

Making sense of data in communication

 By [Jaco Pienaar](#)

4 Feb 2016

Every company, irrespective of size, industry, and geographic location, needs data to remain competitive. But given the amount of sources at our disposal, finding relevance in a sea of bits and bytes is not without its challenges. Fortunately, analytical and business intelligence (BI) tools have evolved to provide some of the assistance required.

While 2015 has seen data analysis rise in importance on the corporate agenda, the coming months will accelerate it further. The way analytics used to be done simply cannot keep up with the real-time nature of the digital age. This means research and analysis agencies find themselves in a position where they no longer have to justify their place on the budget but can focus on delivering business value.

For communicators in this space, data is an imperative tool for monitoring trends, evaluating campaign relevance in the market, and more effectively adapting strategy to the zeitgeist. Data on its own means very little. Certainly, technology exists that make it easier to analyse but the human element cannot be underestimated.



©Aliaksandr Mazurkevich via [123RF](#)

Skilled individuals with experience and understanding of the business add immense value to any organisation that wants to remain relevant. These experts are able to transform data into information and knowledge that provides the competitive edge.

With South African social revolutions being underpinned by hashtags such as #MustFall, this human analysis becomes even more critical. Agencies need to understand where conversations are going and have to identify influencers beyond traditional media to help become part of the conversation where relevant. Already, real-time data analysis is essential to crisis communication in the connected world. Even though online reputation monitoring started as a niche sector, it has become an indispensable part of any public relations or corporate affairs strategy.

Another area where data has had a marked impact is that of the measurement and evaluation of articles. The recently unveiled Barcelona Principles 2.0 is a case in point. Launched in June last year, the new look principles builds on the initial declaration of measurement principles first introduced globally in 2010.

Of particular interest is Principle 6 that reads 'social media can and should be measured consistently with other media channels'. It is therefore no longer a case of should we analyse social media but rather comparing it consistently with other communication channels.

The principles further go on to focus on the semantics around measurement and evaluation. However, much of this comes down to taking relevance from the data (and information) that communication professionals have at their disposal.

Even though 2016 is just a few weeks old, there is much excitement in the communication industry around data and the more direct impact it will have on business. Public relations professionals now have even more ammunition at their disposal to help guide their clients when it comes to a more fluid communication strategy. Ultimately, combining data with people who know how to analyse it provides an agency with the momentum required to take their business to the next level.

ABOUT JACO PIENAAR

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

- The value of data for media analysis - 29 Aug 2016
- Making sense of data in communication - 4 Feb 2016
- 2015: The year the consumer found another way - 9 Dec 2015
- Crisis management in the digital world - 27 Nov 2015
- Do we measure up? - 30 Mar 2015

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>