

# IDEAS

**O**NE OF THE best ways to find what the major issues are in a company is to conduct an audit. An audit will disclose the areas which need improvement and attention, and those areas which are well developed. This information is of great value to management as well, showing them what the organizational "climate" is at a certain time.

Many audits are poorly prepared and poorly executed. That is far from the case of the audit conducted by Angela Sinickas, internal communications manager for the Chicago Tribune Company.

Sinickas planned out her objectives which served as a guideline for the audit. She identified information and as needing improvement, indicated the best ways to make improvements, and provided a benchmark against which future progress could be measured.

Next she identified the audience. The Chicago Tribune Company has 3,500 full-time employees with 1,500 located at the Tribune Tower, 1,500 located at Freedom Center (the production facility one mile away), and 500 scattered around the Chicago area and the world. Of that full-time number, about half of the employees belong to one of 13 unions and the other half are salaried.

After objectives were set and the audience was determined, Sinickas established a plan for the audit which included research, design, a proposal, interaction with administration, a follow-up and evaluation.

Sinickas says, "Since we could not afford an outside consultant to conduct an audit, I needed to learn as much about survey techniques as possible. College courses taken eight years ago taught me statistical analysis and basic survey design. I attended sessions on surveys and audits at the IABC conferences in Dallas and Washington, D.C. However, a Chicago IABC chapter luncheon on communications auditing provided the final polish on my own survey design."

Sinickas wanted the audit to give her a blueprint for change. "I wasn't interested in an attitude survey, but a specific set of questions whose answers would lead directly

## CHICAGO TRIBUNE COMPANY COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

Good communication is a two-way process. We need to hear from you whether we're keeping you informed of what you need to know to do your job. Please give us your views on communication at the Chicago Tribune Company by taking a moment to complete the following survey.

As with other surveys conducted in the past, this one is confidential. Your name should not appear anywhere on these pages. Results will be published in a future issue of the Little Trib.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Please circle the number that most closely describes your opinion of the following statements. Unless otherwise specified, questions referring to Chicago Tribune Company, or to "the company," mean the Chicago Tribune newspaper.

### Communications Environment

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
Chicago Tribune Company generally keeps employees informed of changes in policies and operations. (For example, price increases, new sections, company progress towards goals) . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
The reasons behind the changes are usually explained to me. . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Communication between departments is good . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Communication within my department is good. . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Communication within my division or immediate work group is good . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
I usually am able to get my questions answered. . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
I feel my suggestions are seriously evaluated. . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]

### Level of Interest in Information

For each of the following subjects, please circle the number that best reflects your LEVEL OF INTEREST on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is the highest level of interest and 1 indicates that you have absolutely no interest at all in a particular subject.

	Not at all Interested				Extremely Interested
Personnel changes, promotions . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
The effect of outside events on my job . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
How my job fits into the overall company . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Future plans of Chicago Tribune Company . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
News of other Tribune Company subsidiaries (newspapers, cable, TV, forest products, Cubs) . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Future plans of my department . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Plans of other departments . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Productivity improvement . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Job advancement/personal development . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Waste reduction (energy, paper, gas, etc.) . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Accident prevention . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Health care costs . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Financial/budgetary status of the company . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Personnel policies and practices . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Employee personal news (weddings, deaths) . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Freedom Center . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
News of retirees . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Chicago Tribune Company's community involvement, event participation . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
New technologies . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Employee services (parking, cashier, etc.) . . . . .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

**Level of Information**

For each of the following subjects, please circle the number that best reflects HOW WELL INFORMED you are about it on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 indicates you are thoroughly informed and 1 indicates you are not at all informed.

	Not at all Informed				Very Well Informed
Personnel changes, promotions	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
The effect of outside events on my job	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
How my job fits into the overall company	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Future plans of Chicago Tribune Company	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
News of other Tribune Company subsidiaries (Newspapers, cable, TV, forest products, Cubs)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Future plans of my department	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Plans of other departments	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Productivity improvement	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Job advancement/personal development	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Waste reduction (energy, paper, gas, etc.)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Accident prevention	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Health care costs	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Financial/budgetary status of the company	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Personnel policies and practices	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Employee personal news (weddings, deaths)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Freedom Center	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
News of retirees	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Chicago Tribune Company's community involvement/civil participation	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
New technologies	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Employee services (banking, cashier, etc.)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

**Other Interests:**

(NOTE: If you added "other interests" on the preceding page, list them here also and continue to respond.)

_____	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
_____	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

**Sources of Information**

For each subject listed on the bottom half of this page, please write in the blank space the letter of the usual information source below from which you CURRENTLY receive most of the information on this subject. Letters may be used more than once or not at all. Please use only one letter per subject listed.

