October 2011

Evaluating Your Communication Tools

What Works, What Doesn't?

The Westminster Model

Supported by

Westminster City Council

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“This is a genuinely astonishing piece of work. I doubt any public sector body in the UK has such a detailed, forward-thinking evaluation model as this. Without question, it provides a template that our industry should just copy. In this field, as in so many, Westminster blaze a trail.”

Francis Ingham, PRCA Chief Executive

“The Westminster ‘model’ deserves the industry’s support because of its systematic planning approach to communications starting with engagement and insight. It is classic account planning and I wish more client organisations, whatever their size, would adopt the same approach because it is a critical part of communication effectiveness leading to measurable results at the end of the process. The Westminster Model is a healthy contribution to communications programme research because of the author’s willingness to share what works, and what doesn’t. We congratulate Westminster on a thoughtful approach”

Barry Leggetter, FCIPR, FPRCA
Executive Director, The International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC)

Executive Summary

Evaluation should be seen as a **key part of the communications process**, and not a bolt-on at the end, and thought needs to be put into understanding exactly what **outcomes** can and should be measured. At a bare minimum, organisations should ensure they have ways for measuring how they perform in the media, how informed their staff are, and how campaigns are performing. Good evaluation **raises the profile of communications and brings boardroom credibility.**

An outcome is a **measurable change in behaviour, attitudes or opinions**. Research is the starting point of any campaign, and knowing how somebody behaved prior to a campaign and how they behaved afterwards is key. Communications is pointless without research and evaluation.

The audience is at the heart of any communications activity. By understanding the motivations and behaviours of a particular audience, you will both be able to plan your communications activity more effectively, and also develop a robust approach to evaluation.

Evaluation does not need to be expensive nor overly complex. Start simple by doing whatever desk research you can in order to understand your audience and current issues. By also looking around to see what information already exists on a particular audience and how it behaves, thinks and feels about different issues, you can quickly **build up benchmarks** to which you will be able to compare later.

Use whatever information you have available to identify your target customer groups. This could for example be through an existing database such as a council tax register, or through a mailing list. **Avoid targeting everybody** to bring greater focus to your communications activity, and to make the evaluation process easier.

When evaluating traditional media such as newspaper articles and radio coverage, the focus should be on the **quality, not the quantity** of coverage. We recommend following the **Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles** in approaching any evaluation exercise. These can be applied to new as well as traditional media.

With more communications taking place online, more thought and resource needs to be put into evaluating this area. Many evaluation tools exist, some of which we discuss in this report. However, there is **no hard and fast rule over which tools should be used**. The **key is knowing what to do with the data** that is produced. We therefore, we advocate investing in analysts and evaluation tools using the 90/10 ratio. “If you would like to invest $100 in making smart decisions, then invest $10 in tools and invest $90 in smart brains”.[1]

Evaluation is constantly changing, and no-one should claim to know all the answers or offer an off-the-shelf approach. Unless there is a clear plan as to what your communications are trying to achieve, you might as well just count the number of press releases you send out. **Good evaluation helps bring clarity to the objectives of your organisation**. Further, it helps bring a fresh perspective to your communications, allowing you to assess what works and what does not, allowing you to fine tune your approach. Everyone can improve the communications they do through good evaluation.

[1] Kaushik, A (2010), Web Analytics 2.0, USA, Wiley Publishing

Introduction

Effective communications requires good evaluation. Without evaluation, we would not know where to start with our communications, and would have no idea as to the impact of our communications efforts. The impact of all communications activity can be objectively measured, and failure to evaluate has blighted communications on countless occasions.

At Westminster City Council, evaluation takes place on a daily basis.

Morning meeting: Daily communications meeting to provide update on media coverage and to plan daily strategy

Tweet deck: Continual monitoring of social media, contributing to conversations when appropriate

Research team: Helping to plan communications activity based on customer insight

Operational management meeting: End of week meeting to assess campaign performance and communications activity

This best practice helps to strengthen the position of public relations as a discipline, and counters the often held view that PR has a bad image, as demonstrated by findings from a survey by The European Communication Monitor[2], 73% of communicators agree that negative connotations of PR in the media damage the reputation of communication professionals.

[2] European Communication Monitor survey of 2,209 communications professionals, conducted online in March 2011.

As highlighted by the PRCA, evaluation is important for four reasons:

- **Efficient impact:** Measurement should form an **integral and continuous** part of the campaigns process.
- **ROI:** Measurement helps form a basis for planning and helps us to judge the effectiveness of PR activity alongside other forms of marketing activity. As highlighted by the European Communication Monitor survey, under half (48%) of communicators currently use the term 'return on investment' when planning or evaluating communications.
- **Boardroom credibility:** Measurement helps bring PR activity into the **broader corporate decision making process.**
- **Continuous improvement:** Depending on the techniques used, measurement can also provide "by product information", for example extra insight that we might not have expected to get.

We have written this report to share some of our thoughts on evaluation and to show how all organisations can build it into their communications activities. No organisation should say it cannot afford to do evaluation or feel that they do not need to do it.

- In the first section of this report we establish the basics of evaluation, and set out the importance of measuring outcomes, rather than outputs.
- In section two, we then talk through some useful steps that we recommend taking when planning evaluation, and embedding this in your communications activity.
- In the final section of this report, we discuss what we hope are some practical tips for evaluating different channels and types of media, including traditional media, websites and e-newsletters, as well as social media.

Do you need to read this report?

To encourage you to read this report we thought we would come up with a little test. For each of the following questions about your communications activities rate how you think you are currently doing using the following scale:

0 – Not at all; 1 – A little; 2 – Somewhat; 3 – Fully.

If you score anything less than three for every one then you need to read this report, and if you score three for every one you need to write your own report and we would love to hear from you.

1. Do you know what your communications activity will achieve?
2. Are you happy with the way you evaluate communications activity at present?
3. Do you know what behaviours from your target audience will change through the communications activity you are currently doing?
4. Do you know what attitudes you will shift amongst your target audience?
5. Do you know who the most effective advocate is of your brand or organisation?
6. Do you know what the perfect news story would be to help you reach your objectives?

1. What are you trying to achieve?

1.1 Outcomes

Westminster City Council has an overriding corporate ambition to be a “Living City”. Building a Living City is the council’s way of making a visible difference to the lives of the people the council serves. At the heart of this, the council seeks to serve people with responsive services, to lead in renewing the city, and encourage a sense of responsibility within communities.

Key to delivering the Living City agenda is a Communications Plan. The ultimate purpose of this is to support Westminster’s ambition to deliver a better quality of life for residents and a better environment for those that work in the city. This is reviewed on a yearly basis, and at the heart of this plan are 14 different audiences which the communications team have identified. This means communications activity can be tailored according to the needs and requirements of each different group. Examples of audiences include Council tax payers and their families, businesses, and tenants and lessees.

Having established our audiences, we then focus on the desired outcomes for our communications activity. This could be anything from traditional PR/media activity, such as getting stories into the local and national press, to specific campaigns activity, through to using digital communications to engage and inform a particular audience. We review all of our outcomes on a yearly basis. In the 2011/12 Communications Plan, the outcome we are seeking to achieve with our ‘Older People’ audience is to:

> *Increase awareness and understanding of services available to Westminster’s older residents to improve their quality of life.*

For our ‘Staff’ audience, the desired outcome is:

> *To create a well informed and engaged workforce that delivers services to the highest standards.*

At first glance these outcomes may appear broad. Therefore we set specific out-take and outcome measures, and we will discuss in a bit more detail how we go about this later in this report.

1.2 What can you measure?

A simple rule of thumb for effective evaluation is to measure as much as you can with the resources you have available. Outputs, out-takes and outcomes are often referred to in the context of evaluating communications activity, and at this stage it is useful to bring some clarity about what is meant by each term.

- **Outputs** – these are typically some kind of physical product, for example a leaflet or poster, booklet or press release. Basic evaluation might simply be a case of counting the number of outputs which are the result of some form of communications activity.
- **Out-takes** – an out-take is something the public or your target group will take away as a result of a particular piece of communications activity. For example a key message, perception of understanding of a concept or issue.
- **Outcomes** – outcomes are quantifiable changes in attitudes, behaviours or opinions. With a campaign aimed to encourage greater recycling, an out-take could be an individual taking on board the messages, and able to recall hearing or seeing the message if asked. However, an outcome would be that the person has actually changed their recycling habits for the better as a result of the campaign. Fundamental to behaviour change is being able to use insight to understand your audience and the behaviours you are seeking to influence.

Outputs and out-takes both have their place, however, outcomes ultimately help to justify the use of communications as a discipline. After all, producing a lot of material, such as leaflets and posters, and getting out the right messages is no good if you fail to get the final result. We therefore support an outcome based approach to evaluation, which is also advocated by the PRCA:

> *Measurement isn't about simply monitoring* ***outputs*** *i.e. the quantity of media coverage achieved, but instead effective measurement is about assessing* ***outcomes*** *i.e what attitude shifts have occurred.*

At Westminster City Council evaluation of communications and understanding outcomes is what we do and we know the impact we have had on our target audiences and internally within the organisation. We have also been recognised through a number of awards from, amongst others, AMEC, CIPR, PRCA and PR Week. These awards have had evaluation at their heart and it is not something which should simply be bolted on at the end of a campaign or piece of PR activity. We offer a campaign based approach to communications activities. A useful means to follow a similar approach is to adopt a Total Process Planning (TPP) framework[3]. Total Process Planning (see Appendix A) provides a practical framework within which the range of tasks involved in developing effective behavioural programmes can be effectively planned and managed.

Useful resources

The International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC): www.amecorg.com

Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA): www.prca.org.uk/

[3] French, J, Blair-Stevens, C, Improving Lives Together, Strategic Marketing

2. Planning your communications and evaluation

2.1 Our approach

Having established what you are trying to achieve and measure, the next stage is to plan your communications and evaluation.

Another way of expressing our Communications Plan is represented by the diagram overleaf. As this shows, with our audiences at the centre of our approach, we use engagement and insight to inform our strategy and activities according to the specific lifestyles and needs of each audience. Implementation takes the form of tailored key messages delivered through a range of channels selected to suit the audience. Finally we continuously monitor the outcomes and out-takes and undertake meaningful evaluation that helps refine our methods accordingly.

Two tools play a critical part in all of this – the quarterly **Reputation Tracker** survey[4], which measures public opinion in Westminster, and our reporting **Dashboards** (see pages 12–13), which are used to inform the corporate work of the council every month.

Westminster's approach to communications is evidence-based. We research each area of activity before agreeing campaign plans and monitor and evaluate the impact of all our activities.

2.2 Tell the Story

Ideally, you should aspire to get to a position where you can tell a story about how your communications activity worked from start to finish. For our 'Older Peoples' audience, the story might go as follows:

2.2.1 Customer Insight

To understand the audience, we looked at findings from the latest Reputation Tracker to find out current levels of satisfaction and informed ratings. Through this we could also see what impact Westminster Plus (Westminster's publication for over 60s) was having on this group. At this stage we also did some desk research into the latest thinking on communicating with the older demographic.

