



ULTIMATE MEDIA MONITORING BUYER'S GUIDE



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About This Guide

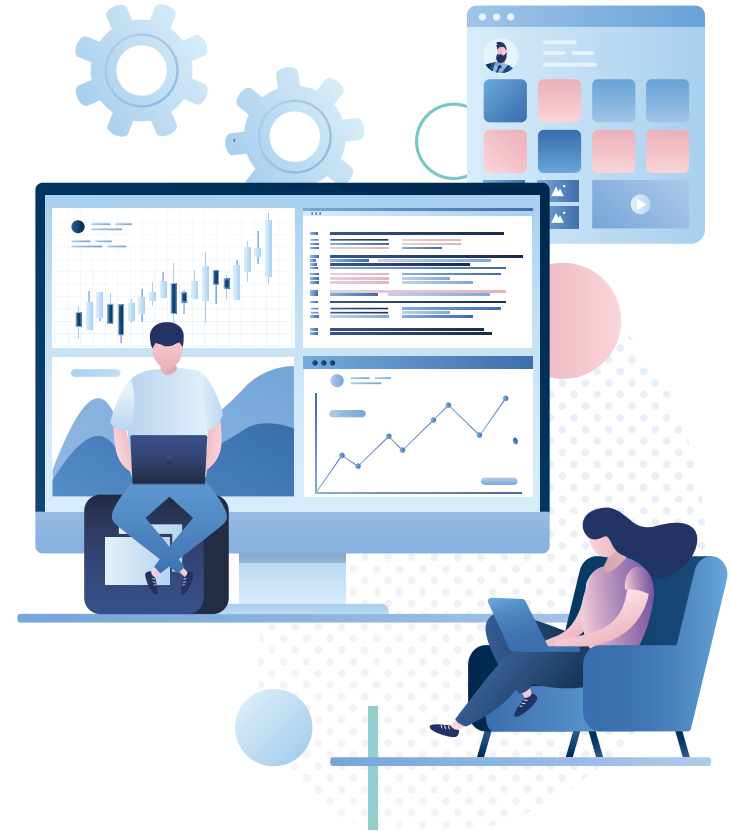
PR and communications professionals have been monitoring the media for mentions of their brand for years. Even before the days of digital, there were sophisticated efforts to curate news clippings from across the world.

“Clipping services” would literally clip articles out of newspapers for brands to use. But with the digital transformation of the media industry, there is now an endless trail of content for comms pros to monitor and report to their key stakeholders internally.

Gathering metrics, analyzing the data, tracking competitors and measuring against business objectives can be more than a full-time job.

That’s where a new age of media monitoring solutions can help. But just as there are many different channels to monitor, there are many different solutions from which to choose, and they vary widely in what they offer.

This guide will help you evaluate and choose the media monitoring solution that works best for your organization.



The Business Case for Media Monitoring

If you're reading this, chances are you are already familiar with the basics of media monitoring and the different types of monitoring your brand should consider as part of your communications and PR strategy. But perhaps you're having trouble articulating to your superiors – those who make the buying decisions – the critical impact media monitoring can have on your brand reputation and management efforts.

If you are trying to justify the addition of media monitoring technology and services, here are a few key considerations to highlight.





What You Don't Know CAN Hurt Your Brand:

With technology at the level it is at now, ignorance is no excuse for any communications team. You need to be monitoring everything, all the time, that pertains to your brand, product or service. If a new competitor surfaces, a rival product or service hits the market, or an event happens that can potentially disrupt your industry, the last thing you need are your stakeholders coming to you with news you were completely unaware of.



Market Research for Effective Campaigns:

Media monitoring solutions can serve as efficient and insightful market research analysis for campaigns or new solutions your company is developing. By setting up monitoring searches around relevant topics, your team can answer some preliminary questions needed for effective campaign planning: What are audiences saying about your company, product or services? What misconceptions do they have? What are they saying about your competitors? Where are there opportunities to change negative perceptions or reinforce positive ones? A good media monitoring solution can empower comms teams with audience intel they can use to inform campaign strategy and create messages that will resonate with target audiences.



