

Demonstrating the Value of Communications

PublicRelay's
PR Attribution
Strategy





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Moving Communications to the Center of the Table

Introduction

Your sales and marketing teams arrive at board meetings with concrete KPIs.

This past quarter, they've made X number of sales and generated Y number of qualified leads. They have the data to prove it.

Now it's your turn. You explain your team's PR output over the quarter. You share the key metrics from your earned media coverage demonstrating how volumes, tone, and impressions all improved over the same period.

But something is missing. These days, your CEO expects data to demonstrate the direct impact of your work on business results. Not just media coverage.

So, how do you show your C-suite that your work directly influenced business outcomes?

With a human-augmented AI approach to media measurement, you can develop a **PR attribution** program that ties your work to business success with analytically solid data that your C-suite can relate to.



How Does PR Attribution Work?

PR attribution involves establishing a **data-based link** between your work and the business results you want to influence.

Identifying these links demonstrates that you've reached your target audience in a meaningful way.

In other words, they are the direct result of your work and the stepping-stone between your contribution and the desired business outcome.



Let's say your team's objective is to increase brand credibility among your target audience over the next quarter because it's associated with trial activations. You could push a PR campaign that promotes your key messages related to credibility (i.e., trust and expertise), and then evaluate changes in brand credibility by conducting reputation surveys at the start and end of that period. But how do you know any measured changes are the result of your work and not the work of marketing or advertising?

By measuring your company's **earned media coverage**.

With a media analytics program that measures metrics tied to your KPIs, you can generate data-driven insights into the **real** impact of your PR campaigns.

It sounds complicated, but our approach makes it simple.

Start With the Desired Business Outcomes

Work with your CEO to determine the company's priorities and how your team can fit into the broader business goals. But first, you must define the business outcomes you can realistically tie to PR outputs.

We know that setting such goals is not as clear-cut for PR as it is for marketing and sales. Some teams previously used AVEs to approximate marketing metrics, but most leaders now agree it's not an accurate evaluation of communications work. However, the trap many PR teams fall into is trying to assess their impact relying on the same metrics as the sales and marketing teams.

Though you can connect your work to some of the more **tangible KPIs**, many argue that the following business outcomes don't capture the full impact of communications on business success:

- Donations and sales (with limitations)
- Qualified leads
- Time spent on - and engagement with - the company website
- Resource downloads
- Service Trial Activations





The true value of communications lies in its power to facilitate cognitive shifts among your target audience. In other words, **PR outputs have the potential to influence brand attitudes, brand awareness, and even purchase intent.**

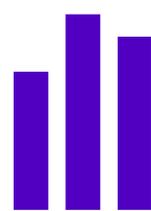
Some of the **intangible factors** influenced by PR outputs that research has linked to widely accepted indicators of business success are:

- Changes in brand perceptions/ attitudes
- Increased brand awareness
- Changes in purchase intent
- Greater employee satisfaction

You'll evaluate intangible outcomes with reputation surveys tailored to your goals. But to take full credit for the results, you must connect the dots between your work, your media insights, and the business outcomes.



