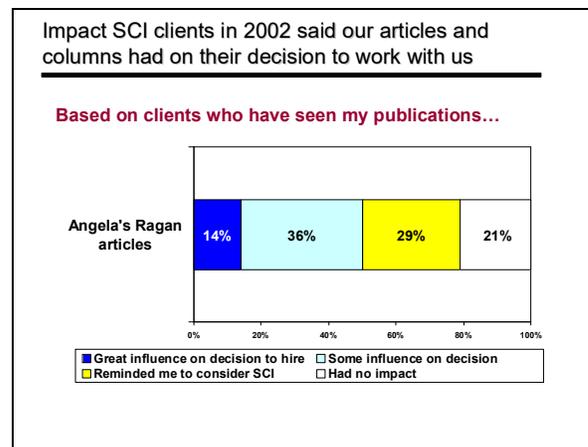| | |
|---:|:---|
| **Entrant's Name:** | Angela D. Sinickas, ABC |
| **Organization's Name:** | Sinickas Communications, Inc. |
| **Category/Division/Subdivision:** | Communication Skills/Division 17/Subdivision 17.01 |
| **Title of Entry:** | **"The Revolution in Communication Measurement"** |
| **Time Period of Project:** | July through September/October, 2002 |
| **Brief Description:** | An article published in the *Journal of Employee Communication Management* intended to help organizational communicators make better business decisions on what to measure about their communication programs. |

## Need/Opportunity

**The editor's needs**: During the first week of July, 2002, I received a call from David Murray, the editor of Ragan Communication's *Journal of Employee Communication Management (JECM)*. He was nearing the deadline for a special edition of this magazine that recapped how internal communication had evolved in the last five years. At this late date, they realized that they didn't have anything in the issue related to measurement, which was clearly a major trend during this period. He asked if I could write a 1,500- to 2,500-word article by July 18 on how communication research has evolved in the last five years.

**My opportunity**: Even though I didn't really have the time to do so, I said yes, because research I do with my own clients has shown that writing for communication journals does lead to new business for my communication consulting firm.

- In a survey of my 2001 clients conducted in early 2002, 63% said they had read my columns in another communication journal, and 70% of those said it influenced their decision to work with us.
- In a survey of 2002 clients, 50% of those who read previous articles of mine in Ragan publications said the articles influenced their decision to hire us. Another 29% said the articles reminded them to consider us when an opportunity arose. Also, 22% of my 2002 clients said they first heard of me by reading an article or column I wrote.



Impact SCI clients in 2002 said our articles and columns had on their decision to work with us

**Based on clients who have seen my publications…**

Angela's Ragan articles: 14% | 36% | 29% | 21%

- ■ Great influence on decision to hire
- □ Some influence on decision
- □ Reminded me to consider SCI
- □ Had no impact

## Intended Audience(s)

**Primary audience**: About 700 organizational communicators who subscribe to *JECM*, and others in their departments to whom they circulate copies. According to the editor, nearly all are in North America. Most are VPs, directors and managers of communication.

**Secondary audience**: The 4,076 corporate communication professionals on the Sinickas Communications, Inc. reprint mailing list. Most of these individuals are highly motivated about communication measurement because they have either been a client or have asked to receive my copyrighted reprints during workshops I've presented or when they visited my Web site. The research we did with these communicators is summarized in the "Measurement" section of this work plan.

## Goals/Objectives

I had goals for the article at several levels, some for my company and others for the readers and editors of the publication. Goals for changes in knowledge and attitudes were set higher than goals for behaviors, which are much harder to achieve.

1. **Expand the reach of Sinickas Communications' reputation as a leading-edge researcher in 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.** Have 50% of non-client readers say reading the article made them feel more likely to hire us.
3. **Provide enduring value to the article's readers and the publication's editor**, as measured in several ways:
   a. 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. Have at least 50% of those who have read the article say they learned something they had not previously known.
   c. Have at least 25% of readers say they used the findings in their jobs.
   d. Have at least 25% of www.SiniCom.com visitors who look at the reprints section of the site open this article. (Since there are 52 articles/columns posted there now, the random chance of any one column/article being opened is about 2%. Achieving a 25% view rate randomly would mean that all visitors to that part of the site open 13 articles.)
   e. Have the editor invite me to write another article in 2003.