Execute and Adjust Campaign Messaging with Speed and Agility:

Executing a campaign around a product, service, piece of content (such as a report or webinar) or any other initiative is only the first step in the communications cycle. Effectively tracking efforts and making the right mid-campaign adjustments to messaging and channels are imperative to overall success. The right media monitoring solution enables your team to continuously track key mentions, competitor reactions and overall audience engagement within an automated fashion. Gaining insight into campaign performance in real time allows your teams to pivot as necessary while focusing on the bigger picture.



Attribute Value for the Coverage You Create:

A quality media monitoring platform enables PR and comms teams to map campaign outcomes to specific business objectives while gaining better insight into how to architect future campaigns. A strong media monitoring solution should provide analytics that can illustrate your campaign outcomes in an easy-to-understand format.

In addition to tracking standard PR metrics like share of voice, sentiment over time and coverage by media type, some monitoring solutions can also track more advanced PR metrics, such as verified views and website conversions. Advanced PR metrics also include demographic and firmographic data, which enables you to gain an even deeper understanding of your target audience. This advanced level of intel also enables PR and comms teams to definitively show that their messages are resonating with target audiences and that their efforts are actively supporting key business objectives.

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Depending on your needs, you may want to consider a platform that can also track more in-depth metrics such as verified views and website conversions.



Smarter Outreach:

Does your company distribute press releases advertising big events? Or reach out to local or national influencers to help boost campaign visibility? Complimenting your outreach strategies with an all-encompassing media monitoring solution can help your team further understand which messages resonate best with your audiences and influencers. Additionally, using this information to pinpoint the most influential individuals can help you make better decisions around which journalists and media influencers to reach out to and partner with. Furthermore, this type of understanding establishes the groundwork for future content and helps contribute to your content calendar planning for the year.



Prevent Crisis:

The ability to identify a potential crisis is the equivalent of having home insurance before an earthquake. The right media monitoring solution in place – complete with the ability to configure automated alerts relevant to your brand – empowers organizations to quickly identify and remediate PR issues, negative sentiment or potential pitfalls for your brand. Media monitoring also acts as a barometer to help gauge real-time sentiment showing how people are responding to crisis communications, and where and how you need to adjust your messaging.

Paid vs. Free Media Monitoring Solutions

Smaller companies and organizations may initially be skeptical about going with a paid vendor, when there are free monitoring services available online. (Google Alerts is a common example.) These free services come with limitations and challenges, however.

When comparing paid vs. free media monitoring tools, here are a few key considerations.



Missing Coverage:

While a free tool like Google Alerts is a viable approach to monitoring media mentions for smaller, less critical topics, it is not the most reliable tool for catching news mentions of key topics and messages with consistency or accuracy. With these free tools, you are only receiving news from a limited number of online publications, leaving you with only a fraction of the news that is taking place around your key alerts. Such critical gaps in coverage can have a negative impact on crisis planning or campaign monitoring.

Informing Business Decisions with Insights:

Most free tools simply notify you of limited mentions, which doesn't help drive any action as standalone points. Media monitoring should act as a medium to help identify trending topics over time through charts and graphs, categorize mentions by sentiment and benchmark and visualize data points to give your team a clear idea of what is working, what isn't and what needs to be prioritized.

In-Depth Audience Metrics:

Gathering more granular metrics is something only achievable by more sophisticated media monitoring solutions. Understanding true earned media viewership, earned media attribution, and demographic and firmographic data can help your team really dig deep into your earned coverage. This information goes a step beyond most media monitoring vendors and enables you to better understand the outcomes of your earned media efforts and communicate them to your stakeholders. Companies like Cision have made a point to invest in technologies that further enhance the detailed insights that can be gained from media monitoring.

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How to Choose the Right Media Monitoring Solution

Now that you understand what investing in a quality media monitoring solution can do for your brand, it's time to find the right one for your particular team. That starts with first identifying your team's particular needs and goals. For example, are you seeking to save your team time? Generate new earned media opportunities? Gather more market intelligence?

You may also find that you don't know what you want until you understand the capabilities available to you. And that's okay, too. Consider the following questions as you think about what you want and need from a monitoring solution and use them to identify the media monitoring solution that's right for you.



CONTENT

Media monitoring solutions are content aggregators, and you will need to dig into the specific types of content the platform collects.