Outputs



Outtakes



Outcomes

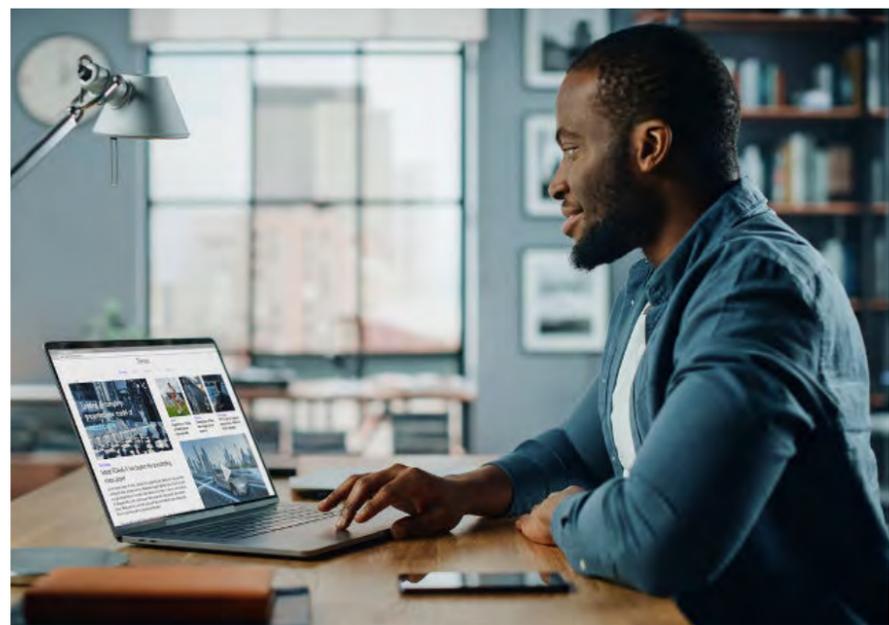
▼ Determine the Necessary Earned Media Coverage

What kind of earned media coverage will facilitate your desired business outcomes? And what are the metrics required to track your progress?

Media analytics are the key to having data that demonstrates precisely how your PR efforts influenced the business results, as reflected in your earned media coverage.

For Tangible Outcomes

For example, if your goal is to boost **lead generation** over the next quarter, then you need to **increase website traffic** among your target audience. Driving your audience to the website will increase their exposure to company marketing materials (e.g., landing pages, calls-to-action, forms, etc.) that can convert them into leads.



How do you attract your target audience to your company website? In addition to articles that backlink to your site, improving **brand awareness** among your audience will inevitably increase your website traffic. Because brand awareness fosters trust, creates an association, and builds brand equity, it will not only draw your audience to your website, but they will likely arrive with a positive brand attitude.

More importantly, **generating earned media coverage in priority outlets** or **by relevant influencers** will dramatically extend the reach of your messaging, boosting your brand awareness even further.

In this instance, your PR attribution media measurement program must track:

- Volume of coverage
- Tone of coverage
- Outlet reach
- Influencer data
- Key message penetration

Only measuring direct link clicks to your website won't fully capture the impact of PR on your web traffic. But, by providing evidence that your earned media coverage has raised your brand awareness, you can attribute increases in organic website traffic to your work as well.



For Intangible Outcomes

Alternatively, let's say your goal is to increase **brand credibility** (perceived trustworthiness and expertise) because research has shown that it impacts brand attitude, significantly influences audience choice, and is associated with engagement.

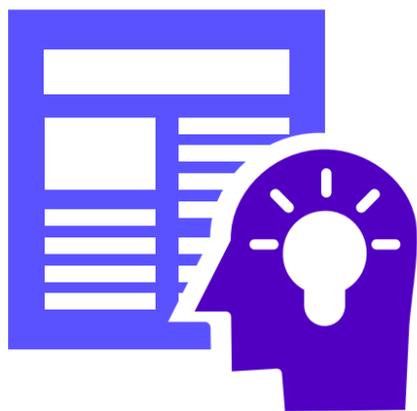
How can this be achieved through earned media?

- Coverage in priority or industry-recognized outlets fosters greater **trust**
- Coverage of your company's thought leadership improves perceptions of **expertise**
- Mentions of your company spokespeople and executives facilitate perceptions of **trustworthiness** and **expertise**



You can determine whether your outputs triggered **the right coverage** by tracking:

- Volume of coverage
- Tone of coverage
- Outlet reach
- Message pull-through/ key message alignment
- Reputational driver coverage



Reputational drivers track the dimensions of your corporate reputation, including governance (e.g., spokespeople and executives), and thought leadership (e.g., research and development, expert quotes, etc.).

Effective reputational driver tracking goes beyond identifying keywords associated with various drivers (e.g., financial performance) – it requires analyzing content for **concepts and ideas** (e.g., ethics, trust, or vision). Though fully automated tools can pinpoint keywords within a text, they can't accurately and reliably evaluate content for concepts or sentiment. Such a depth of analysis requires a human understanding of nuance, context, and even perspective.