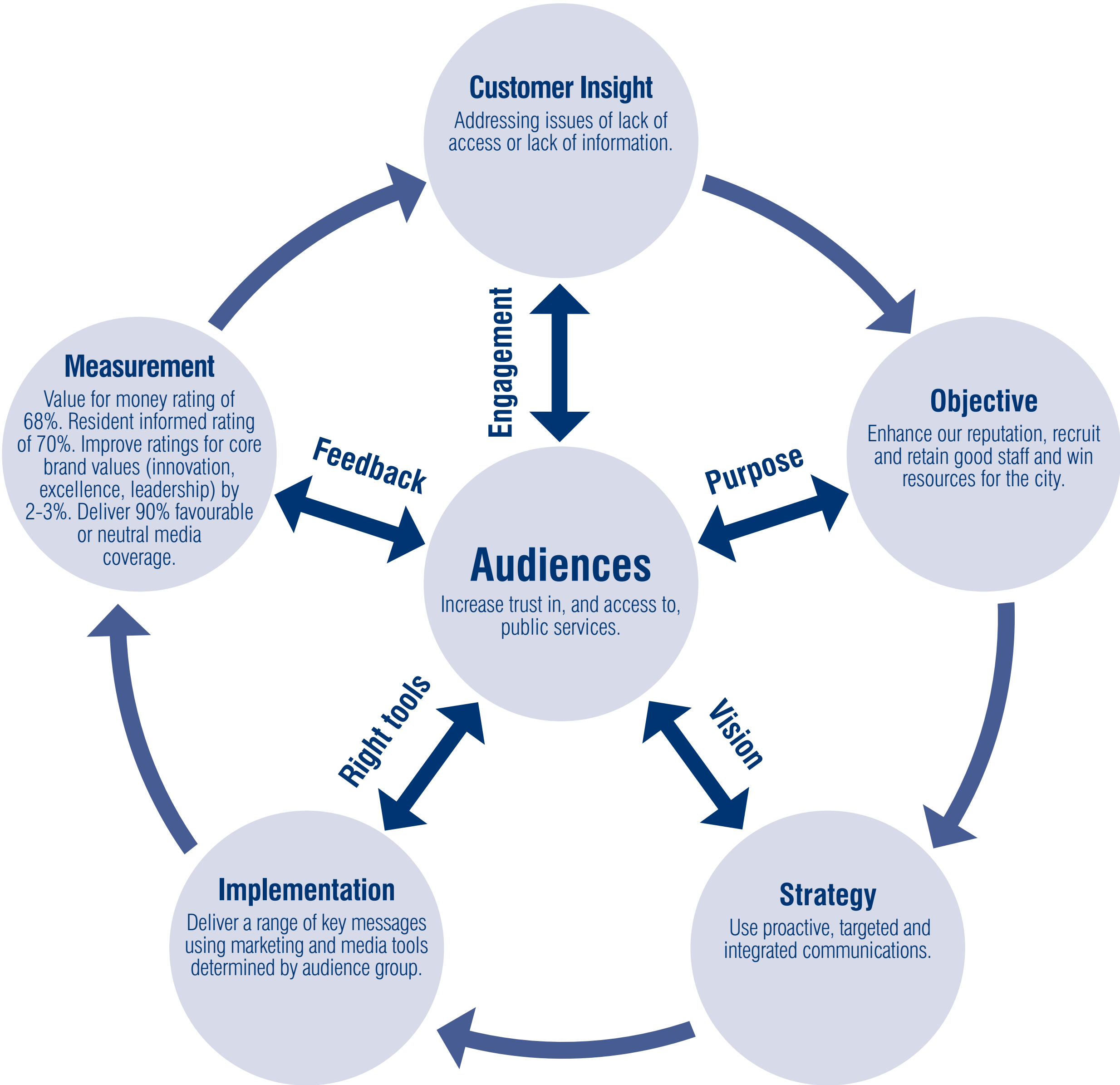
2.2.2 Objective

Based upon this research we then set some key objectives for the campaign; to maintain informed ratings amongst this group, and to increase levels of satisfaction with the council. These objectives formed part of the Communication's Plan which had buy-in from the council's senior political and managerial leadership.

2.2.3 Strategy

We then set out our strategy for achieving these key objectives. We decided to continue using Westminster Plus as a means of informing this audience. A major event, the Westminster Tea Dance, was also planned. As well as being a free event aimed at bringing members of the community together, the purpose of this was also to increase satisfaction with the council.

[4] Westminster City Council runs a quarterly Reputation Tracker survey amongst a random sample 500 residents to evaluate the impact of communications activity.



2.2.4 Implementation

To achieve our objectives we decided to produce three versions of Westminster Plus throughout the year. In this, as well informing our older people's audience about council service and benefits, we also ran several competitions for tickets to shows and events. We also planned the Tea Dance for the spring.

2.2.5 Evaluation

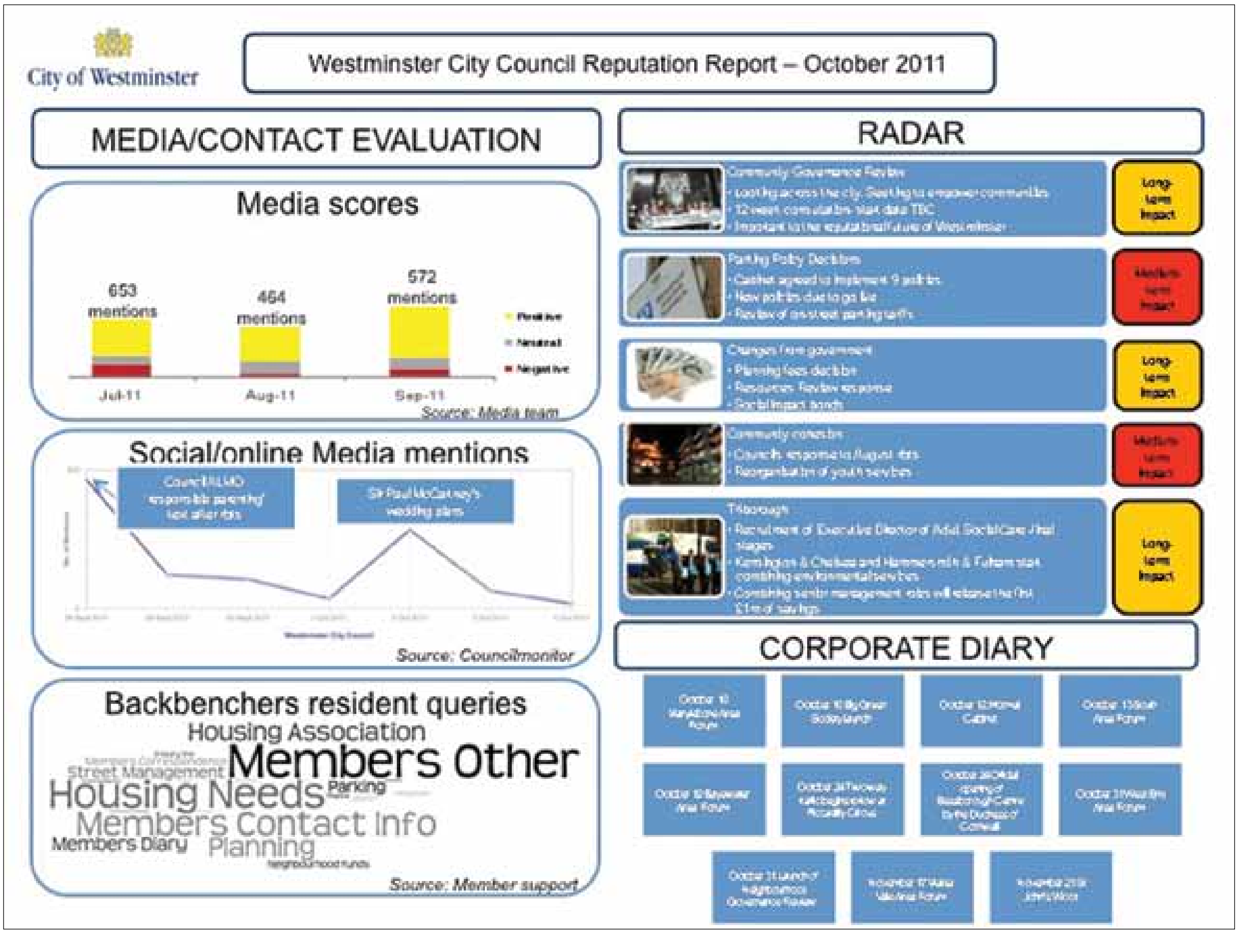
Evaluation was carried out by traditional polling, event feedback, and customer insight. We were able to track opinion amongst the audience throughout the year through the quarterly Reputation Tracker. We also got feedback from the Tea Dance event by way of self completion questionnaires amongst attendees. We also collected feedback from the council's Senior Passport line regarding queries made from older people in Westminster.

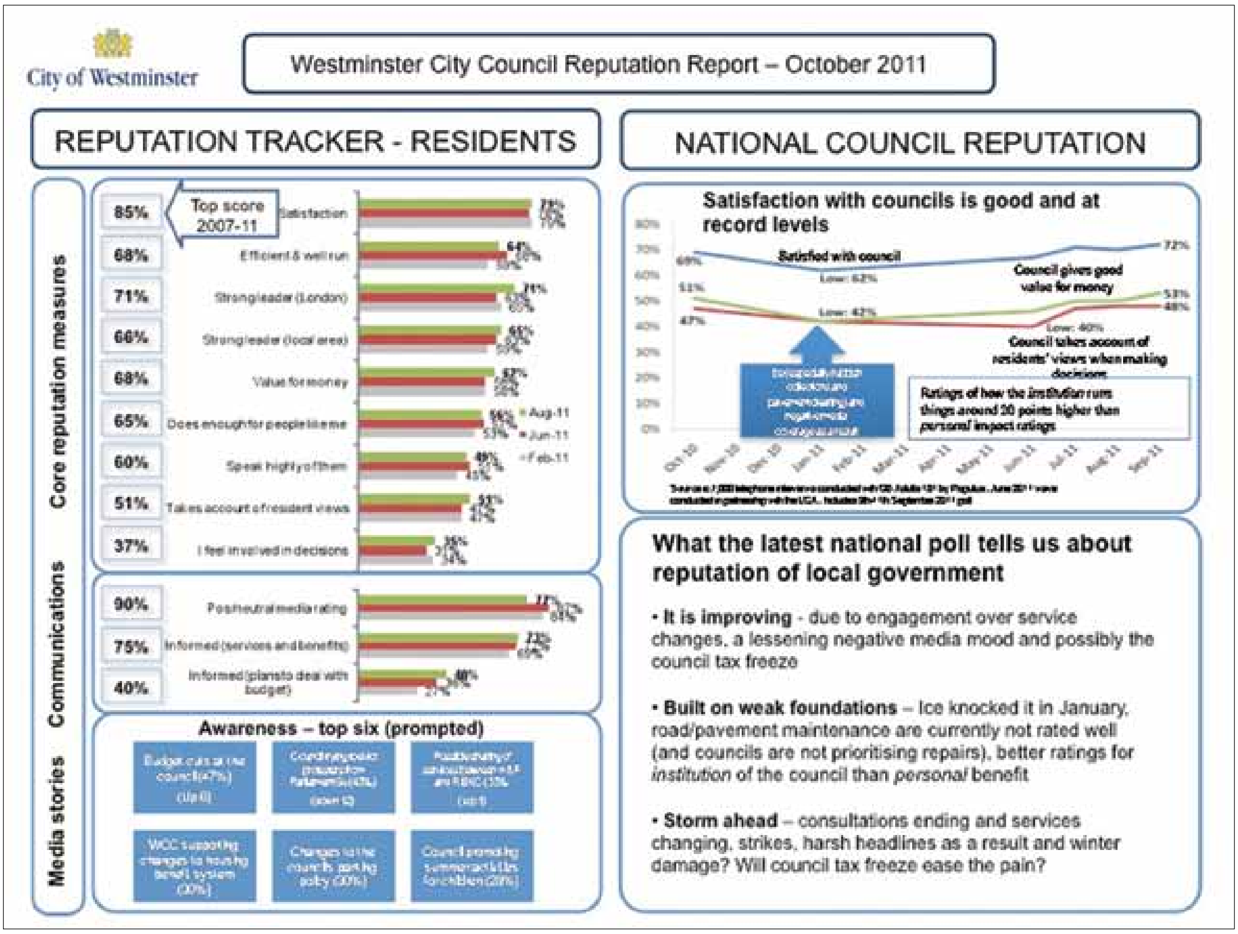
2.3 Using reporting to turn research into insight into action

In summary, our whole approach to communications and evaluation centres around **research**, **insight** and **action**. With this at the centre of our activity, we can operate with authority in order to help the strategic direction of the council and the delivery of the Living City agenda.

We use dashboards as a way of displaying different research, insight and evaluation information in simple and understandable way. By producing dashboards on a monthly basis, we can keep track of a range of metrics and insights that help decision-makers.

The following Reputation Report is supplied to Cabinet and Chief council officers every month. It incorporates a wealth of information from media evaluation, to key items on the communications agenda for the council over the coming weeks and months. Further, it includes key public opinion measures taken from the most recent Reputation Tracker. This gives a comprehensive overview for the communications team and council management, and allows us to plan and focus resources for communications activity.