- What channels does the solution monitor? Does it include social media, print, television, radio, podcasts, online news outlets, blogs, etc?
- Will I be able to monitor the channels and outlets where my audiences are most active and engaged?
- Will I be able to monitor the channels and outlets that are most relevant to my brand and industry?
- Will I be able to monitor my competitors, and to what extent?
- How far-reaching are the monitoring capabilities? Does it cover local and regional outlets as well as national and worldwide?
- What types of metrics can the solution measure? What types of insights will I be able to derive from the data gathered?
- How do I get updates and information on the results of my searches? How easy is it to remove the noise of unwanted content?
- Is the content licensed for sharing?
- Can I add content from other sources my organization subscribes to, e.g., an industry newsfeed?



FUNCTIONALITY

Your monitoring solution may have all the capabilities in the world, but if the user experience isn't there, getting your team to use it – and use it well – will be an uphill battle.

- How user-friendly is the platform? Will it require extensive training or is it intuitive?
- What are the custom search capabilities? How many searches can I set up at a given time? What are the search filters available to me?
- Can I set up alerts for real-time insight or do I have to manually check the platform?
- Is there a limit to the number of searches my team can perform?
- How do I access the analytics? Is there an easy and intuitive way to view the metrics I'm tracking? Are results easy to access, share and turn into executive-ready reports?



CUSTOMER SUPPORT

No matter how sophisticated the technology, any software platform should come with quality, reliable customer support.

- What level of support can my team expect to receive – both during initial setup and on an ongoing basis?
- Is customer support provided in the cost of the solution, or does it cost extra?
- How do I contact customer support when I need it?
- What are the hours of support? What is the typical turnaround time for responding to issues?
- What does the onboarding process look like? Are there training and troubleshooting materials my team can access live or on demand?
- Is there custom support available for ongoing or on-demand monitoring and in-depth reporting on custom projects? What are the associated costs?



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Comparing Different Media Monitoring Vendors

Always try before you buy. Ask for a demo of the media monitoring platform and be sure to include other internal stakeholders who will be key to the decision-making process. Here are a few things to look for or expect during the demo that will indicate a quality potential vendor:

- Before jumping into a demo, a quality vendor will begin by asking questions to understand your core business needs and evaluate the context in which your company might use the platform.
- Using this information, the vendor will prepare a demonstration to show how the solution provides relevant metrics and satisfies your requirements.
- The demo should give you a chance to see how the platform performs, explore its capabilities and get answers to the questions outlined above.
- Ask the vendor if they can provide some sample reports you can take with you, share with your internal stakeholders and use to compare to other platforms.
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Bottom line: A good partner will take the time to answer your questions and understand your specific goals, needs and concerns. Following every demo, make sure you regroup with your team to share feedback and come to a decision everyone is confident in.



Final Thoughts: Avoiding Buyer's Remorse

Today's PR and communications professionals are held to a higher standard than they once were. In addition to being excellent communicators, they are also expected to be adept data analysts and act as strategic counsel to the C-Suite. To keep up with these higher demands and do their jobs effectively, PR and comms pros need the right tech tools in place.

While the costs associated with a media monitoring platform might have your executives take pause, it's important – critical, in fact – to communicate the potential costs of not investing. Because your competitors are investing in this technology – and it's enabling them to earn more earned media and gain a larger share of voice. It also means potential missed opportunities to amplify your brand in the eyes of the very customers your sales team is trying to attract, convert and retain. The more you can connect those dots for your leadership team, the better your chances of getting the powers that be to sign off on it.

The right media monitoring solution can help you take your brand's PR and communication strategy further. Ultimately, you need to choose the one that's right for you. If you are ready for a specialized tool that enables your team to make more informed and strategic decisions around your audience and brand, we invite you to take a tour of Cision's [Media Monitoring & Analytics](#) solutions and see where our capabilities meet your needs.

Schedule a consultation with a Cision expert today.





Cision is a comprehensive communications platform enabling more than 100,000 public relations and marketing professionals around the world to understand, influence and amplify their stories.

As the market leader, Cision enables the next generation of communication professionals to strategically operate in the modern media landscape where company success is directly impacted by public opinion.

Cision has offices in 24 countries through the Americas, EMEA and APAC, and offers a suite of best-in-class solutions, including [PR Newswire](#), [MultiVu](#), [Brandwatch](#), [Cision Communications Cloud®](#) and [Cision Insights](#).

To learn more, visit www.cision.nl and follow [@CisionBenelux](#) on LinkedIn.