Providing analytics that show **how** your work generated earned media associated with brand credibility will support your claim to any changes to your company's reputation over the same period.

▼ Plan the PR

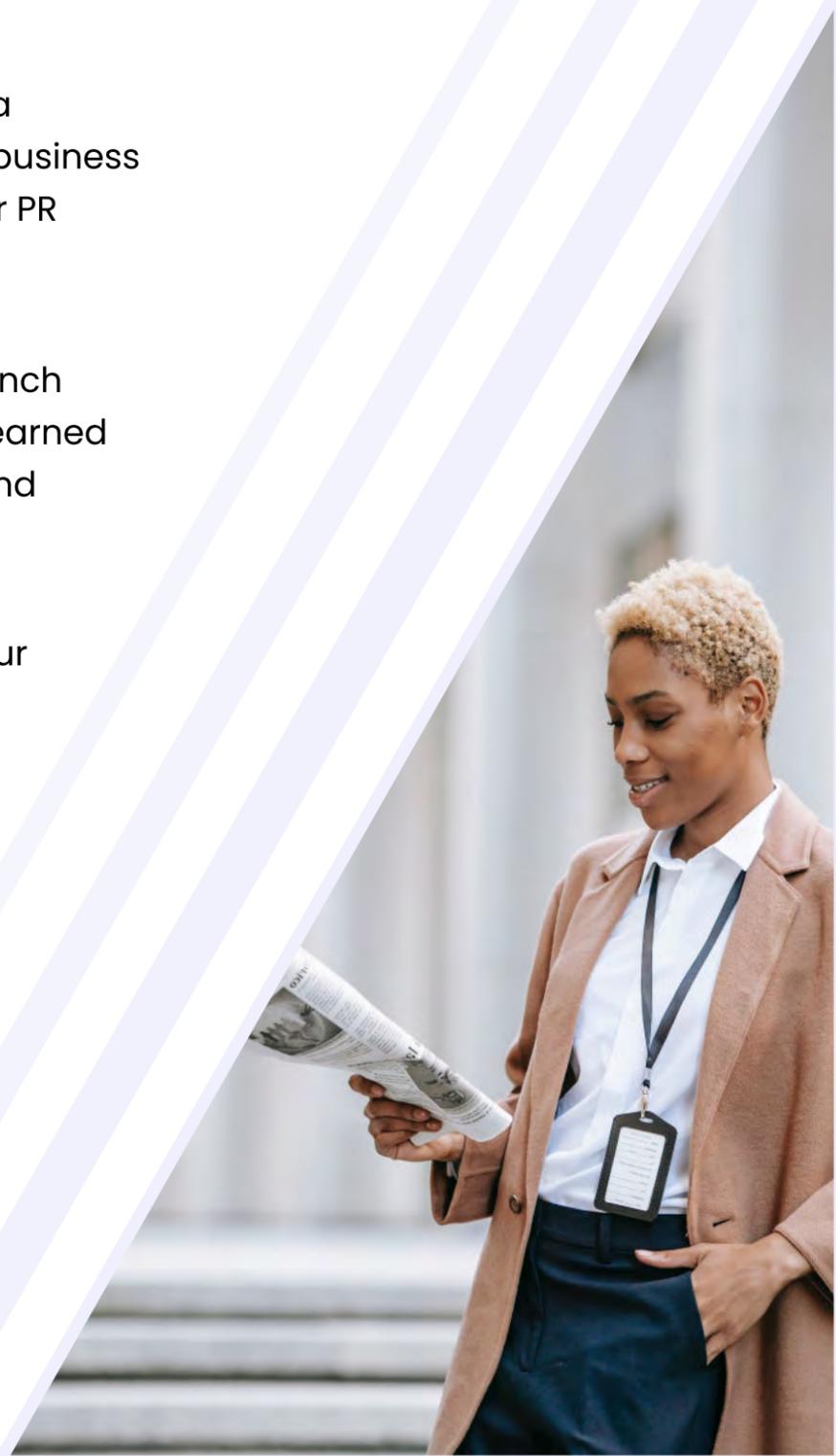
Outputs that will Generate the Right Earned Media

Once you've identified the earned media coverage that will lead to your broader business goals, you can create a strategy for your PR output.

