Entrant's Name:	Angela D. Sinickas, ABC
Title of Entry:	**"Keeping Score: Making performance data more compelling"**
Division/Category:	Division2: Communication Skills/Category 20 Writing
Organization's Name:	Sinickas Communications, Inc.
Time Period of Project:	May through September, 2007
Brief Description:	A two-part article published in Melcrum's *Strategic Communication Management* intended to help organizational communicators create meaningful key performance indicators and share progress with management.

Need / Opportunity

The audience's needs: On April 30, 2007, one person posted a request on Melcrum's CommsNetwork discussion group for information on how to create a dashboard for communication. Dozens of other communicators asked to be included in any responses (sample e-mail of interest included in the work sample). Sensing a trend, I spoke with the editor of *Strategic Communication Management* (*SCM*), Mandy Thatcher, about writing an article for an upcoming issue on the topic. She agreed that there would be great interest in such an article, so *SCM*'s associate editor sent an email out to the discussion group that I'd have an article on dashboards in the very next issue.

My opportunity: Writing articles for publication and giving speeches are the main ways I use to make myself known to prospective clients so they think of me when they need help with a measurement project. In a survey I conducted in 2003, 63% of clients who had read my writings in professional journals said the articles influenced their decision to work with us. Another 25% said it reminded them to consider us for new projects. Also, 22% of clients said they first heard of me by reading an article or column I wrote.

Intended Audience(s)

Primary audience: The subscribers of *Strategic Communication Management (SCM)* are the primary audience. Although subscribers' job levels, job types and experience levels vary, I targeted the article to experienced communicators in large corporations holding a title of manager or above who are most likely to need to provide measures of communication effectiveness. These are also my potential clients. Geographical dispersion of *SCM* readers around the world is reflected in the graphic at right. All regions are in my target group because Sinickas Communications, Inc. (SCI) is international, with over 30% of last year's revenue coming from outside North America.

Geographic breakdown of audiences

SCM readers — US 25%, Canada 6%, UK 44%, Asia/Pacific 9%, Other Europe 13%, Lat. Amer/Carib 2%, ME/Africa 1%

Our mailing list — US 75%, Canada 10%, UK 9%, Asia/Pacific 2%, Other Europe 2%, Lat. Amer/Carib 1%

Legend: US, Canada, UK, Asia/Pacific, Other Europe, Lat. Amer/Carib, ME/Africa

Secondary audience: The 6,794 corporate communication professionals on the SCI reprint mailing list. Most of these individuals are highly motivated about measurement because they have either been a client or have asked to receive my copyrighted reprints by either:

- Giving me their business card at the end of speeches and workshops I present.
- Requesting to be put on the reprint list when they visit my web site, www.SiniCom.com.
- Returning the reply card in my capabilities brochure.
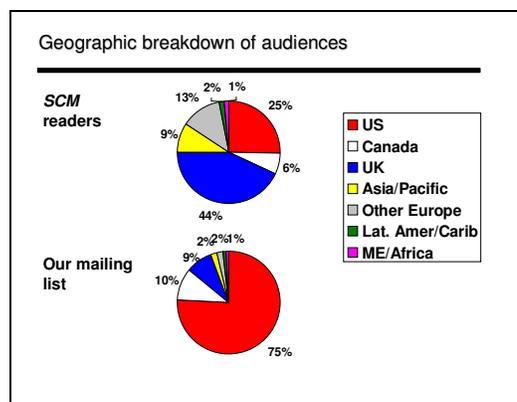
Goals and Objectives

I had goals for the article at several levels, some for my company and others for the readers of the publication. Goals for changes in knowledge and attitudes were set higher than goals for behaviors, which are generally much harder to achieve. Ironically, it turned out that more people acted on the article than reported changes in perceptions—which is not a bad result!

1. **Expand the reach of Sinickas Communications' reputation as a leading-edge expert in measuring communication effectiveness.** Have at least 25% of the article's readers find it valuable enough to share with other communicators or their business management, who often control larger budgets.
2. **Increase the likelihood of people hiring us for projects or buying our products.** Obtain at least one client project as a result of their having read the article.
3. **Provide enduring value to the article's readers**, as measured in several ways:
   a. **Output target**: Write the article to be understandable by the average communicator (most of whom have college degrees, and virtually all of whom finished secondary schools). This translates to a Flesch-Kincaid grade level readability score of 12.0.
   b. **Knowledge target**: Have at least 50% of those who have read the article say they learned something they had not previously known.
   c. **Attitude target**: Have at least 50% of those who have read the article feel more confident in their ability to develop performance measures.
   d. **Behavior target**: Have at least 25% of readers say they used the information to change the way they set performance targets, measure their progress or report on their results.