City of Westminster
Westminster City Council Reputation Report – October 2011
REPUTATION TRACKER - RESIDENTS
Core reputation measures
85%
Top score 2007-11
Satisfaction
68%
Efficient & well run
71%
Strong leader (London)
66%
Strong leader (local area)
68%
Value for money
65%
Does enough for people like me
60%
Speak highly of them
51%
Takes account of resident views
37%
I feel involved in decisions
Aug-11
Jun-11
Feb-11
Communications
90%
Pos/neutral media rating
75%
Informed (services and benefits)
40%
Informed (plans to deal with budget)
Media stories
Awareness – top six (prompted)
WCC supporting changes to housing benefit system (30%)
NATIONAL COUNCIL REPUTATION
Satisfaction with councils is good and at record levels
Satisfied with council
Low: 62%
Council gives good value for money
Low: 42%
Low: 40%
Council takes account of residents' views when making decisions
Ratings of how the institution runs things around 20 points higher than personal impact ratings
72%
69%
51%
47%
53%
48%
What the latest national poll tells us about reputation of local government
• It is improving - due to engagement over service changes, a lessening negative media mood and possibly the council tax freeze
• Built on weak foundations – Ice knocked it in January, road/pavement maintenance are currently not rated well (and councils are not prioritising repairs), better ratings for *institution* of the council than *personal* benefit
• Storm ahead – consultations ending and services changing, strikes, harsh headlines as a result and winter damage? Will council tax freeze ease the pain?

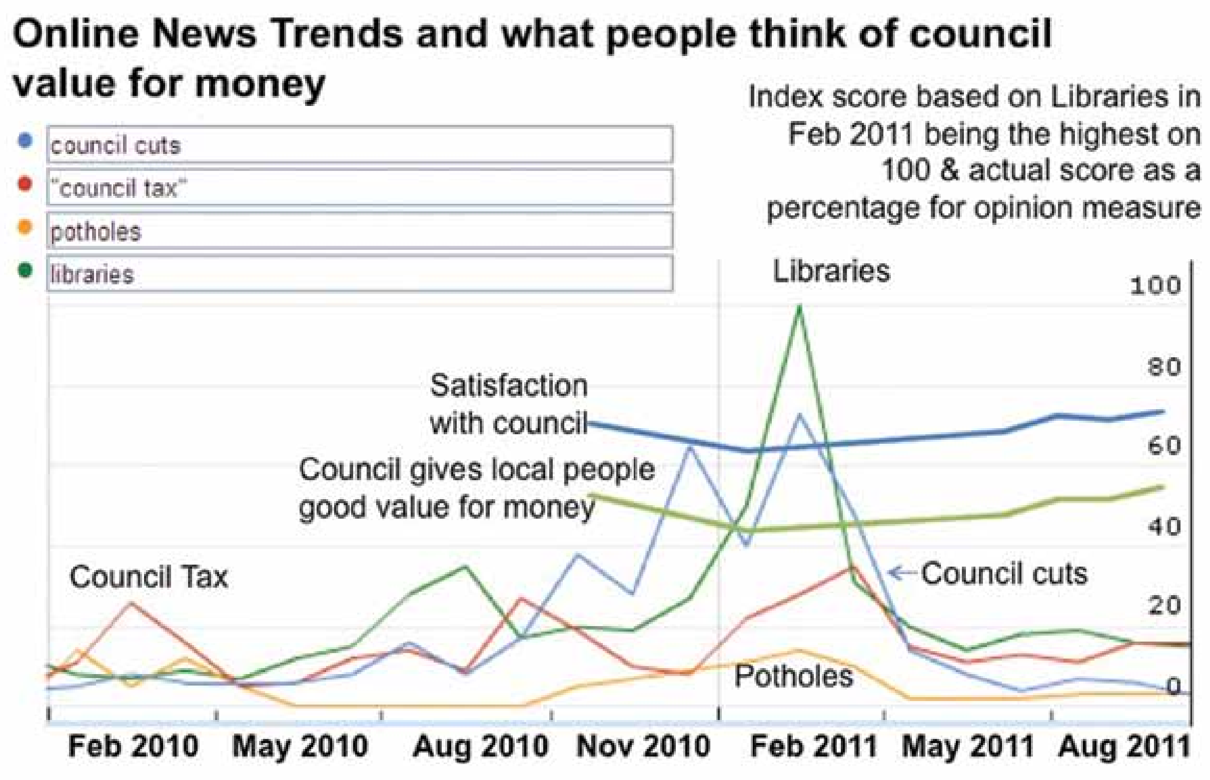
2.4 Making evaluation cost effective

2.4.1 Do some desk research

A good starting point for evaluation is to look at what information already exists and to see how other organisations do evaluation. Looking at secondary research may help you to gain an idea as to current benchmarks and what you should be aiming for.

For example, if you are about to embark on a campaign to increase people's perceptions of the value for money your authority provides, look for any existing reports which give an idea as to current value for money ratings amongst residents in other areas.

Google Insights is particularly useful source for understanding the prominence of certain news topics over time. In the chart below we have included key news topics from Google Insights, and overlaid key opinion measures taken from polling research by LGInsight[5]/Populus.



Online News Trends source: Google Insights, http://www.google.com/insights/search/ Searched for news items in UK between 2010 and September 2011
Public opinion measure: LGinsight/Populus, c.1000 GB adults 16+ interviewed each month (Oct-10, Jan-11, Jun-11 onwards)

[5] LGInsight is a national body which aims to improve and challenge how local government researcher use data to deliver good decisions and positive outcomes. LGInsight is the sister organisation of LGCommunications. LGCommunications is a national body made up of an association of authorities that works to raise the standard of communications in local government.

2.4.2 Assess the metrics that you need to measure before going about your communications activity

Before embarking on communications activity, it is essential to baseline in order to understand what you are going to need to know in order to successfully evaluate your activity later on. In local government several reports such as Westminster City Council's 'How Communications Works' as well as national trends derived from research by LGinsight are a useful starting point in establishing what you need to know.

Using the example set out above, if you are about to run a value for money campaign, any evaluation you do post the communications activity will be ineffective unless you know what value for money ratings were prior to the campaign start.

Likewise, if you are running a campaign to encourage residents to pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit instead of by cheque, it is essential that you know exactly how many payments were made by the different methods before any activity begins. **This way you will have a benchmark to which you can compare later.**

Research is critical. It shows the importance of informing people of what we do, and for a local authority in particular, ultimately shows the importance of communications activity on driving up key ratings for value for money and satisfaction. Westminster puts research at the heart of all communications activity, and through its public opinion surveys is able to benchmark performance and evaluate the effectiveness of different audience based campaigns. Once we have these benchmarks in place, we then **make projections** as to what we hope to achieve in terms of quantifiable changes in behaviour or public opinion. The projections are calculated using our Albert Model (see Appendix C) which creates realistic targets that can later be measured through the Reputation Tracker.

2.4.3 Why not talk to your audiences?

Focus groups are a useful way of finding out what people think about a given topic and allow you to explore opinion and views in detail. A focus group that is well recruited with a good mix of participants who are representative of your target audience will yield a wealth of insight into opinion towards a particular area. The advantage focus groups have over quantitative research is that they allow you to explore what drives opinion and really explore a topic in depth. Before running a focus group, a topic guide should be drawn up to ensure that the relevant topics and questions are addressed.

However, reaching out and talking to a potential audience does not have to be as formal as a focus group, and in fact does not always require a lot of effort.

Several years ago, Westminster came up the idea of attaching metal signs to lampposts giving passers by a number to call if they wanted to report a problem, such as vandalism or graffiti in a street. To test the concept before rolling the idea out in full, a sign was attached to a lamppost as a trial. A member of the team then stood by the lamppost and asked passers-by what they would do to report a problem in the street. Mid way through the conversation the researcher pointed up to the sign and asked people if they had noticed it and if they would call the number given to report a problem. It turned out that people on the street were both not noticing the sign, and further most said they would not use the number. The metal signs idea was dropped.

Therefore, by focussing on the behaviour we were trying to change and testing the idea first, we can get an idea as to the likely shifts in behaviour we might see as a result of communications activity. This worked better than asking people beforehand if they would like a sign, or in the conversation going straight to the issue.

2.5 Identify your target customer groups

Communications is more focussed if you have a number of customer groups who you understand the needs of. Identifying your target customer groups can range from simple to complex. It might be that you are running a campaign aimed at all residents, and therefore identifying your customer groups is fairly straightforward, though the strategy for reaching them will still need to be planned. However, if you are trying to reach a particular segment, such as young people, older people, or council tenants, you will have to think of a strategy for identifying each group.

Typical ways to identify a target group might include:

- **Existing databases** – look at what information you already have at your disposal. Do any databases already exist which can be used to identify a particular target group? For example, a council tax register.
- **Mailing lists and subscribers** – do you have any subscription mailing lists, or social media groups which can be used to contact a particular target group.
- **Geodemographic data** – this is a form of data that contains certain information about specific geographical areas. For example, it might include a list of all the postcodes, and with each postcode various other pieces of information are appended, such as average household income and household structure. Geodemographic data is often based upon information from the 2001 census. At Westminster we use OAC data. This is a freely available dataset produced by the Office of National Statistics, and is useful at helping to target different resident groups depending on the outcomes we are seeking to achieve. An LGInsight report entitled 'Understanding Our Residents – improving the lives of six key customer groups'[6] explores the use of OAC data in greater detail.

Avoid targeting everybody. Part of the reason why Tesco have become the UKs leading retailer is down to the fact that they understand their customers in great detail. Through Clubcard they can evaluate every single item a customer buys. With this information (and along with other information the customer provides when they sign up to the scheme) they can then build up a profile of each customer. Next, they group customers who have similar characteristics together, thereby creating a segmentation model.

Having this segmentation model allows them to target relevant communications[7] and offers to specific customer groups.

Even local authorities can aspire to get to this '**Big Data**' level of evaluation, which is now being discussed as the next big thing for research by industry leaders, including Ray Poynter[8]. By understanding our customers to a similar level of detail, we will be able to anticipate demand better, tailor services, and ultimately save costs.

[6] Wholey, N, Harrison, W, (2011), Understanding Our Residents – improving the lives of six key customer groups, UK, LGInsight

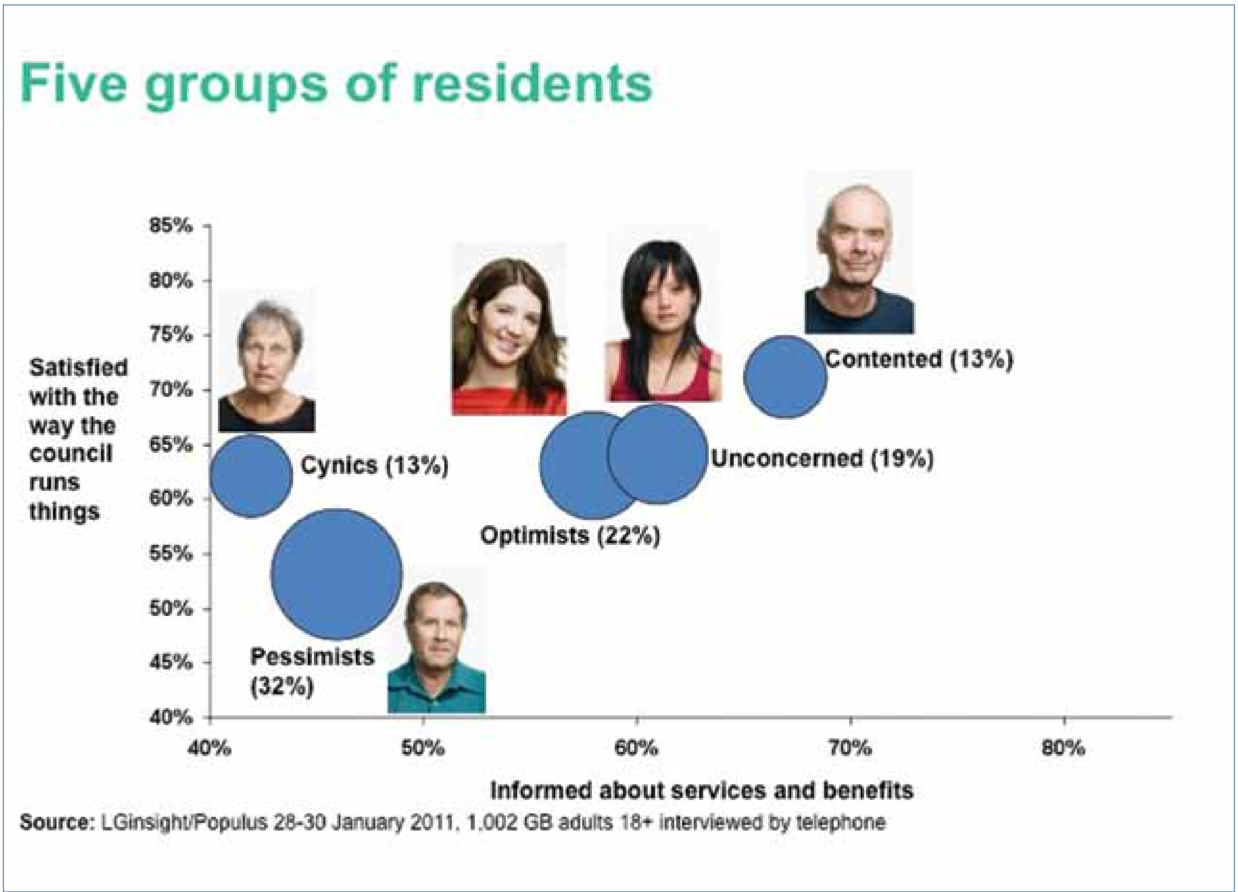
[7] Relevant Communications,(2010), Dunnhumby

[8] Poynter, R, The Future Place Blog, http://thefutureplace.typepad.com. Accessed on 12/10/2011

The chart below shows five resident groups identified from a national poll carried out by LGInsight. By identifying these groups based on attitudes towards certain aspects of local government recommendations for how to communicate with each individual group were proposed.

