

Using analysis to enhance media monitoring

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Imagine a world where media monitoring costs nothing. Sure, this might sound far-fetched, but is monitoring not simply providing the raw data required to conduct analysis that gives insight on a company?

In 2009, American writer Chris Anderson published 'Free: The Future of a Radical Price'. In it, he examined the rise of pricing models that give products and services free to customers. Anderson argued that this could be used as a strategy to attract users and up-sell them to a premium level with other value-adds.



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The 'freemium' model

Despite the criticism it received, many online businesses have subsequently adopted the 'freemium' model for a variety of goods and services. And yet, traditional organisations baulk at the idea of offering something for nothing in spite of the potential for retaining existing customers and gaining new ones.

Think about it. What does media monitoring actually entail? At its heart, it captures editorial or advertising content by subject, industry, publication, journalist, and so on. It then presents that content to a public relations agency or corporate customer as the coverage received for a specific campaign. And while monitoring companies have been around for a long time, evolving technology has seen many PR firms and even corporates taking the monitoring function in-house.

Irrespective of whether it is qualitative or quantitative, media monitoring on its own means very little. It is just a collection of data and statistics which really do not provide any value. The real reason why monitoring is needed is the realistic, objective, and honest interpretation of that data and statistics.

Managing monitoring internally

So what has this to do with the 'freemium' model? Well, the model certainly provides media monitoring agencies with food for thought to offer more value-added services that are designed to enhance the standard monitoring offering.

Just the fact that monitoring agencies are not always the first port of call when it comes to these services should already be cause for concern.

Limited budgets mean that monitoring is seen as something that is best managed internally. But this should not be the case. Monitoring still remains a specialist skill. Yes, anybody can set up an RSS feed that tracks coverage but it does not give the complete picture.

Tailored to benefit everyone

Today, a new kind of monitor is required that provides analysis as an integrated offering. Monitoring should be seen as a matter of course with the real value-add coming from interpreting the raw data and statistics. It is in the analysis where monitors can make their money. By being able to structure their services in a way to enhance monitoring with specialist analysis, they will be in a position to differentiate themselves from competitors.

Granted, this will not be an easy move to make. Already, there is a degree of cost integration that will be required given the cost of getting broadcast and print clippings. But this does not mean media monitors need to blindly adopt the 'freemium'

model and hope for the best. Offerings should be tailored to benefit both clients and the monitors themselves.

The takeaway is that things need to change in media monitoring. Whether the monitors are up for the change is immaterial. They have to evolve or close down.

ABOUT JACO PIENAAR

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

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