In the latter example, your team can launch campaigns focused on generating the earned media coverage connected with trust and perceptions of expertise, as well as:

- Promote press releases detailing your company's latest research and development initiatives
- Reach out to influencers and journalists at key publications
- Secure by-lines for your company executives in industry-recognized publications

You get the idea.



Proving Impact

Once you've developed your PR attribution strategy, the rest is straightforward:

- 1 Take a baseline measurement of your desired business outcomes.
- 2 Record all your PR output.
- 3 Use media analytics to measure the effects of your work on earned coverage.
- 4 Evaluate your end results with reputational surveys.
- 5 Use correlation analysis to establish the data-based links between your earned media coverage and measured changes in your reputation.

A well-planned attribution strategy will not only illuminate the impact of your PR outputs on crucial aspects of business success, but it will also help your team to assess the effectiveness of your campaigns. With attribution retrospectives, your team can critique each campaign, determine what worked and what didn't, assess its impact on business objectives, and then use these insights to refine your next campaign.





Case Studies

The following are case studies of PublicRelay clients who have successfully tied PR outputs to business outcomes using our solution. The examples in the case studies that follow are based on industry-specific outcomes which can otherwise be tailored to your unique business goals.

Insurance Company

The Client

Our client is a multinational financial services leader that now operates in over 40 countries. The Fortune 100 company specializes in insurance and investment management with a mission of helping its customers to grow and protect their wealth.

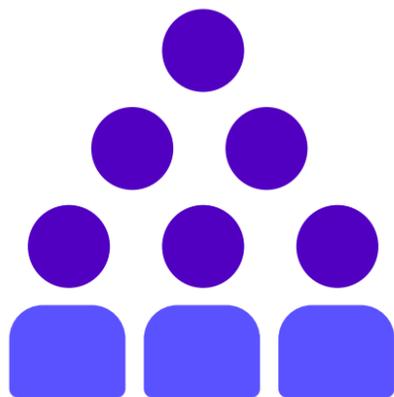
The Challenge

For years, the financial services industry has tried to reach affluent Black consumers by promoting CSR and DEI efforts.

It wasn't working.

A study conducted over two years revealed a **decline in brand health among Black Adults** not just for the company, but across the entire financial services industry.

Company leaders suspected that different messages may resonate more with affluent Black consumers, but what were they? And how could their PR team develop a data-driven strategy for reaching Black audiences going forward?



Our Solution

The company's PR team decided to use our **PR attribution strategy** to generate insights from the company's earned media coverage that would:

- Uncover the themes and messages that have the greatest impact on brand perceptions among Black adults,
- Connect the dots between their work, their earned media coverage, and changes in brand health among Black audiences, and
- Inform a framework for developing data-driven approaches to reaching specific audiences in the future.

Results

Trust emerged as the aspect of brand health that mattered most in Black Adults' decision to become customers of a financial services company.