## Solution Overview

Retrospective articles can be pretty boring.

I wanted to focus the article not only on what David had requested, but also on something useful for readers today. I decided to focus on two major themes: changes in *what* we measure and changes in *how* we measure. The "what we measure" part gave me the most difficulty because I saw two major trends and could not figure out how to integrate them. Finally, I fell back on an organization tool that has saved me many times in the past: a grid. Once I plotted one trend as column headings and the other as row headings, I saw that I had not only solved my writing problem, but I had also created a new way of helping communicators do two things:

- Assess the relative value of what they were *currently* measuring about their communication programs.
- Plan what they *should be* measuring that would be of greater value to their organizations.

Development of the grid made the rest of the article very easy to write. I was able to deliver 2,065 words, right in the middle of the range David had requested. He changed the title and we went to press.

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.

## Implementation and Challenges

- **Time**. David's request came at a particularly bad time. I knew I would be out of the country for 17 days in July 2002 (conducting workshops in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur and presenting a research paper in L'Aquila, Italy). David's deadline came on a day that I would be in Singapore. In addition, I had three client projects in process and two proposals due. My time was already tightly accounted for. I negotiated a few days' grace period on my deadline so I could write the article during the five days I had between trips. I started the article on Sunday, July 21, the day after my return from Asia. I delivered it before I left for Italy on July 25.
- **Budget**. This was not an issue because *JECM* does not pay for articles. However, considering the amount of time it took to write the article, it "cost" me about $4,000 of potential billable time.

## Measurement/Evaluation of Outcomes

Here's how we did on each goal, many of them measured by a client survey and a survey of non-clients on our mailing list. Both questionnaires were administered through SurveyMonkey.com:

1. **Expand the reach of Sinickas Communications' reputation as a leading-edge researcher in communication effectiveness.** A survey of contacts on my mailing list, to whom the article was sent in 2002, showed that of those who read it, 42% shared it with other communicators (goal was 25%). In addition, 8% of them shared it with non-communication managers.



Goals 1 and 3: Readers' evaluation of "Revolution in measurement" article

Based on % of mailing list contacts who read the article

Goal 1: Shared article with communicators — 42%
Goal 1: Shared article with non-communication management — 8%
Goal 3b: Learned something I didn't know — 55%
Goal 3c: Used something I learned in my work — 16%

■ % Agreeing



Goal 2: Impact of "Revolution in measurement" article on SCI revenue (from survey)

Based on % of respondents who read the article

% of non-clients who said reading the article made them more likely to work with us — 75%
% of clients who said reading the article influenced their decision to work with us — 50%
% of clients who first heard of us by reading an article of ours in a publication — 22%

□ % Agreeing



Goal 3d: Readership of Website "reprints" of article (note that 52 selections are available)

Nov. 17 — 71%
Nov. 10 — 100%
Nov. 3 — 50%
Oct. 27 — 100%
Oct. 13 — 100%
Oct. 6 — 25%
Sept. 29 — 44%
Sept. 15 — 37%

■ % of all on-line reprint readers who read "Evolution" article each week

2. **Increase the likelihood of people hiring us for projects or buying our products.** About 75% of our mailing list contacts who read the article said it made them feel more likely to hire us (goal was 50%).
3. **Provide enduring value to the article's readers and the publication's editor**:
   a. Understandability: Microsoft Word's readability program calculated the Flesch-Kincaid grade level score to be 12.0 (goal was 12.0).
   b. 55% of those who read the article said they learned something they had not previously known (goal was 50%).
   c. 16% of readers said they used the findings in their jobs (goal was 25%). However, since the survey was conducted less than one month after they received the reprint, I'm very satisfied with the results.
   d. This article was read by 25% to 100% of visitors to the reprint section of my Web site. during each week after it was posted to the site.
   e. The editor not only asked me to write another article for 2003, but one for each year through 2006.

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