Some of the key characteristics of each group are as follows:

- **Contented** (13% of GB adults): This group are well educated and well informed. They feel that the range and quality of services will go down over the next year, but are still satisfied with their council, and are accepting of changes that may occur.
- **Optimists** (22% of GB adults): Characterised by optimism that things will stay the same.
- **Unconcerned** (19% of GB adults): Read the tabloids and don't tend to get involved in politics. They are relatively satisfied with their council and generally feel that service range and quality will stay the same.
- **Pessimists** (32% of GB adults): As with the Contented residents they keep up-to-date on issues, but reach a completely different conclusion. Compared to the average they are dissatisfied with their council and don't feel they get good value for money. They are likely to think that service range and quality will decrease over the coming year.
- **Cynics** (13% of GB adults): Don't think the council takes account of their views when making decisions and are not overly satisfied with their council. Likely to read their local newspaper but not their council publication.



Useful resources

Desk research

Westminster City Council's Research and Customer Insight Team:
www.westminster.gov.uk/services/councilgovernmentanddemocracy/research-and-customer-insight/

LGInsight: www.lgcomms.org.uk/lginsight

IpsosMORI: www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications.aspx

YouGov: http://today.yougov.co.uk/

DCSF: www.education.gov.uk/publications

Google Insights: www.google.com/insights/search

Geodemographics

Communities of Practice (www.communities.idea.gov.uk) is a useful starting place to learn about geodemographics and in particular OAC data.

On the communities of practice website you can find a useful fact sheet on OAC with instruction on how to download the data from the ONS website. Here you can download OAC data for all UK postcodes. Having the data at postcode level is particularly useful as it can allow you to match this to other data sets you might have access to, for example e-newsletter subscribers or a database of residents who pay for services by cash. By doing this you can start to get an understanding of how to contact these particular customer groups, and their likely characteristics.

3 Evaluation tools

The next part of this paper looks at some specific tools and techniques that we recommend applying to evaluate different types of communications activity.

3.1 Evaluating public opinion

To begin with it is useful to mention in some detail public opinion research. We have already mentioned how the Westminster Reputation Tracker is used as a tool to help plan for communications activity (see 2.1.1). As well as helping us to plan communications activity, the Reputation Tracker is also used to assess progress of campaigns throughout the year, for example, we can ask residents if they have heard about a particular initiative or campaign. On top of this, we can also measure the impact of traditional PR activity, be assessing which news stories have the greatest awareness. Because of this, we regard the Reputation Tracker to be our most powerful tool in delivering consistent metrics to evaluate the performance of our campaigns and press activity.

The Westminster Reputation Tracker is a quarterly telephone survey conducted amongst a sample of 500 residents. Respondents are selected using a process known as random digit dialling which ensures a random selection of respondents. Quotes are also set by age, gender and work status. This is to ensure that the respondents match the rest of the Westminster population in terms of their demographic profile.

With the Westminster Reputation Tracker, as well as having information on age, gender and work status, we also ask respondents their tenancy status, as well as information on their employment status and qualifications. This allows us to understand the socio-economic status of respondents and the customer groups they fall into. The methodology used remains consistent over time, and therefore allows key metrics to be tracked over time, and further, for comparisons to be made between Westminster and other authorities. A different sample of residents is interviewed each time.

3.2 Evaluating media

3.2.1 The Barcelona Declaration (AMEC)

In our approach to evaluating media we support the Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles[9]. At the declaration, various organisations who are members of AMEC agreed on a set of measurement principles. These will be refined through participant feedback, and built on by AMEC and its partners over the coming years.

In Appendix B, we refer to the Barcelona Principles in detail, however in summary they are:

- Importance of goal setting and measurement
- Measuring the effect on outcomes is preferred to measuring outputs
- The effect on business results can and should be measured where possible
- Media measurement requires quantity and quality

[9] The Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles were presented on June 17th 2010 and finalised on July 19th 2010. They were drawn up between members of Global Alliance, ICCO, the Institute of Public Relations, the Public Relations Society of America, and AMEC US and the Agency Leaders Chapter.

- Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) are not the value of public relations
- Social media can and should be measured
- Transparency and replicability are paramount to sound measurement

We have a formal process for evaluating media which has been replicated by a number of other local authorities. As set out by the Barcelona Principles, we focus on goals we want to achieve and the quality of coverage not just quantity. We do not include AVEs – this is the Advertising Value Equivalent for the column space that is occupied by a particular story or piece of press activity.

In 2010 the Research and Customer team at Westminster City Council won the award for best use of a research and measurement programme for a public sector communications team. The chart below summarises the approach taken by the team within an evaluation framework which AMEC has developed.

Non-Profit/ Public Education: Westminster City Council	**Awareness**	**Knowledge**	**Interest**	**Support**	**Action**
Public Relation Activity	City Recovery Programme launched by leader of council in October 2008. In reaction to deepening economic situation and proposed to support people into work and to support businesses in Westminster Media team announced launch to all target press, supported with further stories to support the programme throughout. Promotional events such as 'Love Your Market 'run to support local businesses and increase resident and business awareness October 2008 Westminster Reporter magazine – re-launched with focus on value for money and budgeting				
Intermediary Effect	Monthly e-newsletter reaches 37,000 people	Daily analysis of media coverage. On average 57% of coverage either positive or neutral between October – December 2008			
Target Audience Effect		In May 2007, 58% of residents felt well informed and by May 2010, this had steadily risen to 75%. In August 2008 53% of residents thought the council offered good value for money. This increased to 68% by May 2010.	Usage of new website increased by 30,000 users a month	Residents are far more satisfied with the council as a result, rising from 76% in May 2007 to 84% in 2010. Between November 2009 and June 2010, the number of residents saying that council staff are easy to deal with increased from 55% to 66%.	Early warning on opinion shifts enabled council to quickly develop its City Recovery programme which helped 1,000 businesses and 1,000 residents. Fear of crime has nearly halved in Westminster – equates to 30,000 people who once feared crime who now do not. Falls Prevention Team received a 170% increase in self referrals after bring featured in publication for older people, Westminster Plus.

3.2.2 Westminster's media scoring model

Through our Reputation Tracker and public opinion research, we have been able to bring depth to our media evaluation by understanding what newspapers our residents read, and which news channels they watch and listen to. For example, we know that over 100,000 residents have watched BBC news in the last seven days, and the around half of residents aged over 16 listen to BBC radio stations. Further, a third of residents read the Evening Standard or the Metro (or both) newspapers most weekdays.

By understanding what our residents read, watch and listen to, we are able to then work out who our target media are, as shown in the table below. It is crucial to understand the penetration of different media sources amongst your target audience, and the communication strategies you use should be adopted to suit the type of media your audience engage with.

A common perception amongst local authorities is that local newspapers and radio are the target audience for their stories and communications. However, it is crucial to actually find out if this is the case. After all, in Westminster there are a range of local newspapers, however the penetration of these is very low and so these are not seen as our target publications. The Evening Standard on the other hand, which is a London wide publication, has a much higher penetration amongst our residents. Likewise BBC London has a high penetration, as do national newspapers such as the Times and Daily Telegraph.

Priority Media x4	Key Target Media x3	Important Media Outlets x2	Other media x1
BBC National News	Evening Standard	Broadsheets	Local newspapers
BBC London	Metro	Tabloids	Other regional press
ITV National News	Radio 4	All london and national radio	Trade press
London Tonight	Times	Other national news (satellite)	All internet (excluding PA & BBC)
		PA news	National/regional newspaper website
		BBC online	Community newspapers
		Time Out magazine	International broadcast/ press

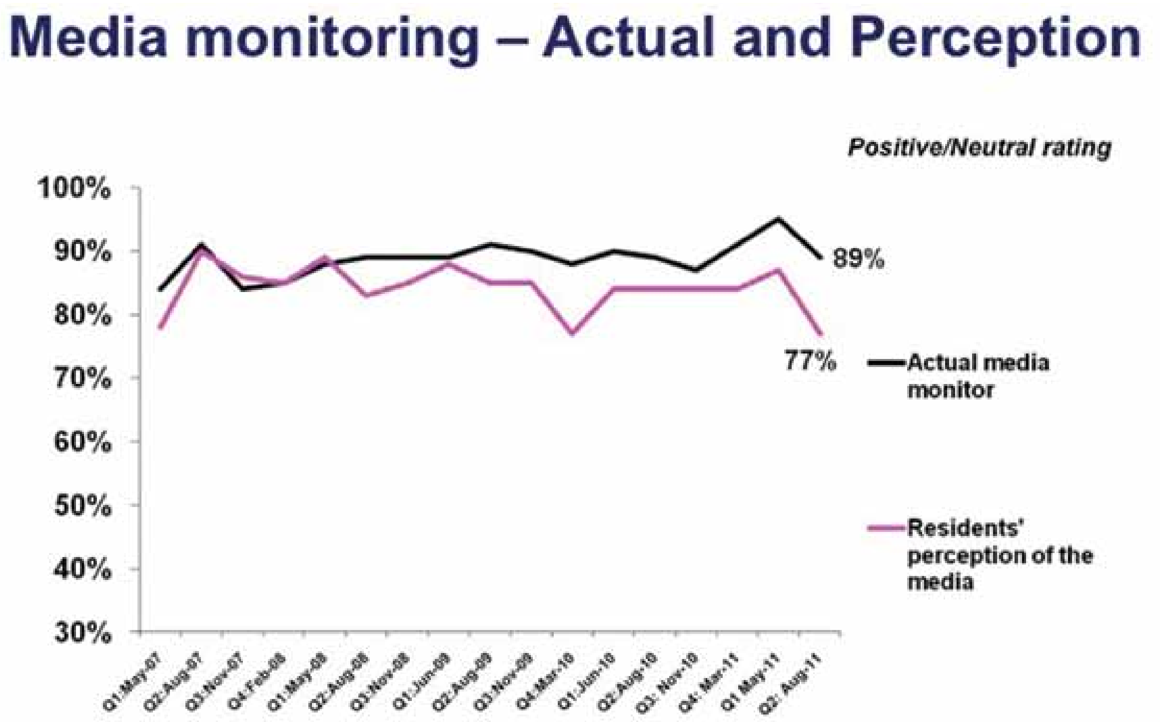
The media monitoring process is run by media assistants. Every day they compile a media monitor document of all media coverage. Each article and piece of broadcast coverage is evaluated and allocated points based on the following criteria:

- +2: Very Positive: Positive Headline, Positive mention of council services, policies, staff or members, No negative comment/component
- +1: Positive: Positive Headline, Positive mention of council services, policies, staff or members, Negative comment/component
- 0: Neutral: Mention of council, No negative comment/component, No positive comment/component
- -1: Negative: Negative Headline, Criticism of the council services, policies, staff or members, Council comment/component included
- -2: Very Negative: Negative Headline, Overall criticism of council services, policies, staff or members, No council comment/component

The table below demonstrates how a range of stories would typically be evaluated and complied. From this we can begin to build up a total of all weekly scores. We also classify all stories into relevant areas, for example built environment (BE) and Corporate (Corp), and can also therefore provide evaluation at different levels, from the whole council, to three different service areas.

