

Rice Krispies, cost and worth

By [Taazima Kala-Essack](#)

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I like Rice Krispies. I always have. When I hear the original radio advert from the 1930s it makes me smile, even today. Brand power? A love of tasteless carbs? Maybe both, but also because I recently heard a story about the origin of that "Snap, Crackle and Pop" and you'd better believe it stuck.



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You see, courtesy of Twitter, I learned that *Snap*, *Crackle* and *Pop* are a wonderful example of onomatopoeia. They are also, I have discovered, terms based on the Rice Krispies mascots and have actual physics behind them, used for the fourth, fifth and sixth time derivatives of position. Science some people will understand, and the rest of us will dig for our old Physics textbooks. Regardless, I cannot help but wonder why this was not made more popular – surely there was more longevity in that radio ad, proffered, perhaps, but unpacking this cool story? I bet a PR person could have done it! It got me thinking...

The more time goes on, the more the debate about cost versus worth in the communications space gets muddled. Is it truly a PR problem, or a communications industry problem at that? We work in an industry of intangibles. You feel the difference lent by PR work – good PR work at least – and you experience it in many ways, but the inability to see it, hold it, breathe it and even smell it - the very lack of sensory experience - makes it a hard sell for many. So how do we then classify its worth? And does the worth even offset the cost?

Impact

The debate on how to measure PR efforts is not a new one. No matter what you choose, the widely disputed AVE method, the more favoured AMEC examples, or simple evidence of positive feedback, with arguments for and against – arguably some more strongly championed for than others. And yet, true to Freud's old iceberg theory, the beauty of PR's impact is largely below the surface: long term, not always the most obvious and yet irrefutably of great substance. Heaven knows us PR types are always on a mission to prove it.

Bill Gates famously once said, "If I was down to my last Dollar, I would spend it on public relations". If you work hard enough to show it or look hard enough to see it, worth can be apparent for all to see eventually. As brands start to evolve and grow, increasing investments are made into PR, and yet, somehow the worth or value derived almost pales in comparison to the investment made. It's a good deal, and half the appeal of why PR is often the better choice, but are we not selling ourselves short?



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Whether you are on the receiving end (the client or brand) who earns the value, or the acting end (PR consultancy or business), PR always seems to be the slightly less favoured kid in the brood, no? There are brands which will tell you they receive 500-1000% Return on Investment (a PR person even did the calculations!) from certain public relations initiatives, or the equivalent in positive relationship development.

You would think they'd steer straight towards this option, usually cheaper and thus the lesser of two evils, than big fancy billboards (I don't hate billboards, I swear) and yet. And yet, the bigger, shinier and more expensive billboard takes the proverbial cake. Maybe because it's more visible and obvious? Maybe because ad campaigns feel more tangible? Or maybe we haven't quite stopped to recognise whether our ambition was short-term or long-term, for the cost versus worth argument should see PR investment to boot.

Relevance

Each to their own, and the issue of relevance should certainly be at the fore. All I am saying is, just as we measure emotional cost versus worth, and debate the "fiscal drag" (a wonderful term to describe slow and taxing "ugh") of a good job versus a bad job, or even how invested we need to be in any given situation, the cost versus worth conversation needs to be re-jigged in the PR space.

Either we are selling ourselves short, or we have a whole lot of introspecting to do as we enjoy that *Snap*, *Crackle* and *Pop* bliss.

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