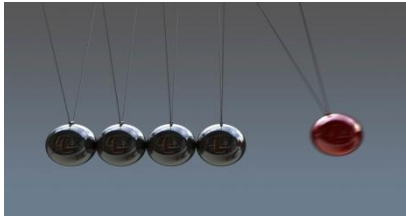




## A Practical Guide to Delivering on Trainer Metrics Matter™



The Dot Bomb era is still taking a toll, not only on clients and sales prospects, but also on related industries - including the analyst and publishing communities. The U.S. recession starting in 2008 has begun a chain reaction in the publishing communities - strong publishing houses are dramatically reducing reporting staff. The effects of this downsizing trend are now reaching around the world.

- Timing is also critical for the announcement: Asset announcements scheduled around holidays, or when leading vendors habitually make announcements, and announcements released around tradeshows typically result in weaker coverage.
- Before forecasting, consider whether there is adequate staff coverage at your target publications/outlets, and if the timing supports strong coverage for the industry/topic to ensure your announcement doesn't get lost in the noise.
- Consider the opportunity to pre-brief reporters and bloggers to increase your chances for more coverage.
- Ask the following questions before forecasting an asset:
  - Can I package this news so that it can be covered (even in excerpts) without an individual interview?
  - Will an editor take a briefing on this because of the critical / timely / or "wow" factor of the asset?
  - Will news release postings be important coverage for this client?
  - Can I get the blogger community (which is a bit more recession proof) to start a groundswell about this asset?
  - Does this announcement coincide with other key industry events or anticipated national or international news that could over-tax an already short-handed target group?
  - Can I offer a video that requires fewer individual interactions?

### **The Debate: Is it the relationship with a reporter or is it the strength of the pitch?**

Trainer contends it is both the relationship with a reporter and the strength of the pitch: sometimes simply having a history of delivering quality to the reporter or analyst will garner interest. And of course, strong pitches also succeed at garnering attention.

- Analyst relationships can assist a client in make inroads faster: by knowing their "rules of engagement" and services offered, they can expedite relationships and client support.

- While having a relationship with a media entity can make coverage more likely, no journalist can guarantee coverage unless they are offering to post on a private blog.
- A crucial element of forecasting is counting those you know will be interested in your news, and those that are of interest to your client.
- Ask the following questions before forecasting an asset:
  - Does my target list contain a large group of “known” entities?
  - Among them, is there a history of interest in this type of asset?
  - Are any of them writing a column or series of stories about this type of company, products, customer problems, etc.?
  - What is my track record of converting contacts into ink?
  - What have they told you about internal business objectives?
  - Can you package this story or opportunity into a format that can support a contact’s needs? (E.g. contributed article, power point, traditional interview, video, etc.)

### **Company Reputation, History and Current Conditions**

- Another vital aspect of accurate forecasting is the factoring of current events, and the client’s reputation and history (and how those factors have impacted previous announcements). Rarely can an announcement release in isolation of current events, or with the luxury of absence of legacy.
- Forecasting results coverage for a known entity can be considerably easier than a new start-up: researching past announcements and factoring in current events will increase the accuracy of forecasts.
- Ask the following questions before forecasting an asset:
  - Is the company embroiled in controversy?
  - If they are traded on the public markets, is their stock doing well?
  - Are the executives embroiled in controversy?
  - Does the company have a history of delivering on its promises?
  - Does it have a strong customer following?
  - Is it considered a “blue chip” company?
  - Is it considered an innovator, leader, or laggard?
  - If the company is a leader, what kind of leadership does the company exhibit (product innovation, operational excellence, or customer intimacy)?

### **Forecasting Speaking Opportunities**

- Speaking opportunities are particularly tricky to project and extreme caution is suggested when forecasting for them, as the state of the conference industry is relatively precarious: attendance and the composition of the audience can vary wildly from year-to-year.
- A clear understanding of the client’s business objectives for conferences (e.g. creating an image or generating leads) will help you in determining what conferences to target and pitch.
- Ask the following questions before forecasting speaking:
  - Does the conference require an investment to attain a speaking slot?
  - Are there panel moderators that make it possible for you to “pitch” an abstract without running through conference bureaucracy?

- Does the conference require speakers to be customers? If so, does your client have customers willing to travel and speak on the client's behalf?
- What are the levels of speakers permitted at the conference (e.g. CIO level, technical only, etc.)?

### **The Client is King**

Borrowing from the phrase "all money is not green," Trainer contends: "all ink is not interesting to all clients." Simply put, ensure that forecasts and coverage support the client's business goals and expectations.

- Delivering coverage in unwanted venues is a losing proposition. The client becomes skeptical about forecasts that don't "move the needle," and the agency can become burned out on time-consuming and fruitless labor.
- Ask the following questions before forecasting an asset:
  - What are the client's specific business objectives?
  - Will they value coverage that doesn't speak to their target business audience for the sake of "buzz?"
  - Are there publications, blogs and analyst research they prefer over others?
  - Have they specifically steered you away from reporters, publications or research firms that are not helpful or useful to accomplishing their business goals?
  - Have you presented and agreed upon a media list with the client?
  - Can you justify an ROI with the coverage toward a business goal?
- **Exercise: Evaluating the News for Forecasting**  
*Example News Assets* News: Little-known public company is making a 2.0 announcement of a management product that substantially creates new opportunities for green IT.
  - Competition: HP, IBM, CA
  - Industry Dynamics: Highly competitive - the big boys are playing!
  - Hype Cycle: At its height - all media cover green now.
  - Client Resources: One spokesperson that is travelling extensively, and one customer willing to be quoted in the press release and take up to two media interviews.
  - Agency Resources: Dedicated team available to work the announcement.
  - Publishing Industry Status: In chaos, a major IT publication laid off all but one reporter.
  - Company Reputation & History: Not well known.
  - Relationships: 8 known well.
  - Appropriate Targets: 22

<b>Scoring Code</b>		
	1	poor
	2	average
	3	very good
<b>Appropriate Targets</b>		Count possible outlets
<b>Relationships</b>		Count solid relationships where staff can predict interest

Factor	Score	# of Targets	
Competition	3		
Industry Dynamics / Forecast	3		
Hype Cycle	3		
Client Resources	2		
Agency Resources	3		
Publishing Industry Status	1		
Company Reputation & History	1		
Relationships		8	
Appropriate Targets		22	
<b>Actual Coverage Forecast</b>		15	
<b>6 Features / 9 Briefs</b>			

**Final Thoughts on “Do’s and Don’ts with Forecasting”**

- The key to forecasting is to remember that you are not forecasting specific reporters or publications - you are forecasting classes of publications: blogs, business, industry and analyst coverage, as well as the quantity (a feature versus a brief mention) and tone of the coverage.
- Never forecast an article based on a friendship you have with an editor or analyst – it cheapens the coverage and often backfires. Ultimately, the merit of the asset is what dictates the quality of coverage.
- Don’t over estimate. Utilize the filter of considerations outlined in this document to develop your forecast, and then reduce it by 10 -20% as a sort of “fudge factor” to ensure you are accurately setting client expectations.
- Develop a contingency agreement with every client should the unexpected happen: a news leak, a slip or dilution of an expected asset, or a national disaster.