Article/ Broadcast	Publication	Publication Category	Area	Band	Tone	Tone Value	Total
Monday							
Leader of the Council on ban on portable advertising boards	BBC London TV	London broadcast	BE	4	VP	2	8
Recyclers are cashing in on the fortune in your bin	The Times	national press	BE	3	VP	2	6
How a load of old rubbish is fast becoming new gold rush	The Times	national press	BE	3	VP	2	6
Hopes pinned on regeneration	Evening Standard	London press	PS	3	VP	2	6
WCC enforcing a ban on portable advertising boards	ITV London	London broadcast	BE	4	P	1	4
Madonna's London pub facing price probe	Now Magazine	Website	BE	1	VP	2	2

We can then track our scores over time, therefore getting a detailed picture of how our traditional media communication is working. The chart overleaf shows the proportion of media hits that were classified as either positive or neutral on a quarterly basis since 2007. Alongside this, perceptions of media coverage amongst residents are shown. These scores are taken from the quarterly Reputation Tracker survey. By asking residents as well we can validate the trends. Several other authorities have adopted this system as it is simple to implement and cost effective. Further, by using the same methodology, comparisons between authorities can be made (see Appendix D).



Source: *Media monitor* c.1,200-1,500 media hits each quarter. *Opinion monitor* c. 500 telephone interviews in the last month of the quarter with Westminster residents aged 16+. Figures based on all those answering the following question: *Overall, do you think that the media has viewed Westminster City Council positively or negatively in the last few months?*

Useful resources

Barcelona Principles: www.amecorg.com

Westminster research resources:
www.westminster.gov.uk/services/councilgovernmentanddemocracy/research-and-customer-insight/

PRCA: Evaluation – A best practice guide to evaluating the effects of your campaigns
www.prca.org.uk/Insight/insight_bestpractice

3.3 Evaluating Websites

3.3.1 Keep analysis in-house

Website evaluation is a huge topic, with companies investing heavily in the area, and whole agencies established within the field. We believe that organisations should keep web analytics in-house, and this notion is supported by leaders in the industry such as Marshall Sponder[10] and Avinash Kaushik[11]. There are two main reasons why we believe analytics should be kept in-house:

- Web analytics can form a crucial role in helping determine strategy, but should be supplemented with other data to create a fuller picture. For example, if we are trying to encourage channel shift, we can use web analytics to track how many customers are conducting transactions online, but having telephony and other contact channel data will allows us to understand where customers are shifting from. Keeping analytics in-house will make obtaining other data easier, and furthermore, an in-house analyst will have first-hand experience of the changes going on within an organisation.
- If based within communications, web analytics can play an active role in shaping and informing campaign activity. Further, it is a vital tool in evaluating the success of campaigns. A researcher or web analyst can work alongside their colleagues in marketing and communications, playing an active role in the campaigns process.

Before starting any web evaluation is to take a good look at the site itself. Put yourself into the shoes of a user and see how the website works. Note down any key observations and findings you make.

3.3.2 Web analytics

Web analytics is essentially about looking at how your website is being used. It gives you a feel for how many visits your site gets over a given time period, how many of these visits are unique, what the most popular pages are, as well as a whole range of other information.

From an evaluation perspective, with web analytics we can relatively easily find out the impact of communications activity. For example, at Westminster we have recently been reviewing our parking policies. As part of this, we have been directing members of the public and motorists to specific pages on our website which give more information on the topic. After issuing these leaflets and posters we are then able to see what the impact has been on the website, and whether or not more people have visited the desired pages as a result.

It is important to note however that using web analytics alone is not a solution to evaluating communications, as the web is one of many channels that need to be measured for successful communications evaluation.

> *“Web analytics is no longer a silo, neither is it becoming the centre of the universe. In order to truly measure success we are having to accurately understand and measure what happens upstream (in TV ads and newspapers, and in blogs and in RSS feeds and in magazines) and we are having to accurately understand what happens downstream (phone channel, retail stores, other websites etc.).” Avinash Kaushik*

[10] Sponder, M (2012) Social Media Analytics – Effective tools for building, interpreting, and using metrics, USA, McGraw-Hill

[11] Kaushik, A, Occam’s Razor, http://www.kaushik.net, Accessed on 12/10/2011

Through using website analysis in conjunction with information from other channels, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, we can begin to evaluate communications in more depth. For example, if we embark on a communications campaign to encourage people to stop renewing library books by phone and to renew online instead, looking at what is happening on the web as well as in the call centre will allow us to successfully evaluate the impact of this communications activity.

3.3.3 Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a free and popular tool used for web analytics. A piece of code is added to the HTML script of each page which then starts collecting information about a website which can be viewed in a user friendly interface[12].

3.3.3.1 Advantages of Google analytics

There are various benefits and advantages of Google Analytics. Below we list just some of them.

- It is free
- The user friendly dashboard makes understanding data easy
- You can quickly see key metrics, including which are the most viewed pages on your site, where people enter and leave the site, how long people spend on your site, and how many pages they view on average
- You can see how your site is being used by mobile devices, and what for
- You can see what search terms people use in google to find your site
- You can set goals you want the site to achieve, for example to monitor how many customers complete a specific transaction or download a document from your site.

3.3.3.2 Things to be aware of with Google Analytics and best practice

There are also several features of Google Analytics which could potentially work to its disadvantage:

- Whilst it is very good at displaying information on the number of visitors your site receives and the pages they view, it cannot give a profile of visitors. For example there is no way of telling overall what the main interests of individual visitors are. For example, does someone mostly have an interest in parking or schools?
- The amount of data and information produced by Google Analytics can be quite staggering. Therefore it is important to only report what is useful. Our advice is to keep it simple. Focus on the information that really brings value and tells you something interesting.
- Look at trends over time – essentially, the greater the period of time you are able to see data for, the better. Ideally, you look at a month's worth of data as a minimum. This will allow you to start identifying trends over time.
- Compare data to the same period from the previous year – obviously when you first set up Google Analytics, you will not be able to view any historical data. However, once the tool has been up and running for a while, you will be able to start making comparisons to previous dates.

Other tools exist for web analytics, some of which have more features but may not necessarily be free. Essentially, we believe that Google Analytics is a good starting point, and by understanding this tool, you will be able to understand the fundamentals of how your site is being used, and being to make strategic improvements, and ultimately improve how you evaluate communications activity.

[12] Google Analytics Guide, www.google.com/grants/education/Google_Analytics_Training.pdf, Accessed 12/10/2011

3.3.3.3 The main dashboard

Upon signing into Google Analytics, you will first be presented with the following dashboard:

At first glance we are given a useful insight into how the website is being used. For example:

- There were 412,916 visits over the month period
- On average when people looked at just over four pages
- On average, people spent just under four minutes on the site
- The bounce rate 36.46%. This means that just over a third of people who went onto the site left immediately without visiting any other pages (this is not a high bounce rate considering the high overall number of visits).

Why is this useful?

The dashboard is immediately useful as it shows us how many people are visiting the site and when. Further, it enables us to quickly spot any major problems – for example if the bounce rate suddenly increased to 70% we might want to investigate further. It also presents potential opportunities. For example, visits are highest on Monday and Tuesday. Should we therefore be publishing new stories on the site on these days to get the most exposure?

3.3.3.4 Traffic sources

Another useful function in Google Analytics is the Traffic Sources tool.

Source: www.westminster.gov.uk 30 April 2011 – 30 May 2011

This allows us to see where all traffic has come from to get to our site. As shown in the example above, half of traffic to the Westminster website comes from a search engine, nearly a third comes from referring sites (external websites that have a link to Westminster's website), and 18% of traffic is direct – people have entered www.westminster.gov.uk directly into their internet browser.

To access the main traffic sources page, from the Dashboard, click on Traffic Sources on the left-hand side menu.

Why is this useful?

Having an understanding of what the main sources of traffic are for your website can add value in several ways. Of note, this allows you to:

- Determine if there are any external sites which consistently send traffic to your site – if so, are there any opportunities for promotion on these external sites.
- Determine the proportion of traffic coming to the site through search – if it's low, can your site be better optimised so that it is recognised and picked up by search engines?

3.3.3.5 Site search terms

Another useful feature in Google Analytics is the ability to see what site visitors are searching for in Google before coming to your site. If your site has a lot of traffic, Google Analytics will produce a very long list of search terms. A useful way to get a feel for what visitors are searching for is to create a Key Word Tag Cloud in Wordle (www.wordle.net). Within Google Analytics, select 'Content' and then 'Site Search'. If your site has a lot of traffic, make sure you get a good random selection of data by scrolling to the bottom of the page, clicking 'View full report' and then selecting 500 rows of data. Now export the data into a CSV file.

Next, within Wordle, select 'Advanced', then paste the first two columns (containing search terms and number of times used) into Wordle (the two columns must be separated by a colon). Wordle will then produce an output like below:

From this simple visualisation we can easily build up a picture of what people are coming to our site to do. Furthermore, running this report can show seasonal differences. In the example above, we have looked for the period over Christmas 2010. We can clearly see how a substantial number of visits were to do with finding out information about parking during the Christmas period.

Why is this useful?

Running this report allows us to:

- See what customers are trying to achieve on our site. We can then build and focus our site on what customers actually want. For example, if we know that lots of customers are using the site to pay for parking permits, we can make sure that the site is well set up to allow customers to carry out these transactions.
- See if our site is geared up for what customers actually use it for. A site may have 50 links on the front page, when in fact few of them are actually used. The things we know customers want to use the site for should be well sign posted.
- Ensure that the terms people are using to search for our site are contained within the metadata[13] for the relevant pages. For example, if lots of people are searching for "Pay parking permit Westminster", we should ensure that this term is contained within the metadata for all parking permit pages.

3.3.3.6 Goals and event tracking

A goal is an ultimate page you want a customer to visit on your website. Typical goals could be

- A sale (this could be defined as when someone reached a 'Payment Taken' or similar page on your site
- A form, such as a PDF downloaded
- A video watched

To set up a goal, you need to first of all define the goal within your account as follows:

- Under user settings, click the Edit link next to the profile for which you'd like to create a goal. Under the Goals section, select Add Goal
- Create a name for you goal, for example 'Council tax payments'. This is the name that will appear in your goal funnel report.
- Next, in the Goal URL field, you need to enter the web address that marks a successful conversion when reached. This might be a 'Thank you' page which is reached when a customer successfully pays their council tax, or a newsletter subscription page.
- In the next step, you need to define your Funnel Path. This is effectively the pages you expect customers to click through to complete a chosen goal. You can have up to 10 pages within your funnel path, and you need to enter the full URL with each page.

[13] Metadata is effectively words used 'behind the scenes' on a web page to describe what is shown in the page itself. It, along with the actual content on the page, as well as image tags are picked up by search engines.

Why is this useful?

- By setting up goals and funnel paths, you will be able to see if visitors are taking the path you expect, and if not, where they may be losing interest and exiting the site.
- Setting up goals and funnels allows you to automate a certain aspect of evaluation. For things that are on-going, such as council tax payments, and newsletter subscriptions, you can quickly see how many visitors are completing each goal over a chosen time period.

3.3.4 Going beyond Google Analytics

As we mentioned earlier, there are tools other than Google Analytics which can be used to evaluate the usage of websites.

One of the main disadvantages of Google Analytics is that, although it is very good at telling us key metrics, such as page views and the number of visitors, it is less effective at building up a picture of the customer. For example, we may know that a lot of our parking or library pages have been viewed, however, it does not tell us specifically which customers are interested in what. One groups of customers may regularly use the site to find information on planning, while another may use the site for libraries and education.

In local government LoGo_net[14] is a tool which allows us to build up a picture of the types of customers who use our site, and what they use it for. It does so by categorising the content on web pages. By having this greater level of understanding, we can begin to evaluate site usage to a very detailed degree, and can track the impact that communications activity has on particular customer groups.

Furthermore, with LoGo_net we can start to tailor web content for specific audiences based on what their interests are. For example, our parking audience can be shown relevant signposts giving them information of parking rates, while our parents audience could be displayed specific information on schools. Much in the same way as Google Analytics, we can set goals and then evaluate and assess the effectiveness of specific activities. This goes beyond just putting something about parking permits on the parking permits web pages, but instead tailoring the website around the needs of someone who is looking for information on parking permits.

3.3.5 Use of surveys on websites

By getting feedback from visitors to our site, we can get a very quick and effective insight into how the website is performing. After all, if someone could not find what they were looking for, or were extremely frustrated with the site for whatever reason, they are in many cases willing to say so through a feedback mechanism.

We can trawl for hours and hours through Google Analytics, but one comment from a customer could reveal a piece of insight which we might never have seen in the data.

