

Impact and the comms office

Media Impact Guide:

bit.ly/mediaimpactguide

Hypothesis:



Comms teams:

- Want to know about published research, pre-publication findings, projects, etc
- but don't always find out until it's too late, or at least later than would be ideal
- Research office knows about ongoing research, sees grants and bids, knows who's working on what

Better info exchange would help

Research office / impact teams:

- Would benefit from help in:
 - putting research in front of the right audiences
 - targeting communications at specific potential beneficiaries or stakeholders
 - generating impact
 - collecting evidence of impact

Comms teams have knowledge + tools that can (often) help

Impact recap:

Readership figures are not useful for showing **REF impact**

Impact is demonstrated by showing that **an audience benefited from the research**

Not just that an audience was reached, or how many people

However, media exposure is useful for REF because it widens engagement with research, and can be targeted to specific groups who may benefit from it

Significant impacts from media:

Use of research by orgs leading to benefits for them or their clients, patients, etc

Change in public awareness, attitude or behaviour

Raise awareness of research among civil servants and politicians, or

raise profile of researchers, making them more likely to be included in policy-making process

Planning:

Media teams have skills and know-how that can help researchers/research office staff generate and evidence impact:

Recognising potential audiences

Routes (media) through which to reach them

How best to communicate the research to them

Identify others that may help or hinder



Plan and target potential media engagement for impact, or you:

Won't identify / understand the researchers' impact objectives

Won't fully identify potential beneficiaries

Miss opportunities / outlets to reach potential beneficiaries

Poorly target potential beneficiaries, by not considering how best to communicate with them or what they want/need

Evidence gathering:

Self-reporting by researchers

– eg, The Conversation's post-publication impact tool (and others like it: Pure, Researchfish...)

Exchanging data across teams

– eg, research/impact teams report impacts to comms, comms provide reach/audience stats to embellish impact evidence

Other types of evidence

– research citations, such as in policy documents. Follow-up with stakeholders / beneficiaries for more info, interview research users

Extracting evidence from media:

Social media analysis:

– textual analysis (keywords and phrases, sentiment analysis), views and shares, biographical details of commenters from profiles), direct interview/survey

The funnel approach:

– use media engagements to direct users to, eg, a web survey, hashtag, website. Then add value, and then follow up with them

Before/after polling

Working together:

Comms teams:

- additional staff / capacity
- social media data analysis skills
- greater focus on potential for wins in specialist news media (small but powerful audience vs large but weak)
- get early awareness of research that needs comms support
- involve researchers!
- planning ahead, together!

Research teams:

- targeted access to comms' tools to gather audience data
- improved media knowledge, eg finding and approaching specialist media
- training on using altmetric data
- give early warning of projects with big potential
- involve researchers!
- planning ahead, together!

Engagement and impact

From author survey 2020-21:

55%

were contacted by the media

17%

were invited to or asked
to speak at conferences

16%

were contacted by NGOs or charities

14%

were asked to collaborate on research

12%

were contacted by business or industry

5%

were contacted by government

Liverpool John Moores University academic wrote *'Stranger danger' in the online and real world*

→ **contacted by the NSPCC, she ran workshops for charity to enhance its policies**

University of Reading academic wrote *The best time to water your plants during a heatwave*

→ **UK water regulator Ofwat asked him to write advice pages on water conservation**

Staffordshire academic wrote *The major source of ocean plastic pollution you've never heard of*

→ **trade association Plastics Europe saw repub in Newsweek, contacted her for consultancy on pellet management and pollution reduction**

Sheffield academic wrote *Greensill collapse may kill off a form of financing vital to global economy*

→ **invited to give evidence to MPs on Treasury Select Committee, and his expert commentary then appeared in committee's final report**

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