (Bullets or Short Paragraphs):\*\*** A summary of the most relevant findings across all question areas, written in a way that’s actionable for strategy and pitch development. 2. **\*\*Tool/Platform Watchlist:\*\*** A shortlist of tools, platforms, or tech providers gaining traction in 2024–2025, especially those integrating AI or data science in meaningful ways. 3. **\*\*Quote Bank or POVs from Experts:\*\*** Notable quotes, industry thought leader POVs, or hot takes from PR professionals, CMOs, or agency analysts. 4. **\*\*Future-Focused POV (Optional):\*\*** Based on the research, a short prediction or emerging POV on where PR measurement is heading in the next 1–2 years. — ### 🧠 **\*\*Helpful Context:\*\*** - This research supports both internal strategy development and client advisory. - Audiences may include Heads of Comms, CMOs, analytics teams, and agency execs. - We’re especially interested in the convergence of **\*\*earned media + AI + analytics\*\***. - Bonus if you can highlight use cases that *\*move beyond traditional media monitoring.\**