> *"Qualitative data is so hyper important. It is the difference between 99% of the website analysis that happens that yields very little insights and the 1% that provides a window into the mind of a customer." Avinash Kaushik*

[14] Local Government Channel Shift Solutions, www.logo-net.co.uk/

There are many providers of website surveys, such as GovMetric, who provide off the shelf solutions. Below we set out several key considerations for using website surveys:

- Use mostly **quantitative scale questions** with some open-ended qualitative questions. Quantitative analysis helps find pockets of discontent but qualitative responses add depth
- You may want to consider targeting survey participants. Random sampling seems like the most logical approach, but could be seen as less effective in some situations. *"Surveying people who have had the chance to engage the site is optimal. It shows commitment on their part and we will get better quality answers." Avinash Kaushik.* For example, you might want to just survey people who have paid their council tax online, or paid for a parking permit.
- There's **no need to send a survey to every visitor**. For a 'high traffic' website, if the survey is shown to 3-5% of visitors, a 5% response rate would be good. The key is that those invited are randomly selected.
- Use continuous surveys not ad hoc ones. Many organisations often implement a survey to try and fix a specific problem. However, continuous surveys can be very powerful as an ongoing measurement system. Importantly they allow you to take account of seasonality, external influences, such as press releases, and marketing campaigns.
- There are several ways to initiate a survey, including when the customer visits, on exit, or during a session. In many cases, initiating the survey on exit works well.
- Feedback from surveys should be sent to the relevant people in the organisation. If it is technical feedback, send it to the IT team, if it is content related, send to the relevant department or web editor.

Below we present the typical structure of a whole site survey.

Was this useful?

Scale 1–5
(1 not helpful,
5 very helpful)

→

If not useful, was this because of:

Content
Technical issue
Other

→

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Open ended

→

Option to leave name and email address

3.3.6 Heuristic Evaluations

Heuristic evaluations involve using a researcher to act as a customer and attempting to complete a set of predetermined tasks related to the website's existence.

The aim of heuristic tests are to identify flaws by attempting to mimic customer behaviour and experience.

At Westminster we conduct heuristic evaluations on a quarterly basis and use the following approach:

- Determine a set of common web tasks. These are normally based upon the most common tasks we know are completed on our website (derived from analytics). For example, how do I find out what activities are taking place in my local area for young people.
- Send individual tasks to different colleagues and ask them to complete them by a certain deadline.
- Colleagues must record every step they took to complete their task, noting down any difficulties encountered and timing how long it took to complete.
- The findings can then be analysed and changes made to the website as necessary. Findings can be categorised depending on what needs fixing immediately, and what can wait.

Useful resources

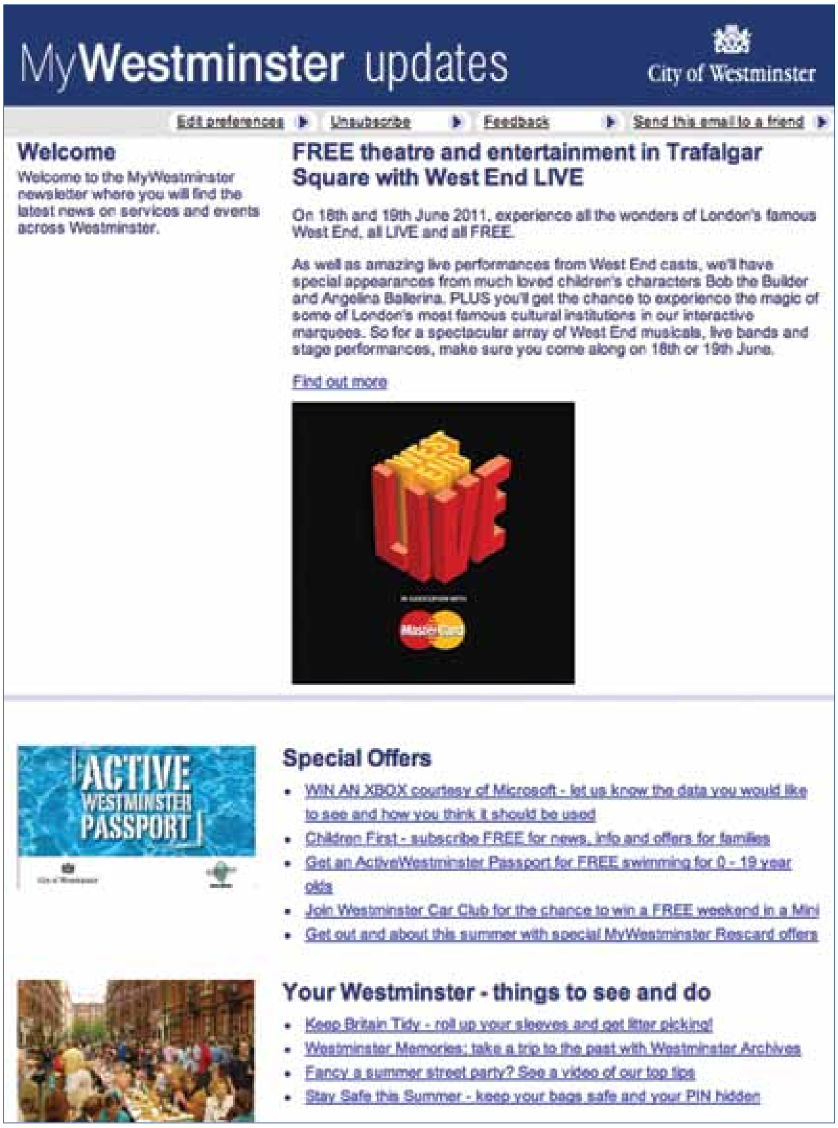
Google Analytics
www.google.com/analytics/

Beginners guide to Google Analytics
http://static.googleusercontent.com/external_content/untrusted_dlcp/www.google.com/en//grants/education/Google_Analytics_Training.pdf

Practical tips for web analytics
www.kaushik.net/avinash/

3.4 Evaluating e-newsletters

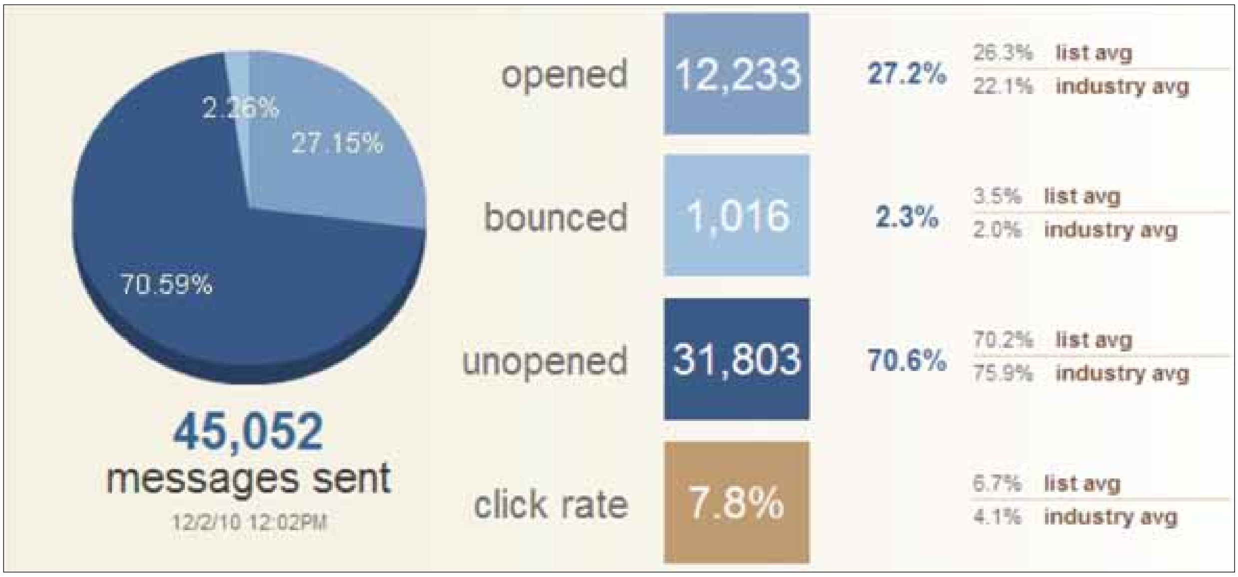
At Westminster we send a bi-monthly newsletter to around 45,000 recipients. Through effective evaluation of the newsletter we are able to try out new ideas and see what is most effective amongst our audience in informing residents about our services and benefits.



3.4.1 Use a mailing list tool

We use a tool called MailChimp to send out our resident newsletter. Other tools are available. If you just blind copy a list of email addresses you will not only look less professional you will not have access to a range of evaluation metrics. Once your newsletter has been designed and is setup, MailChimp can be used to create a campaign using your mailing list.

As soon as the newsletter is sent out, MailChimp begins to compile various statistics and information, as shown below.



From here we can easily see the total number of messages sent, how many were opened, and the click rate (the number and proportion of people who clicked on at least one of the links in the newsletter). We can start to test what works well, and what is less effective. For example we can try using different subject lines to see which bring about the highest open rates, and we can experiment with the newsletter content to see what works best to encourage people to engage (i.e. click on links) with the letter.

Below are the most clicked on subjects to date for the MyWestminster newsletter:

Most clicked on subjects	
Great offers and discounts with your MyWestminster Rescard	1,269
Great offers and discounts with your MyWestminster Rescard	1174
Great discounts with your ResCard this Christmas	1090

And here are the subjects which received the lowest number of clicks:

Most clicked on subjects	
Report anti-social behaviour by calling the Community Intelligence Line	68
Join your library online	66
Money	55
A-Z	53

It becomes clear that a customer offer beats corporate information online for increasing engagement and yielding a greater click through rate.

3.4.2 A/B testing

A/B testing allows you to send out one newsletter, but to try out two slightly different designs, content, or subject lines to see which is more effective. For example, you can choose to send your newsletter using two different subject lines, or with a different 'from' field.

As highlighted in the diagram below, you initially send the test to a proportion of the database. This is split 50/50 between the two different versions of the newsletter. After an allocated time period, the more successful version of the newsletter is then sent to the remainder of the database.

MailChimp allows you to easily A/B test different **subject lines**, **from names**, and **delivery date/times**.

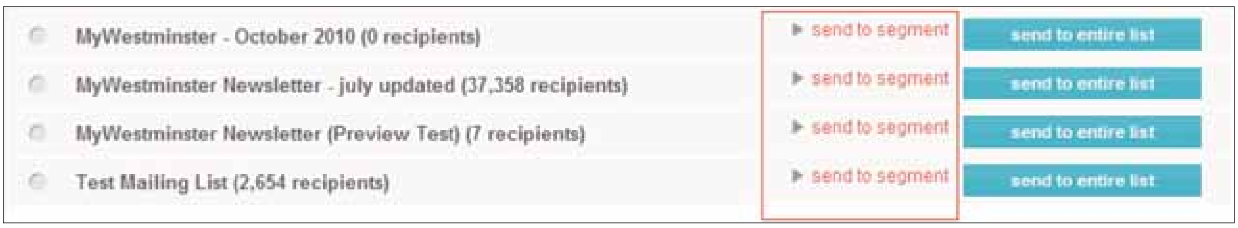
Next there is an option of choosing what constitutes the 'winning' newsletter. This can automated, so the tool will send the remainder of your database the winning formula of newsletter depending on which has the best open rate, or click rate. You can specify the time delay for sending out the remainder of the newsletters. There is also a manual setting, so you can choose yourself which is the most successful version of the newsletter.

3.4.3 Segmenting on past behaviour

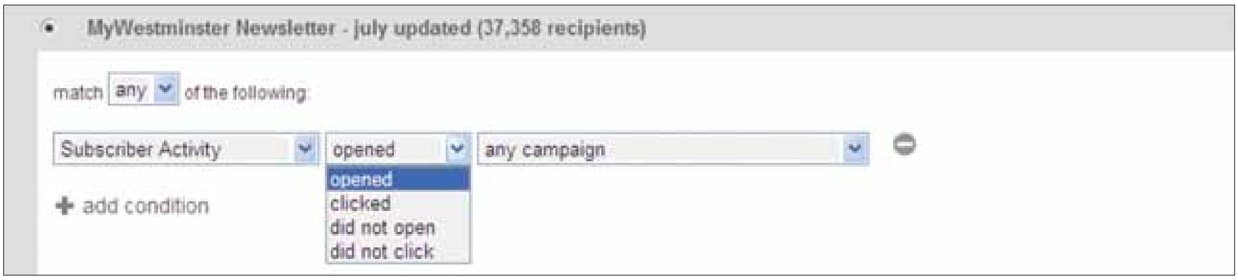
With MailChimp you can send different versions of your newsletter to different groups according to their past behaviour. For example, we can create one segment of customers who receive the newsletter but do not open it, another for those who open the email, but do not click on any links, and a third segment for those who click on links – the most 'loyal' customers.

