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Tackling the New Rules for So- cial Media and Measurement: Critical Book Review

Rebecca Cohen

McMaster University

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Abstract

This is a critical review of two books: *The new rules of marketing and public relations* (3rd ed.) (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 318 pages) and *Measure what matters: Online tools for understanding customers, social media, engagement and key relationships* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 222 pages). The first book provides excellent advice on social media tactics and strategies. The latter expresses the importance of measurement and demonstrates how to effectively complete this task across a variety of platforms. The reviewer examines how the advice of both authors is beneficial to the daily role of the public relations practitioner.

Keywords: David Meerman-Scott, Katie Delahaye Paine, social media, measurement, public relations

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Rebecca Cohen
McMaster University

Since the early 1990s, the Internet has transformed the way both businesses and consumers engage, interact, research, and make purchases. Many companies, both large and small, are often unsure of how to maximize their presence online and effectively measure their efforts. Two books provide meaningful insights and experiences to achieve these aims; *The new rules of marketing and public relations* by David Meerman-Scott and *Measure what matters: Online tools for understanding customers, social media, engagement and key relationships* by Katie Delahaye Paine. David Meerman-Scott is the bestselling author of eight books on topics such as marketing, leadership, and social media. Katie Delahaye Paine is an accomplished author whose books focus on the measurement of both traditional and social media.

Although the two books discuss very different topics, the reviewer feels they belong together, as it is important to understand what constitutes effective public relations tactics and strategies as well as how to properly measure them. Scott writes a handbook with step-by-step instructions, guiding the reader through the basics of social media. His book is particularly useful for young public relations practitioners, who may not be technologically savvy. Due to the fact that Scott's book focuses on the day-to-day tactics and strategies of social media,

this book is better suited to junior practitioners rather than senior managers. Although this book appears to be targeted at people in public relations and marketing, this book may also benefit small business owners and mommy bloggers. Scott's book is broken down into themed topics and addresses relevant issues, questions, and problems that new or inexperienced social media users face today. Themes discussed in the book include content-rich websites, the importance of conducting real-time efforts, blogging, mobile marketing, and podcasting.

The common perception of many measurement books is that they are dry and disinteresting. This was not the case with Paine's book. It was relevant, provided applicable tools and examples, and kept the reader wanting to learn more about measurement. Paine's book is a useful read for public relations practitioners at all levels. It discusses measurement from simple concepts, such as counting attendees at events, to more advanced measures, such as calculating cost per message communicated. Certain sections are more applicable to early practitioners, while others are more relevant to seasoned experts. Measurement is critical regardless of one's field, making this book suitable to people in advertising, marketing, and business. Paine's book is also applicable to public relations practitioners working in a variety of sectors. The book includes problems encountered by those in the non-profit and education sectors and offers practical suggestions to overcome them.

Both books contain key take-aways that are beneficial to practitioners at all levels. One of the key messages in Scott's book is that traditional tactics and strategies from the real world do not translate into the social media world. Scott explains that social media is not a space to sell, market, or advertise but rather a space to engage and interact. Although this may seem obvious to the seasoned communicator, it may provide a valuable lesson for young public relations practitioners and people with marketing and advertising backgrounds. Companies such as Hermes and Kraft are excellent examples of online spaces that provide engagement and interaction instead

of focusing on selling and promoting products. Hermes consumers have several blogs where brand ambassadors describe admiration for their products (MangoBluete, 2013). Hermes does not interfere in these virtual worlds, allowing consumers to engage and interact with each other (MangoBluete, 2013). Another strong example is Kraft Foods, as their website is focused on recipes, tips, and cooking videos (Kraft Foods, 2013).

Scott explains that social media has provided platforms for people to learn, share, and connect. Although social media is an excellent tool for businesses to use, it can be difficult to measure. Paine expresses the difficulty of measuring social media and explains that it is not simply about 'likes,' 'retweets,' or how many 'friends' one has. Paine also advises readers not to rely on software to analyze social media content, as computers cannot recognize humorous or sarcastic posts. She highlights the fact that companies do not always measure what they intend to measure, an observation she makes frequently throughout the book. Paine provides an example of a company wanting to recruit more employees via social media. She explains that having more followers on Twitter is irrelevant to the goal; attracting more qualified and talent employees is the better topic to measure.

A key lesson from Scott's book is the importance of recognizing that an organization has multiple groups of stakeholders. Scott uses the example of a university having multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, alumni, neighbors, and employees. Scott's message is simple and clear: organizations cannot treat these groups as if they are the same. Scott emphasizes that it is important to engage with each group of stakeholders differently. Scott highlights companies like Netflix and Amazon, which personalize the customer experience by recommending products that each individual might like. Scott recommends personalizing websites, blogs, and key messages to each unique stakeholder group.

Although both Scott and Paine's book are focused on public relations, only Paine incorporates public relations research and theory, including Grunig's Relationship Survey and

Grunig's Excellence Study. Both the survey and study are constant themes woven into the book. Paine uses the survey to show the importance of measuring relationships through items such as trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and communal relationships. She leaves her readers with the take-away message of measuring relationships at every opportunity.

Another critical take-away lesson of Paine's book is return on investment, something that she suggests is always extremely difficult to show but demanded by management. Paine explains how to calculate metrics such as cost per message communicated, cost per customer acquired, cost per qualified lead, cost per minute spent with prospective customer, cost per attendee, and return on investment of a website. The reviewer finds this the most valuable lesson from Paine's book, as showing return on investment is one of the greatest challenges the public relations field faces today.

Paine's book addresses obstacles that many practitioners face on a day-to-day basis and provides examples of how and why it is important for the practitioner to overcome them. It is often difficult to acquire budgets to measure public relations activities and often the data becomes quickly outdated. Paine highlights the importance of always having fresh data and measuring results over time in order to look at trends rather than point-in-time assessments.

Scott offers readers an unfamiliar yet valuable perspective on how to embrace citizen journalists and bloggers. Scott provides the example of the 2008 Obama campaign, which earned vast amounts of online coverage due to the engagement of bloggers by his team. Scott explains that formal credentials and portfolios are a thing of the past. He suggests reaching out to niche bloggers as well as bloggers who have large readerships, and to treat bloggers as equals to professional journalists. Although many public relations agencies fail to reach out to bloggers, this strategy is very useful and particularly important as more and more readers shift away from printed publications.

These two well-written books provide tremendous value to the public relations practitioner. As social media advances, it is important for every person in the field to understand effective strategies and tactics for the various platforms as well as how to effectively measure activity on each one. Paine and Scott provide relevant and noteworthy examples of best practices that should be used by all practitioners.

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