

Measurement is not the issue. Your objectives are.

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**An embellished account of a real-life meeting at sports and entertainment marketing agency, Levergy.*



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I found myself in a meeting that was taking place far too early in the morning. My head still groggy from a distinct lack of sleep. I grabbed a muffin, some coffee, and sat down to take notes of what was being presented so that I could refer back to them when my brain decided to join the party. On today's agenda - campaign measurement.

We got about five minutes into the presentation before it was mentioned for the first time. Not trusting my sleepy brain enough yet, I decided to keep a low profile in the back of the room. Approximately 30-seconds passed before it was mentioned again. "Not now Reece," I thought to myself. And then... a third time.

Despite the risks of not sounding coherent yet, I threw caution to the wind. I had to say something because I wasn't going to sit here for 90 minutes

discussing Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) – especially not when I hauled myself out of bed for this. Normally AVE only haunts my nightmares, but this time, it followed me to work at this ungodly hour. As I raised my hand, the room went quiet as everyone turned to face me. "Excuse me sir, but do you really believe that AVE has any real-world value in sponsorship marketing? Don't you believe that it's an outdated metric? Do you think that if there was an empirical measurement for this we would have found it considering the human race is capable of sending people to the moon and contemplating the vastness of the universe?"

"No denying it has its pros and cons, but how else would we measure against objectives of awareness?" came a retort from the other side of the boardroom.

I'd gone too far (damn you, morning brain!), but there was no turning back now. I was about to get into a debate at a time when I'm normally in a peaceful duvet-cocoon. "Gloves off Jacobsen, it's time to back yourself or die trying," I thought to myself.

"Well," I said, taking a sip of coffee (come on caffeine, time to step up already!) "having seen some figures reported for AVE in the last decade, I highly doubt that anything is worth the amount of money quoted in some of these meetings and reports let alone some obscure mention or logo placement on a team kit or perimeter boards that the user could quite easily miss altogether."

"I would argue though," I continued, "that the issue here isn't some marketer once decided that this is the best way to measure it – hell, at the time it probably was, but there was also a time when we thought the earth was flat. Some people still do, mind you, but those people also probably believe that reporting figures such as AVE are worth paper they are written on."

"Well what are you proposing?" accompanied with some glaring looks from the other side of the table.

"Oh Reece, what have you done?" I thought to myself once again. The insecurity monster that lives in the dark corners of my brain starts to rear its ugly head, but nevertheless, I forged on.

“I don’t suggest we tar and feather the person who came up with AVE, I just think that any multi-million rand sponsorship campaign that gets signed off with something as vague as ‘awareness’ as an objective is probably lazy briefing. **I believe the problem is in determining what we want to achieve, not necessarily in how we as marketers try to prove success.**”

It’s generally conceded around the room that this point has merit. I breathe a sigh of relief as others start to nod. I take another sip of coffee as I gently lull the insecurity monster back to sleep while I sit back in my chair and watch as the conversation is picked up by others around the room. **It appears that there was general consensus at the table that we need to be more direct with our objective setting and move away from the ambiguity of awareness and engagement, to something more meaningful, more tangible, more real.**

My colleagues, my heroes, taking the spotlight off of me at last, were able to run with what was put down and there were some really useful suggestions that followed. Below are some of my favourites:

- **Sales / Trial**

Seeing as we’re unable to add the additional billion-rand AVE to the bottom line, marketers and agencies must be made privy to what’s having an impact on real world sales. Burn down the reporting silos and give us a view to what’s really happening. Surely any marketing campaign report should include evidence of increased sales because when it’s all said and done, that’s exactly why we’re in this game.

- **Perception**

Let’s pretend you’re in the sneaker industry and a product has historically been viewed as the “old people running shoe” when compared to major labels like Nike or Adidas, despite wanting to target the same audiences. No amount of AVE or engagement measurement is going to prove that you’ve shifted the needle on this key brand issue. Measurements such as public sentiment or key message prevalence in your communications, coupled with qualitative research are far more valuable to any brand to determine whether or not you’re moving in the right direction, not how many people you’ve reached possibly even extending the “old people running shoe” opinion to the new audiences you’ve plastered your brand in front of.

- **Service**

Great, you’ve won over a few new customers with your marketing campaign, but are you going to keep them there? I’ve long argued that customer service is a marketing function because well, it really is. It will only cause the brand greater damage if you’ve eventually convinced someone your product is worthwhile through your latest ad campaign for them to be let down at the first hurdle on the other side. Once bitten, twice shy I believe the saying goes.

- **Credibility**

There’s a great meme of Steve Buschemi holding a skateboard, dressed like an idiot saying “How do you do, fellow kids?” If you haven’t seen it, I encourage you to Google that after the article – it really gets the credibility message across better than most things I can think of. The metrics we should be looking at here (and it’s closely tied to perception) is how credible your brand is in the spaces you’re trying to occupy. Marketing will never work if it’s not believable – which makes it all the more important to understand and measure if you’re doing it right.

If you’ve got more suggestions to add to the list for sponsorship marketing objectives fit for the 21st century, please leave them in the comments or send them to me on Twitter ([@reecejacobsen](https://twitter.com/reecejacobsen)).

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