In a similar way to A/B testing, different versions of the newsletter can then be sent, with slight tweaks made according to the different segment someone is in.

To segment your database according to past behaviour, during the campaign builder process when you come to select your list choose 'Send to Segment' instead of 'Send to entire list'.



Below, you can then select Subscriber Activity from the drop down list, and select the relevant activity (opened any campaign, never opened any campaign etc.).



3.5 Evaluating Social Media

Everyone wants to evaluate social media. It is rich in data and must have some meaning! Every major news story, from the Arab Spring to celebrity gossip, has a social media element that highlights the speed information is now disseminated.

We consider that when referring to social media, we should actually refer to it as social conversation. Rather than traditional media where we broadcast messages, social media is much more of a two-way conversation. This highlights the importance that social media now has for professional communicators, and emphasises how it should be used as a regular channel for communications activity. All organisations need to be aware of the conversations that are happening, and need to be able to respond and engage with people through social media to protect their reputations and ensure that correct and accurate messages are being put across.

The Barcelona Principles state that social media should be measured and it is a growing field of experts. We have found the recent books by Ray Poynter[15] and Marshall Sponder[16] to be particularly useful. The key to social media is that you need to decide what you want to achieve. We focus on Twitter as we feel this gives a good introduction to the issues you will want to consider.

3.5.1 Evaluating Twitter

When people talk of social media evaluation they often first think of Twitter. This is because the data is so readily available, it is focused on giving instant feedback and there are lots of tools that can crunch the data to produce something to interpret.

In choosing how to evaluate Twitter you need to understand it first. Users register for free, create a small profile page, ideally with a picture, and start posting messages of no more than 160 characters. All these messages can be seen by everyone who looks for them. Each user selects a unique name, such as @CityWestminster for Westminster City Council, and chooses which other users they would like to “follow” to see their posts. These then appear in a constantly updating stream of posts. Those users who have more followers will reach more people with what they are saying. Therefore each user looks to follow those they are interested in and that users follow them.

[15] Poynter, R (2010) The Handbook of Online and Social Media Research: Tools and Techniques for Market Researchers, UK, John Wiley and Sons Ltd

[16] Sponder, M (2012) Social Media Analytics – Effective tools for building, interpreting, and using metrics, USA, McGraw-Hill

Each user then has a couple of tools to help disseminate messages. The first is a retweet. This is the ability to send to all their followers a tweet from someone else they are following – essentially validating and disseminating a tweet. The second is the ability to put in a hashtag before a word, such as #localgov for local government topics. This enables users to categorise their messages and enables all users interested in the topic to find relevant messages. This is why they have sprung up on television programmes such as Question Time (#bbcqt) to keep the debate going online. The third is that if a message is sent with the user name at the start then that user will pick it up as a mention of them, but also anyone following both users will see both messages. In this way conversations can happen in groups. This is different to a direct message which will only be seen by the recipient and is the only part of Twitter other users cannot search for and read. The final tool is the ability to put in shortened email links to tweets and links to pictures. This adds rich content to messages and makes it more likely people will take notice and retweet messages, which might in turn lead to more followers.

The best way to understand Twitter is to use it yourself. Set up an account and get used to the way it works. At first it will look like meaningless streams of consciousness but through use you will see it actually is a means of filtering information. The best information, which might be the most useful, profound or amusing, will be the items retweeted or said by someone you particularly want to listen to.

To evaluate Twitter you need to decide on what you want to achieve and there are three main objectives;

- **Information** – You can set-up an account, follow a hundred users you are interested in and never tweet yourself. This could be useful for understanding what is going on within a sector or among key individuals. The evaluation for this would be to ensure that you are happy that everyone you want to follow is there, for example all those who regularly tweet on local government issues
- **Connections** – If you want to start using Twitter to send out messages you want people to follow you and listen to what you have to say. For some organisations, such as a council, this number will gradually grow as people recognise the organisation and see them as relevant. The more you tweet and engage with people the more your followers should grow. This is an important metric and should be the most basic you use. But within this you may want to consider a list of 50-100 people or organisations you really want to follow you. For example if you are a local authority do you want all local journalists to follow your account? If they are not you can make sure you are attentive to them in Twitter, responding to their queries, but also contact them in the real world and ask them to follow you. It is probably more useful to have fifty highly connected and important followers, than five hundred people who are not. In practice the more influential people follow you the more likely your messages will be disseminated far and wide and you will get more followers in return
- **Getting the message out** – With a good network each and every tweet should go far and wide. Wrong. Twitter is all about timing and quality of content. If you had a wonderful item of information and no-one retweeted it or responded to it, then it probably failed. The wording might be wrong, it might have been the wrong time of day or used the wrong hashtag. You need to understand what works for you and there are lots of online tools you can use to help you understand the needs of your followers. This is why it is best to do Twitter yourself as you understand your audience more and they help you improve your work by producing better quality information, rather than just sending it out. Twitter takes skill and you need to learn.

There are new Twitter evaluation tools that are coming out all the time. Keep an eye out and following @TweetSmarter gives you regular updates on many of them. Our top current recommendations are:

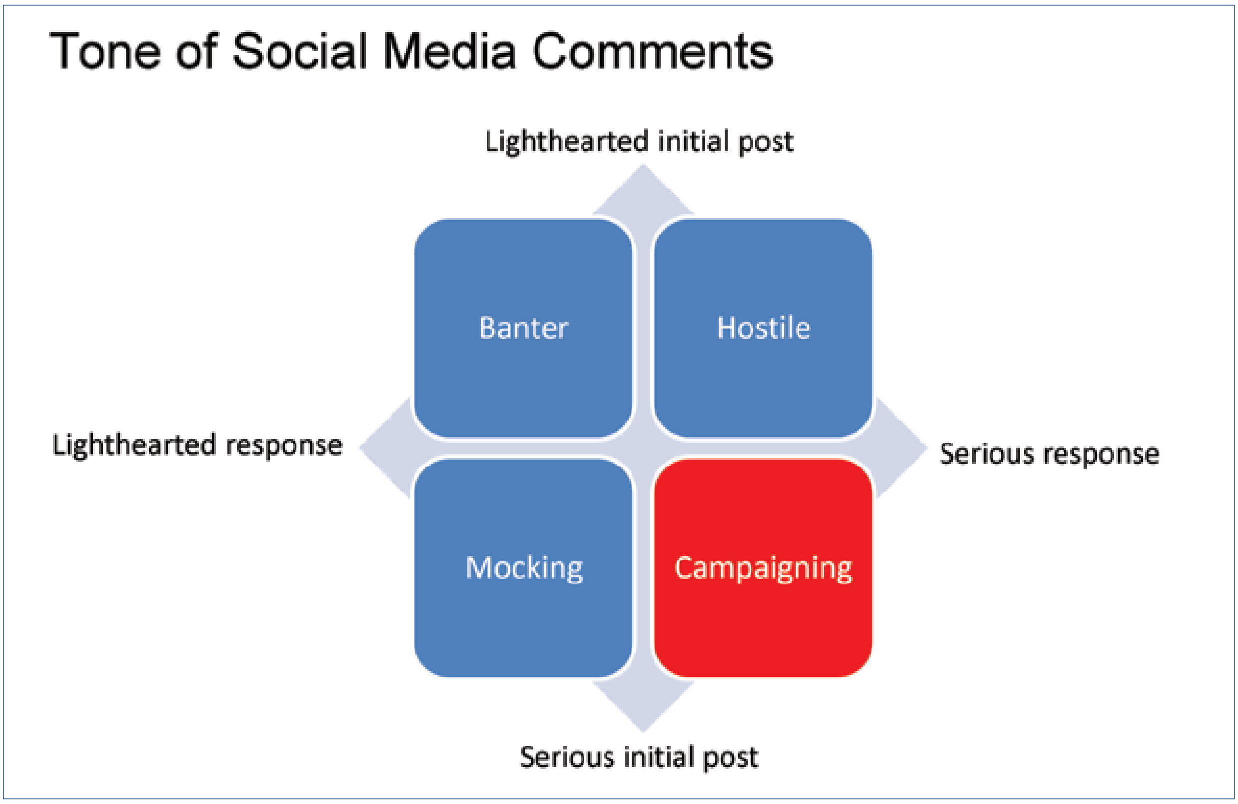
- www.twazzup.com A search engine which shows you Twitter comments on a particular keyword at that point in time. Presented as a dashboard with information on who the most influential users are, the current hashtags being used and the messages themselves. Constantly updating so you can only use it to assess current sentiment. Good in a crisis or when a lively debate about something is happening.
- http://hashtags.org Helps identify trends in use of particular hashtags
- http://tweetreach.com Helps identify how many users have seen your tweets
- http://bufferapp.com Recently released and enables you to study your users behaviour and time your tweets accordingly. It is worth searching online for tools like this – there are plenty of free and paid ones which should meet your needs.
- www.klout.com Useful for helping to identify the style of your tweets and also who else you might want to follow. The Klout score is popular, but whether it adds real value is debatable.

3.5.2 Evaluating other types of social media

We have mostly covered how to evaluate Twitter, however there are obviously a number of other influential social media sites and platforms which have a great deal of influence. Many free and paid for evaluation tools exist, and it is ultimately up to individual organisations to decide which approach works best. A selection of these tools are listed overleaf.

When assessing the usefulness of different tools, we recommend considering the following.

- Credibility of the author – an author who has high credibility could for example be someone who has a large audience of followers in Twitter, or a lot of ‘friends’ on Facebook. What these people say is more likely to be seen by others and subsequently re-posted and re-Tweeted. Do the evaluation tools measure credibility?
- The tone of the message – ideally this should be categorised into positive, neutral or negative (like with our traditional media evaluation). Do the tools measure tone of message?
- The tone of the comments and debate – this can help establish if the discussion will continue or is a threat to the organisation. A serious initial post can be quickly dampened by other people responding in a lighthearted way. However, if it is gathering a serious response then this starts to turn the debate into a potential campaign and something you need to be aware of and address.



Other useful social media evaluation tools

Some other sites worth checking for social media evaluation:

www.blogpulse.com

www.samepoint.com

http://addictomatic.com/

www.socialmention.com

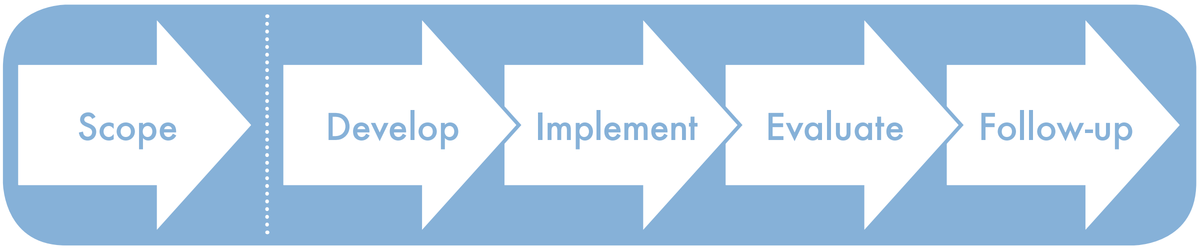
4. Conclusions

We hope you have found this report useful. It is a brief tour of what we do and we would welcome feedback on whether you think it is the right approach or if it could be improved. This field is constantly changing and no-one should claim to know all the answers or offer an off-the-shelf approach to evaluation. What is true for everyone is that evaluation is only as strong as how focused the organisation is. Unless there is strong and clear leadership on what the organisation, and therefore communications, needs to achieve then you might as well just count the number of press releases you send out. Good evaluation can help motivate organisations to have a clearer set of objectives as they realise that their fate is in their own hands. Things also change. If you base your communications on what has worked historically, or what you think has worked, then you are probably wrong or at the very least have not fine tuned your approach to current circumstances. Everyone can improve the communications they do through good evaluation.

Appendix A: Total Process Planning

Total Process Planning

French, Blair Stevens 2005



Total Process Planning (TPP) provides a practical framework within which the range of tasks involved in developing and delivering effective behavioural programmes (or campaigns or interventions) can be effectively planned and managed.

Each stage involves a range of key tasks, described as ‘Key Task Areas’.

Social marketing can be undertaken in a short, medium or longer term time frame. Ideally a longer term approach should be adopted, since many of the desired behavioural outcomes are unlikely to be achieved by short term initiatives.

In short the TPP framework consist of:

1. **5 stages** – deliberately intended to be distinct and sequential
2. Various **task areas** within each **stage** – which are rarely sequential.

