

Woolley weighs into PR measurement debate

MELBOURNE: Consultancy firm P3 has developed a measure that enables the public relations industry to demonstrate its worth, but turning marketers' heads is proving a tough battle.

The system, called P3PR, weights a story based on page placement, key messages, key audiences and length of time it appears in the marketplace.

P3 has begun promoting the measure among clients, but many are reluctant to turn their backs on the Advertising Value Equivalents (AVE) system, despite it being widely criticised by many industry leaders.

AVE, which calculates PR worth by multiplying media advertising rates by three, has been shunned by the Advertising Federation of Australia and the Public Relations Institute of Australia, both labelling the system as an artificial measure and inappropriate judge of PR value.

P3 founder Darren Woolley said he had an increasing number of clients wanting to measure the outcome of PR.

"There is a measure for all forms of media, but there's been nothing suitable for PR used across the board," Woolley said.

"At the moment, there is no system out there that compares apples with apples."

The P3PR system requires the client to work in conjunction

with the PR agency to set objectives and then for a media log to be kept and measured outcomes weighted against a score of 100.

Woolley said he had a battle on his hands selling the measure to clients, with some still relying on AVEs. The P3PR costs about \$10,000 to implement and run, he said. "I will persevere and try to change their way of thinking," he said.

CARMA, a Sydney-based organisation that specialises in analysing the measure of PR and corporate communication, has been one of the nation's most outspoken critics of the AVE system.

Dr Jim Macnamara, CEO of CARMA, said the two main challenges for PR are understanding and using new media, and objectively measuring the effectiveness of PR.

"Public relations can and should be objectively measured to evaluate its impact and effects," he said.

Macnamara, who last month launched a book on the industry, said while PR is often branded as "spin" or seen as buying journalists' lunch, it is an important management practice involving public communication using a range of both traditional and new media, including blogs and podcasting.