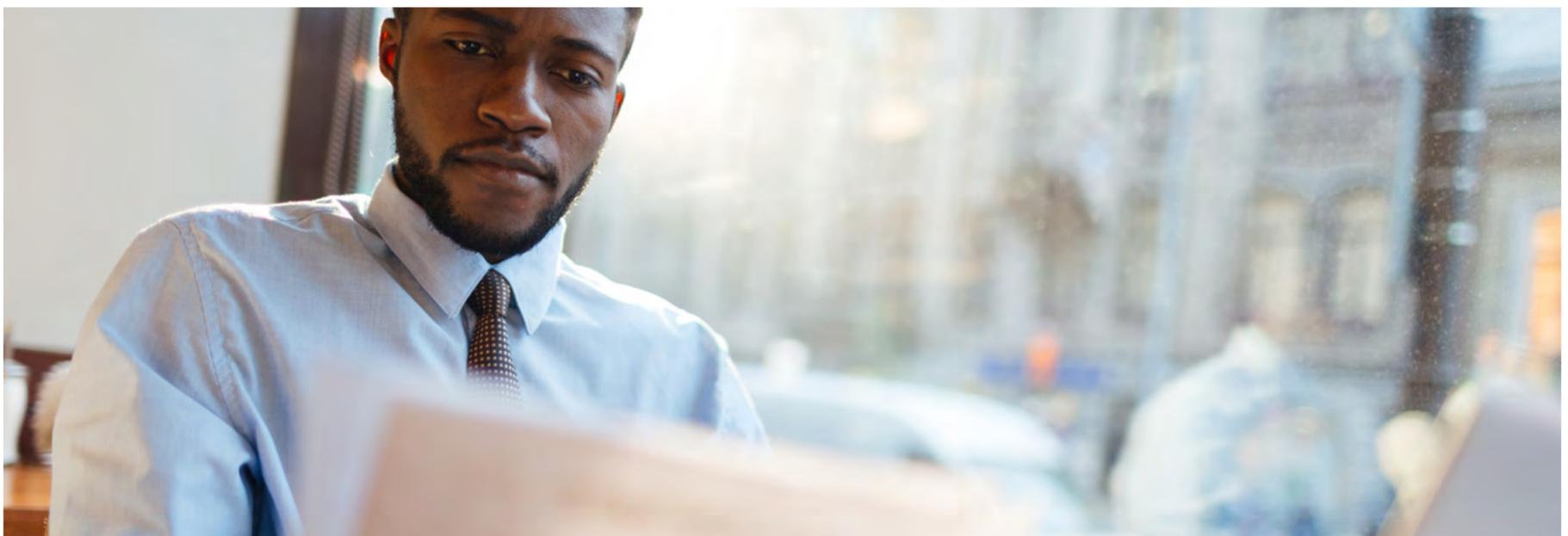
And, it turns out the company leaders were right: **Trust among affluent Black consumers was less impacted by CSR and DEI** and more affected by companies' business performance and thought leadership coverage.

The findings revealed that while Citizenship and CSR coverage could improve Favorability among highly invested Black Adults, it does not translate into Trust for that group. **Research coverage**, on the other hand, **correlated with Trust for both high-income and lower-income Black Adults.**

With these insights, the PR team was able to intelligently pivot its strategy and **maximize the impact of its initiative to target Black audiences.**

Key Takeaways

- PublicRelay's PR attribution strategy revealed that media coverage of the company's business performance and thought leadership had the greatest impact on brand perceptions among their target audience of affluent Black consumers.
- The team was able to incorporate PublicRelay's PR attribution strategy into their playbook for reaching specific audiences going forward.



Leading Non-Profit

The Client

Our client is a U.S. humanitarian organization that provides emergency assistance and disaster relief, including volunteer support, blood donation, and fundraising.

The Challenge

In 2020, the organization tasked its communications team with a tangible business goal: to boost the organization's total fiscal fundraising and blood collection over four months.

For this to work, the team needed to implement a strategy for:

- 1 Affecting **growth** in fundraising and blood collection using earned media, and
- 2 Demonstrating their role in achieving the results.

Our Solution

For the team to achieve their goals and prove their impact, we set them up with our **PR attribution strategy** to:

- Demonstrate their impact on **engagement** – the audience behavior most often associated with increased donations. In other words, the team wanted their earned media coverage to facilitate increased interactions with the organization via their website, mobile app, and volunteering,
- Establish their role in increasing **brand credibility** – the key dimension of brand health and reputation associated with audience engagement, and
- Pinpoint the **reputational drivers** that contribute to concepts associated with brand credibility within their earned media coverage, thereby enabling them to focus their messaging on the drivers with the most impact.



Using PublicRelay's human-augmented technology, the communications team received a highly accurate and nuanced analysis of the organization's earned media coverage during the four-month period.