While the five main stages are designed to be sequential, the task areas involved in each stage are rarely sequential and require specific tailoring to the relevant context, resources and time available.

Appendix B: Barcelona Principles

At the second European Summit on Development, held in Barcelona in June 2010, the Barcelona Measurement Principles were developed. There are seven key principles:

Importance of goal setting and measurement

- Goal-setting and measurement are fundamental aspects of any public relations program
- Goals should be as quantitative as possible and address who, what, when and how much the PR program is intended to affect
- Measurement should be holistic, including the measurement of traditional and social media, changes in awareness amongst key stakeholders, comprehension, attitude, and behaviour as applicable; and affect on business results.

Measuring the effect on outcomes is preferred to measuring outputs

- Outcomes include shifts in awareness, comprehension, attitudes and behaviours. These should be measured as oppose to simply outputs, such as column inches or whether or not a press release makes it into a target publication.
- Measuring outcomes should be tailored to the objectives of the PR activities. Quantitative measures such as benchmarks and tracking surveys are preferable. Qualitative methods can also be used to supplement quantitative measures.
- Standard best practices, for example sample and survey design should be applied for total transparency in any approaches used.

The effect on business results can and should be measured where possible

- To measure business results from consumer or brand marketing, models that determine the effects of the quantity and quality of PR outputs on sales or other business metrics, while accounting for other variables, are a preferred choice. In summary, communications professionals need to develop market mix models which can measure a range of different variables.

Media measurement requires quantity and quality

- Overall clip counts and impressions are meaningless on their own. Media measurement, whether in traditional or online channels should account for impressions amongst the stakeholder or audience, and the quality of the coverage.
- To measure the quality of coverage, tone, relevance to the intended audience, message delivery, and inclusion of a spokesperson (in the case of the council, a senior officer or member), should all be taken into account. Quality can be negative, positive or neutral.

AVEs are not the value of public relations

- Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) do not measure the value of public relations and do not inform future activity; they measure the cost of media space and are rejected as a concept to value public relations
- Multipliers intended to reflect a greater media cost for earned versus paid media should never be applied unless proven to exist in the specific case.

Social media can and should be measured

- Social media should be seen as a discipline, not simply a tool. There is no single metric for measuring social media.
- Organisations need to have clearly defined goals and outcomes for social media.
- Media content analysis should be complemented by website analytics, sales and CRM data, survey data and other methods.
- The same principles applied to traditional media should be applied whereby quality and quantity are both measured.
- Measurement must focus on "conversation" and "communities", not just "coverage".
- Understanding reach and influence is important, but existing sources are not accessible, transparent or consistent enough to be reliable; experimentation and testing are key to success.

Transparency and replicability are paramount to sound measurement

- For any media measurement, the source of content, along with criteria used for assessment should be made clear. The analysis methodology should also be clearly stated, for example human or automated, tone scale, reach to target, content analysis parameters.
- Any surveys used should have methodology and sample size clearly stated, and methods for statistical reliability should be referred to.

Appendix C: The Albert Model

Westminster have developed a mathematical tool to enable realistic targeting for a number of campaigns. ALBERT has been incorporated into our planning process, using an automated spreadsheet with survey data, so we instantly know the effect of targeting specific groups or areas.

ALBERT is a practical model that enables Westminster to pre-determine the amount of people to target and where to find them. It is a mathematical model based on conversion rates, so we can predict the outcome of any campaign at a given conversion rate. The model itself was essentially a variation of a percentage rate.

$$\textbf{Predicted result} = \frac{\textbf{Number of people satisfied before campaign + extra people satisfied after campaign}}{\textbf{Number of people in Westminster}}$$

In mathematical terms, the model is represented this as follows:

T = number of people in target group
B = number of people in Borough
C = conversion rate

S_t = Satisfaction of target group
S_b = Satisfaction of Borough
S_{tb} = Target satisfaction rate for borough

$$S_{tb} = \frac{((T \times (1 - S_t) \times C) + (S_b \times B))}{B}$$

Once finalised this had an immediate application, as it told us that in targeting terms, there were elements we had control over and therefore only three ways to improve campaign results.

- Targeting groups with higher levels of non-satisfaction
- Targeting more people
- Increasing the conversion rate through targeting people for whom the message was most relevant or else using the medium most relevant to them

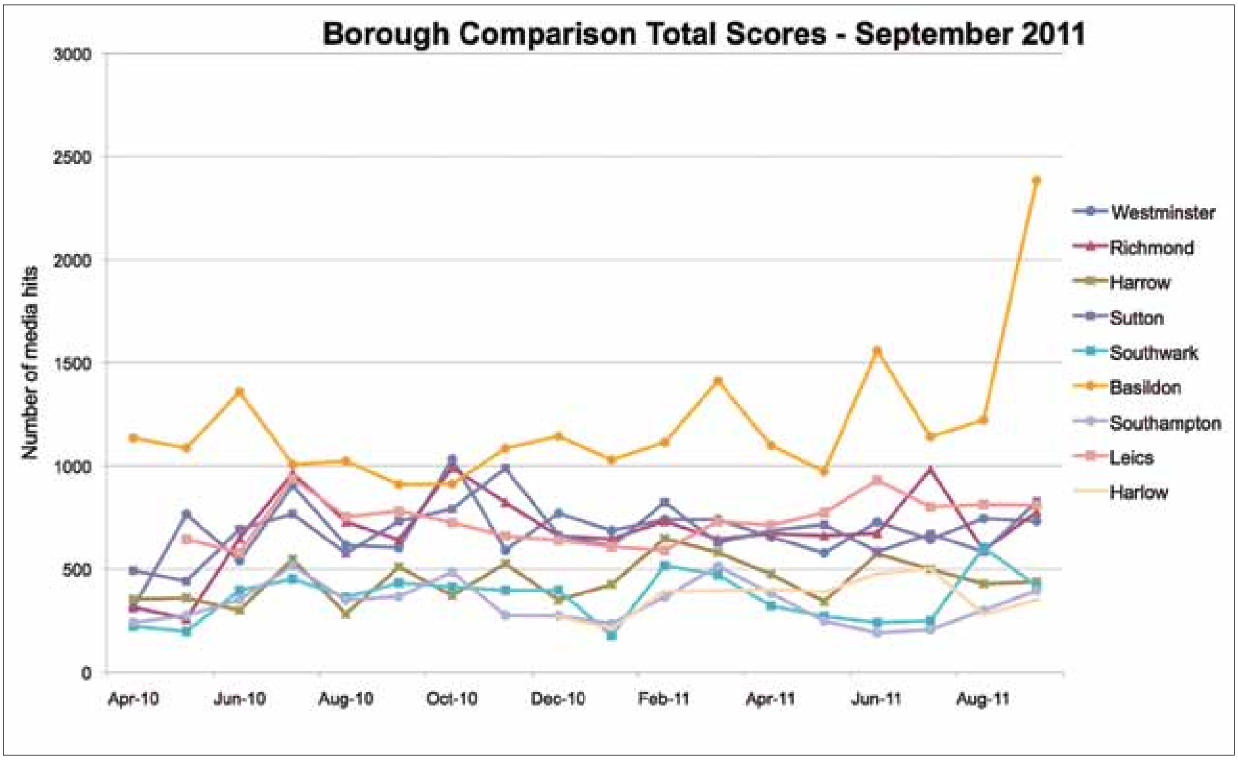
Additionally, by rearranging the terms of the equation, we could compute:

- The number of people to target to achieve a given conversion rate
- The conversion rate required to hit any given target

The model allows us to predict the impact of a campaign on a relevant metric. As budgets grow ever tighter, we are increasingly using it for cost-benefit analysis as we scale back activity, to make sure we only concentrate on those areas and activities that have the greatest effect.

Appendix D: Media scores

Comparisons scores across different authorities.



Appendix E: Campaign measures and targets

These are revised on a yearly basis and provide measurable target and evaluation measures which are outcome based.

Audience	Measure/target	Evaluation
Council tax payers and their families	% of residents who say the council offers good value for money • Target: 60%	Current value for money rating: 68%
Older people	% of those over 60 who say the council does enough for people like me • Target: 64%	Current proportion of older residents who feel the council does enough for people like them: 70%
Parents and guardians	% of parents informed about services and benefits • Target: 66%	Current proportion of parents who feel informed about services and benefits: 66%
Young people	% of 16 – 19 year olds satisfied with youth clubs and other facilities • Target: 45%	Current proportion of 16 – 19 year olds satisfied with youth clubs and other facilities: 40%
Healthier people	% of residents who agree the council encourages residents to live a healthy lifestyle • Target: 57%	Current proportion of residents who agree the council encourages residents to live a healthy lifestyle: 62%
Motorists	% of motorists who say they understand the parking rules • Target: 76%	Current proportion of motorists who say they understand the parking rules: 76%
Engaged citizens	% of residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their area • Target: 44%	Current proportion of residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their area: 44%

Audience	Measure/target	Evaluation
Tenants and lessees	% of council tenants/lessees satisfied with the council • Target: 80%	Current proportion of council tenants/lessees satisfied with the council: 81%
Adult social care users including vulnerable adults	% of those with a disability satisfied with services for those with a disability • Target: 49%	Current proportion of those with a disability satisfied with services for those with a disability: 41%
Planning community	% of residents satisfied with planning service • Target: 36%	Current proportion of residents satisfied with planning services: 31% Approximate 5% increase in planning applications over the last 9 months.
Staff	% of staff advocates of the council as an employer • Target: 45%	Current proportion of staff advocates of the council as an employer: 36%
Key influencers	% of community leaders who feel involved in the decisions the council takes • Target: 36%	Current proportion of community leaders who feel involved in the decisions the council takes: 29%
Visitors	West End spend • Target: £5.82 billion	Increased West End spend
Businesses	Increase perception that Westminster is a good place to do business by 2 – 4% from our April 2010 score Achieve a net increase in commercial waste revenue of £700,000	78% of businesses feel Westminster is a good place to do business. Survey to benchmark performance was conducted in September. Commercial waste revenue target of £11.4 million met.
Unemployed	Assist 500 people into work and 2,000 into training through the Westminster Works programme by March 2011	309 people helped into work and 2,485 enrolled on the Westminster Works programme

Appendix F: Contact Details

This report was written by the Research and Customer Insight team at Westminster City Council. We seek to understand the reasons behind public opinion, rather than just benchmark and report it, and actively drive communications and council activities by using insight from our research. The team has won a number of awards; the AMEC Award for best in-house public sector evaluation programme in 2010, the PR Week Award for Evaluation in 2010, the Government Business Awards for market research in 2009 and 2010, the CIPR Research and Evaluation Award in 2008 and 2009 and the European Excellence Award for Evaluation in 2007. They have also been finalists in the Market Research Society award for public sector research in 2008 and 2011.

The team are often seconded to the council's trading company Westco. This enables them to share the very best of what they do for Westminster with other councils. As Westco Research they have carried out research in a number of authorities across the country including a third of London Boroughs. This has ranged from rolling out versions of Westminster's Reputation Tracker survey, to focus groups and consultation events.

About the authors

The authors have sought to ensure that this report is an accurate reflection of the research that has taken place. It is therefore important that the findings continue to be accurately reflected in any future internal or external publication. If you wish to reference the findings from this report please contact the authors to ensure that your interpretation is correct.

Will Harrison is a Senior Customer Insight Officer at Westminster City Council. Will joined the team in 2009 and has worked on a range of research projects, both for the council and for other local authorities, through the council's consultancy arm, Westco. He has developed expertise in behaviour change, and is currently working with the communications department to improve usage of the website through targeted and relevant communications. His customer insight experience spans several sectors, having previously had roles at market research firm Harris Interactive and Dunnhumby, the firm behind Tesco's successful clubcard.

Neil Wholey is Head of Research and Customer Insight at Westminster City Council. He joined the council in 2006 and has concentrated on developing insights from research findings which can then feed into the decision-making process of the council. He combines market research expertise (he worked for over six years at Ipsos MORI on public sector research and was Head of e-Government research) with an understanding of local government from a client-side perspective. Neil is a Full Member of the Market Research Society and a member of the LARIA Council – an organisation which represents local authority researchers. He also Chairs a new think tank, LGinsight, that will act as a sister organisation to LGcommunications. LGinsight will develop new research insights by tapping into knowledge and skills of researchers across the local government sector. You can follow Neil on Twitter @neilwholey

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City of Westminster

Evaluating Your Communication Tools, What Works,What Doesn’t?
The Westminster Model, October 2011