Then, using the same list, indicate for each subject the information source you WOULD MOST PREFER to obtain information from.

**Information Sources:**

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| (A) Top executives                   | (K) TV, radio, newspapers, magazines                              |
| (B) My supervisor                    | (L) Trade journals  |
| (C) The grapevine                    | (M) New employee orientation                                      |
| (D) Letters or memos                 | (N) Submitting a question to Employees Forum/Employee Action Line |
| (E) Union                            |   |
| (F) Bulletin boards                  | (O) Regular departmental readings                                 |
| (G) Little Trib                      | (P) Specially held meetings                                       |
| (H) Limited Edition                  | (Q) Slide shows, video tape programs                              |
| (I) Special Report to Employees      | (R) Other:  |
| (J) Employee handbook/other booklets |   |

Be sure to answer both columns for each subject

Subject:	CURRENT Source of Information	PREFERRED Source of Information
Personnel changes, promotions	_____	_____
The effect of outside events on my job	_____	_____
How my job fits into the overall company	_____	_____
Future plans of the Chicago Tribune Company	_____	_____
Future plans of my department	_____	_____
Plans of other departments of the company	_____	_____
Freedom Center	_____	_____
Financial/budgetary status of the company	_____	_____
How productivity can be improved	_____	_____
Job advancement/personal development	_____	_____
Waste reduction of resources on the job (energy, paper, gas, etc.)	_____	_____
Accident prevention	_____	_____
Health care costs	_____	_____
Personnel policies and practices	_____	_____
Employee personal news (weddings, deaths)	_____	_____
News of retirees	_____	_____
Chicago Tribune Company's community involvement	_____	_____
Employee services (banking, cashier, etc.)	_____	_____
News of other Tribune Company subsidiaries (Newspapers, cable, TV, forest products, Cubs)	_____	_____

**Other Interests:**

(NOTE: Carried from previous pages.)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

to action plans," she continued. "I developed a list of subjects that were based on the company's strategic and operating plans. I knew managers would need to communicate in the coming year on subjects like productivity improvement, waste reduction and accident prevention. For each subject, we measured how interested employees were, how well informed they felt, where they currently heard information on that subject first and where they would prefer to hear about it. I added a one-page readership survey of our main publication to get even more in-depth information on what I suspected was our employees' primary information source."

She then prepared a proposal for revamping employee communications at the company. A critical step to her in the proposal was the audit. An early draft of the questionnaire and a summary of how the audit would be administered and used were attached to the proposal.

Next, she discussed the proposal and audit with Chicago Tribune president, Charles Brumback, who gave his approval.

"In the next few weeks I discussed them again individually with each of 11 vice presidents," she says. "These discussions led to adding and deleting a number of subject areas, information sources and demographic breakdowns. The final result was a tool that each vice president felt was useful to him."

The printed audit questionnaire and a summary of the project was distributed to department vice presidents for discussion and distribution at their staff meetings one week before employees were to receive the surveys.

The actual questionnaires were distributed by supervisors to their employees.

A follow-up letter to each vice president summarized percent return from each department to date, identifying areas that appeared to have an exceptionally low rate of return.

The complete questionnaires were then sent to the company's market research division for data entry and computer printouts.

"Using an Apple computer for text editing, Visiplot and Visicalc, I analyzed the raw data and prepared charts, graphs and summaries that explained the results," Sinickas says. "Based on the results, my staff of two and I came up with a specific operating plan for 1983 that would correct many of the identified deficiencies and build on the strengths."

The follow-up consisted of what Sinickas termed a "dog-and-pony show" around the company, presenting the



overall results and specific breakdowns of departments, locations and jobs to the president and each vice president. Each of them received an individualized permanent copy of the results that was targeted to his responsibilities.

"After summarizing the survey results, we described our plans for 1983 and solicited more management input," she explained.

Articles in their two employee publications summarized the overall results. "In 1983 we continue to refer to specific results of the audit as we introduce new kinds of communications to employees," she continued. "The emphasis is on how we are changing to meet their stated needs.

"We will conduct the audit again to determine if our new programs are achieving the hoped-for results—after that, we will re-survey every other year."

The audit as developed by Sinickas clearly met their objectives. By looking at the results, they can easily find out, for example, that news of a department's plans is the biggest information gap. The current sources are supervisors and the grapevine, but employees would prefer to hear plans from supervisors and through meetings. The supervisor knows he or she should call a meeting to discuss changes in department plans. Needs are identified and blueprints for improvement are provided.

"These results allow us and all managers to better target our messages," she says.

