

# No more excuses for not measuring

Just be creative in recognizing hidden resources, says Angela Sinickas

Since you're reading this newsletter, you probably understand the value of conducting research on your communication program. But if you're like many other communicators, you may be putting off conducting your own measurements for a variety of what seem like good reasons:

- No time.
- No budget.
- Lack of research expertise.
- Lack of management support.

This month's column offers a variety of ideas for overcoming these obstacles. I've organized the ideas roughly into categories that address each of the above potential obstacles, although many of the suggestions address two or three barriers.

## Recruit volunteers

Even if you are a staff of one, you can create a temporary team of research assistants.

- Provide your friends and colleagues with a short list of telephone survey questions, the names and phone numbers of five to 10 randomly selected individuals to call, and a tally sheet for responses. This won't take much of their own time during the course of a week, but if you have enough friends, you can contact enough respondents for statistical validity.
- Use your editorial board to gather input from their colleagues on selected questions you give them about communication.
- Find an administrative assistant looking for more interesting work.
- Find employees who are pursuing degrees in communication part-time, but are currently working in non-communication jobs. They may be eager to gain knowledge that will be useful on their résumés – and to have you as a reference one day.

- Hire an intern.
- Contact a communication professor at a local university. The research you need done could become a class project.

## Use other people's budgets

- When your department hires temporary help for another project, tap into that person's down time to make calls, tally survey responses, etc.
- Your information technology department probably has a library of software, which may include some for measuring the usage of intranets or Web sites. If they don't, they may be able to order it for you out of their own budget.
- Your organization may have an ongoing contract with an outside research firm, PR agency or human resources consulting firm. See if you can use some of the budgeted money for help with your own research projects, especially near the end of the year if all the allocated funds haven't been used up.
- Build small research steps into existing projects that have already been budgeted. For example, if an intranet site is being developed, add some questions about how aspects of the site are working into the pages themselves.
- If your function acts as an internal consultant, when you're developing production budgets for your client departments' projects, build in some extra money for pre-communication research and post-communication measurement of success.

## Borrow other people's expertise

While you may not know much about conducting a survey yourself, you probably have access to internal and external resources you may not be tapping. Of course, they may want to borrow your own expertise in exchange for theirs.

- Someone in your human resources department may have a degree in organizational development or industrial psychology and can advise you about focus groups and surveys.
- Your organization may have an in-house market research function that can help with internal research.
- Find a colleague at another company who has conducted several research projects and solicit his or her help in developing your own research tools.

## Be sneaky

- As you walk around, make phone calls and send e-mails as part of your regular job, ask one or two questions "by the way" about communication and tally them on a log sheet you keep with you at all times.
- Invite 10 to 12 people to join you for pizza at lunch. In exchange for the food, you'll ask them some questions. Voila! You've just conducted a focus group.
- Befriend project managers of already authorized research projects being developed for your target audience and ask them to include some questions you'd like answered on their survey or in their focus groups.

By no means is this an exhaustive list, but I hope it gives you some ideas you can use to get started on some measurements of your own. And when you provide your management with the findings of your informal research, they may very well be intrigued enough to provide more resources and support for more formal research. **TCM**



Angela Sinickas is president of Sinickas Communications, Inc., and author of the manual *How to measure your communication programs*.

How have you overcome barriers to conducting research?  
E-mail  
PWright001@aol.com

Angela Sinickas answers more measurement FAQs on  
[www.melcram.com](http://www.melcram.com)

## Contact

**Angela Sinickas**  
Sinickas Communications, Inc.  
E-mail: [angela@sinicom.com](mailto:angela@sinicom.com)