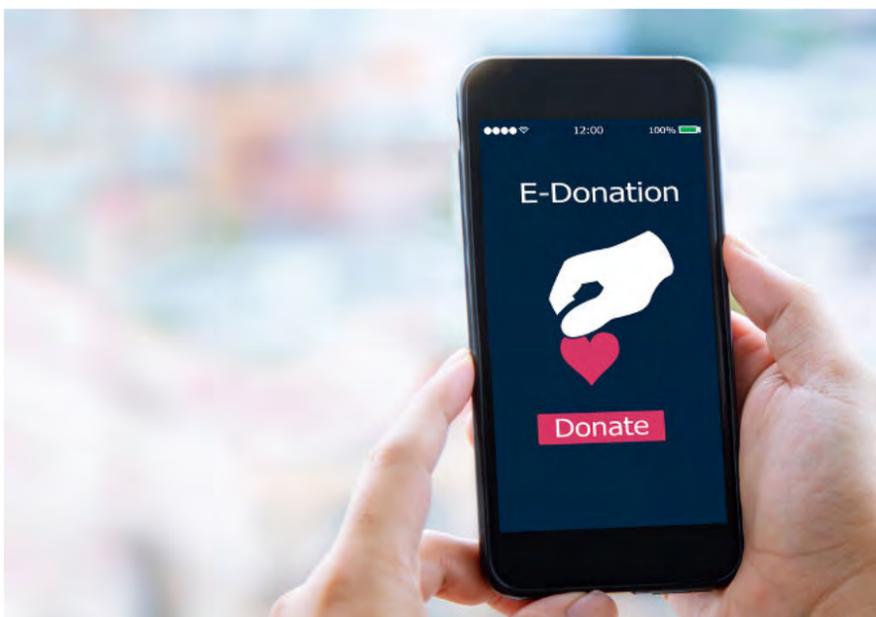
Results

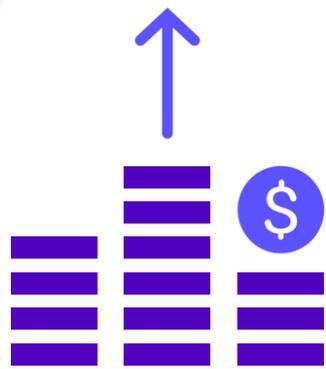
When interpreted alongside the organization's reputation survey results, measures of engagement, and total fiscal fundraising and blood donations, our insights revealed that:

- Earned media coverage in priority publications is positively correlated with **improved brand credibility** and **increased engagement** with the organization.
- Engagement stemming from the organization's earned media coverage can be directly attributed to **increased fundraising** during the period.
- Though blood donations could not be directly tied to the organization's earned media coverage in 100 priority publications, there is evidence to suggest that coverage in smaller local publications may have a greater influence on blood donations, performing 50x better than priority media on the blood services website.

With this approach, the PR team:

- 1 Achieved their business goal of **increasing total fundraising**,
- 2 Could present their CEO with **data-backed evidence** of their impact on the outcome, and
- 3 Attained **nuanced insight** into their earned media strategy that they could apply to future campaigns.





Key Takeaways

- PublicRelay's PR attribution strategy revealed that positive media coverage in priority publications can influence the organization's fundraising efforts.
- By tracking reputational drivers as a part of their media analytics program, the team had a meaningful dataset they could analyze against other data sources, such as reputational survey results, to expose the full impact of PR work.
- The team was able to use these insights to optimize their strategy and tie their PR efforts to the tangible business outcome of increased fundraising.

▼ Moving Communications to the Center of the Table

As a communicator, you know the value of your work. With a strategy built around measurement and proving impact, the rest of the C-suite will, too.

Demonstrating your value starts with reliable, high-quality data. Because understanding sentiment, concepts, and context are pivotal to assessing data-based links, even the most advanced AI tools need to be augmented with human insight.

Make sure you have the metrics you need to tie your PR efforts to overall business outcomes with a media measurement solution that guarantees accuracy with breakthrough technology and human expertise. When executed correctly, this can go beyond securing your seat at the table and place you in the middle of every brand conversation – at the center of the table.



Want to learn how you can use PublicRelay's PR Attribution Strategy to demonstrate your impact and expand your influence? Get in touch with our team at solutions@publicrelay.com today!