"The audit results and new plans based on those results have been warmly accepted in the company," she explained. "The president, a former accountant, is so pleased at being able to measure communication objectively that he brings up points from the results to various employee and management groups he speaks to."

The only expense Sinickas sites is the \$690 duplicating charges (in-house) for printing the questionnaire.

"All other costs were normal and usual departmental operations (keying answers, attending IABC luncheon seminars and national conferences)."

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**Effectiveness of Little Trib**

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
I receive each issue of the Little Trib	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
I read each issue of the Little Trib	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
I take the Little Trib home for my family	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
I read most items in each issue of the Little Trib	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
I read the following features in the Little Trib:				
Employee Action Line	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Employee Forum (Q & A from meetings of randomly selected employees and management)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Monthly Briefing (short news items page)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Triblets (Awards, Veterans, Wedding, On the Move, Retirements, Special Interest, Our Sympathy)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Articles about departments	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Articles about individuals	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
General interest articles (DRC report, hostage coverage, VDT safety)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Cartoons	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Puzzles	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Poetry	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
I can believe information about the company in the Little Trib	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
The Little Trib covers a variety of subjects	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
The Little Trib adequately covers my department	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
The Little Trib adequately covers my immediate work group	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
The Little Trib is easy to understand	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
I am more likely to read a Little Trib article that is illustrated with photos or drawings	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
The quality of photographs in the Little Trib is usually good	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
The layout of articles in the Little Trib is easy to follow	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
I think a regular company publication should be distributed:				
[1] Once a week	[4]	Every other month		
[2] Twice a month	[5]	Every three months		
[3] Once a month	[6]	Less often		
Please give us any comments you have on the Little Trib.				
Please add any comments you have about communication at the Chicago Tribune Company in general.				

The following questions will be used to combine your answers with those of others we receive. It is important that you complete them to help us interpret these results better.

Please circle the number next to the response that best describes you.

- How long have you worked at the Chicago Tribune Company?
 

[1] Less than 1 year	[4] 10 to 19 years
[2] 1 to 3 years	[5] 20 years or more
[3] 4 to 9 years	
- Are you: [1] Male [2] Female
- What department do you work in?
 

(A) ADVERTISING	[1] Chicago - Classified Phone Sales	(F) FINANCE	[1] Customer Accounting	[3] Planning
[2] Classified Street Sales	[2] General	[2] General Accounting	[4] Other	
[3] General	[4] Retail	(G) GENERAL ADMINISTRATION		
[4] Retail	[5] Hinsdale - Classified Phone Sales	(H) INFORMATION SYSTEMS	[1] Computer Operations	
[5] Hinsdale - Classified Street Sales	[6] Classified Street Sales	[2] Systems Development & Programming	[3] Technical Support - Hardware	
[6] Classified Street Sales	[7] Display	[4] Technical Support - Software	[5] Other	
[7] Display	[8] Other	(I) MARKETING	[1] Client Services	[4] Promotion
(B) BUILDING/PURCHASING	[1] Building Operations	[2] Marketing Services	[5] Other	
[2] Maintenance	[4] Security	[3] Research Services		
[3] Purchasing	[5] Other	(J) PRODUCTION	[1] Composing	[5] Paperhandling
(C) CIRCULATION	[1] Driver	[2] Electrical & Main.	[6] Pressroom	
[2] Employee District	[3] Office/Freedom Center (other than telephone sales)	[3] Engraving	[7] Stereotype	
[3] Office/Freedom Center (other than telephone sales)	[4] Telephone Sales	[4] Mailroom	[8] Other	
[4] Telephone Sales	[5] Other	(K) AREA PUBLICATIONS CORPORATION		
[5] Other	(D) EDITORIAL	[1] Features	[4] Photos/Graphics	
[1] Features	[2] News	[2] News	[5] Sports	
[2] News	[3] Operations	[3] Operations	[6] Other	
[3] Operations	[4] Other	(E) EMPLOYEE RELATIONS		
[4] Other				
- How would you describe your job classification?
 

[1] Clerical	[4] Professional / Staff
[2] Craftsman	[5] Other (Please Specify)
[3] Manager / Supervisor (must actually supervise a staff)	
- Where are you located?
 

[1] Tribune Tower	[4] District/Bureau in Chicago area
[2] Freedom Center	[5] District/Bureau outside Chicago area
[3] Harrison Street Fleet Facility	[6] Other (Please Specify)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Please fold and return to Employee Relations, Room 634, Tribune Tower, box located in Freedom Center cafeteria, box located at Hubbard St. entrance at Tribune Tower, or other location specified by your supervisor.