Solution Overview

While the original intent was to write an article about various types of communication measurement dashboards, I realized quickly that before readers were ready to think about presenting results, they needed to be sure they were measuring the right things in the first place. As a result, the article really needed to cover two different message streams:

1. How to set meaningful performance targets that are not all measures of communication activity, but also of related outcomes.
2. How to determine the best ways of presenting these results.

The first draft of the article was much too long for the space available in the next issue of *SCM*. At my request, the editor suggested places where the level of detail could be reduced. Still when we added in the graphics needed to support the text, we had about twice as much content as there was space for. I suggested to the editor that we turn this into a two-part article, which she approved. We still had a challenge in that Part 2 would need to stand on its own for the people who had not read Part 1. We decided to repeat one of the graphics for continuity, but I was able to re-write the rest of the two parts in a way that did not require them both to include all the graphics. Finally, since the audience is international, I had to be careful with word choice and examples such as referring to readability scores and school grading systems.

Also part of my solution is expanding the visibility of articles and columns I write by periodically sending reprints, for which I retain the copyright, to the communicators on my mailing list who are already interested in measurement. Articles and columns for which I own the copyright are also posted on my www.SiniCom.com Web site.

In addition, there have been several additional requests for information on dashboards in the many communicators' social networking sites. In each case, I provided a high-level response

to the request and offered to send the article to anyone who was interested. Nearly 60 communicators requested it over a six-month period.

Implementation and Challenges

- **Time**. I suggested writing the article on May 1. In order to make the June/July issue of *SCM*, I needed to deliver the first draft of the manuscript by May 15. During that time I worked on six client projects, a teleseminar and preparations for a four-day client trip in Europe, followed immediately by a two-day Sinickas public workshop on measurement and the IABC Conference (where we sponsor a booth). The rewrites in turning the one article into two stand-alone parts occurred while I was on the road. The thought process involved in the re-writing was covered in the "Solution Overview" section.
- **Budget**. This was not an issue because *SCM* does not pay for articles. However, considering the amount of time it took to write the article, it "cost" me about $10,000 of potential billable time.

Measurement / Evaluation of Outcomes

Here's how we did on each goal, many of them measured by a survey sent to the 59 communicators who had specifically requested a copy of the article after reading about it on communicator discussion boards or social networking sites. Since six e-mails bounced back due to spam filters or departures, our 13 respondents represent a 25% response rate. The questionnaire was administered through SurveyMonkey.com.

1. **Expand the reach of Sinickas Communications' reputation as a leading-edge expert in measuring communication effectiveness.** About **82%** of the article's readers found it valuable enough to share with other communicators, some of them in other organizations. About **45%** shared the article with non-communication business management, who often control larger budgets. (Goal was 25%,)
2. **Increase the likelihood of people hiring us for projects or buying our products.** We had queries from two companies and one consulting firm who said they had read the article in *SCM*, but no work developed. We had another e-mail from a London-area police agency that wished they had the budget to bring us in to help them set performance measures and develop a measurement plan. Fortunately, we were able to work with them in December 2007 since another London client had already paid for my trans-Atlantic airfare and local travel expenses.
3. **Provide enduring value to the article's readers**:
   a. **Output target** of understandability: Microsoft Word's readability program calculated the Flesch-Kincaid grade level score to be **11.7** (goal was no more than 12.0).
   b. **Knowledge target**: About **39%** said they learned something they had not previously known (goal was 50%).
   c. **Attitude target**: About **54%** said they feel more confident in their ability to develop performance measures because of the article (goal was 50%).
   d. **Behavior targets** (goal for each was 25%**)**:
      - **30%** used the information in developing targets for 2008.
      - **33%** made their previous goals more quantitative for 2008.
      - **75%** added more "outcome" goals to their mostly "activity" goals from the past.
      - **25%** changed the way they set target levels.
      - **17%** used a different visual approach to presenting results.
      - Over 25% changed the way they conduct specific measurements: conducted reading grade level testing (**46%**), started a content analysis (**27%**), conducted a pilot/control group (**27%**), and calculated a return on investment (**36%**).