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**Measuring the Organizations:  
A Fresh Perspective on Online Research**

Katie Delahaye Paine, *Measure What Matters:  
Online Tools for Understanding Customers, Social Media,  
Engagement, and Key Relationships*  
(Wiley, 2011)

Adina ALDEA \*

“We talk about the quality of product and service. What about the quality of our relationships and the quality of our communications and the quality of our promises to each other?” (Max de Pree)

We are now a couple of years into the Web 2.0 era, the era of social networking, blogging, twittering and wikis, the era of collective intelligence. The Internet transformed Marshall McLuhan’s Terra in a new type of community which is defined by a more pronounced virtualisation. In this context, accessibility and interactivity plays the most important role, the common man has at his hand all sorts of means to inform, but also to control what he consumes, transforming himself into an entity actively involved in collecting, selecting and disseminating information. Beyond the specific features of the planetary society, the importance of the role played by the individual and the changes inflicted upon him, positioned him in the core of the free flow of information. In this regard, we’d like to point out the work entitled *Measure What Matters: Online Tools For Understanding Customers, Social Media, Engagement, and Key Relationships* whose primary goal is to analyze the way in which, in this context, companies are managing online relationships.

*Measure What Matters: Online Tools For Understanding Customers, Social Media, Engagement, and Key Relationships*, Katie Delahaye Paine’s new book, was launched in the month of March, last year, being in fact an update of the paper entitled *Measuring Public Relationships*, which was published in December 2007. As opposed to the

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\* Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza” Iași.

earlier book, in *Measure What Matters* Katie Delahaye Paine expanded material on online measurement and social media.

Based on the question “What about the quality of our relationships?”, *Measure What Matters* differs from most books on social media, approaching new social media channels from the perspective of the importance of relationships. As the title suggests, this book refers to online tools which help us measure what matters for an organization in the online field. And, according to Katie Paine, measuring what matters means measuring relationships.

The Internet, and specifically social media, changed the way in which we interact and, implicitly, the way we communicate as individuals but also as companies. Therefore, in a world full of tweets and re-tweets, likes and shares, updates, blogs and posts, the social, corporate and political landscape is redefined. In this sense, one of the most visible changes regards the perception of time. In the social media world, time gained a whole new dimension, one minute or, sometimes, even one second can make the difference between multiple ways in which a company could be perceived. In this context, “The notion that a PR person is someone who has to deal only with the press is just ... antiquated. A good PR person is focused on his or her relationships – be they local media, national bloggers, employees, or community organizers”.

All the actions of companies and PR persons are determined by relationships and the big problem that arises now is how to measure those millions of relationships that appear in the social media world. To speak of relationships and their importance in a world more electronic and less personal than ever sounds paradoxical, but the author is convinced of the fact that “the key to understanding corporate reputation is measuring the relationships that it is based on.”

In the book, devised in two parts, Paine accentuates the fact that establishing tangible objectives concerning sales and marketing, human resources, crisis management, website and social media, is a crucial component of any business strategy.

The first part, entitled “Not your father’s ruler”, is compiled by four chapters about the importance of relationships and the need to understand how they equate to success. First chapter, “You can now measure everything, but you won’t survive without the metrics that matter to your business”, is centered around the concept of stakeholders, this core set of key public with which we must interact and build relationships. The challenge is more serious as the programs and online PR strategies are influenced, on one hand, by the social media revolution,

and, on the other, by the current global recession. Therefore, companies are forced to rethink the PR strategies and at the same time to rethink the tools used to measure the impact on the stakeholders. When we speak of measurement, another thing that has to be mentioned is counting. Maybe it is interesting to point out that “counting just adds things up and gets a total”, while “measurement takes those totals, analyzes what they mean, and uses that meaning to improve business practices.”

During the same first part of the book, Paine emphasizes some of the challenges of effective measurement. One of the most important challenges is regarding the fact that “social media isn’t about the media, it’s about the community in which you do business”. In this context, the author identifies the ways that practitioners can get started with the measuring plan. Paine recommends going through seven steps for creating the perfect measurement program, and the key factor is the fact that each step must be accompanied with relevant methods, tools and vendors.

Even if Winston Churchill said that “The only statistics you can trust are those you falsified yourself”, in order to make it in a new era of conversation, first you have to listen to your customers and secondly, you have to use the right measurement tools. In this context, one of the questions raised by the author is this: “How to decide what tool is right for you?”. The answer can be found at the end of the first part of the book, in the fourth chapter, by identifying several measurement tools which may be used to fit the predetermined objectives.

The words of Chris Brogan , “The difference between PR and social media is that PR is about positioning, and social media is about becoming, being and improving.”, mark the beginning of the second part of the book, entitled “How to Measure What People Are Saying about You Online and Off”. Through the nine chapters we are told about the importance of measuring data across sales and marketing human resources, crisis management, website and social media.

Because “social media is turning the business world upside down”, companies must redefine PR, advertising, marketing, corporate communication, engagement and success and, finally, select the right measurement tool and analyze data. In social media, companies may measure focusing, mainly, on stakeholder groups, and, secondly, on the methods used to measure the relationships with those groups.

What is truly important however, beyond the discussion on relationships, remains the marketplace. There are several questions about it. What is your marketplace talking about? What matters to your business? If while being offline makes it difficult to answer exactly to these two questions, while online, listening to social media conversations

can be done with several tools, like: analytics programmes, Word Tracker, Google Alerts, SAS social media analytics, Cymfony etc. The following chapters provide useful guidelines in measuring the impact of events, sponsorships, relationships with different groups of stakeholders like local community, employees, partners, franchises.

The last two chapters, “Measurement for Nonprofits” and “Measure what matters in higher education”, bring forth a point of view regarding the way in which two distinct sectors are perceived; not only NGOs, but also institutions of higher education are viewed from the perspective of the importance of measuring relationships created via digital media. The last chapter brings a new perspective on social media, less common in this field: measuring relationships created via social media in higher education. This way the author suggests that the door of academia must be open to all of these changes, and when we speak of online PR and social media, institutions of higher learning “are being pressured to think more like businesses”.

The work that we comment on has some obvious merits in the field of social media and online PR. First of all, *Measure What Matters* compared to the previous book by the same author, *Measuring Public Relationships*, is an emphasis on social media in a business context. This book clarifies the idea that a large part of measuring, especially online, is about language, not numbers as we might have expected.

After you’ve read the book, you will find out a possible answer to one of most asked questions in the online realm: what’s the ROI of social media? Determining value is a complicated but a very useful process to all the companies, in every field of activity, because once you invest in social media you must have the right tools to measure the ROI.

With a relevant background in the public relations domain, working on both sides of the fence, for clients but also agencies, Katie Paine explains the procedures for measuring customers, relationships and social media reputation.

To write a book about social media you have to be a person with very good time management skills because in this field things change extremely fast and there is a high risk for the data you collected and outlined to become outdated. Katie Paine’s book, even though it was released in March 2011, contains relevant and up to date information. Although, I would dare say that Paine doesn’t talk about the changes of the semantic web on the tools of measurement, therefore her book would require further research on the metrics of the future.