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INSIDE Inside...

- Dare to Give Them What They Actually Want**4**
- What's missing from CRM? A Sales Perspective**6**
- Opening a New Can of Spam**8**
- How to Avoid Being Branded with the Scarlet "S" (for Spam)**8**
- What Effective Managers Should Know About Cross-Cultural Communication.. **10**
- Career Corner **11**
- Starting Tomorrow, What Should I Read? C.E. Reading Suggestions for IMC Practitioners..... **12**
- Association Update..... **13**
- In My Opinion..... **14**
- New Members **15**

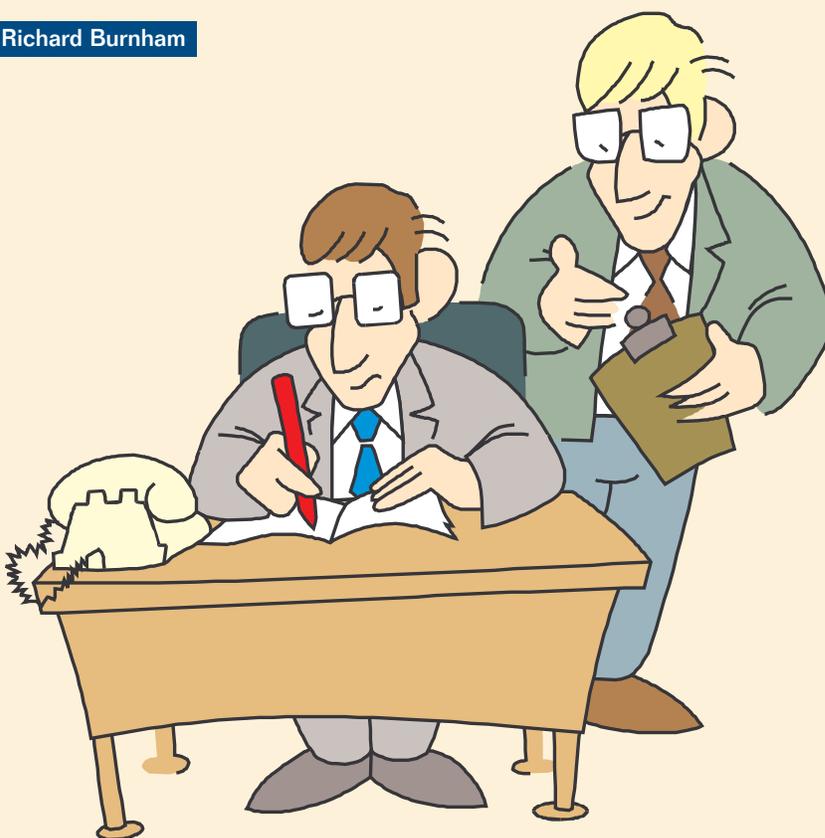
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Engineers as Credible Marketers

By Richard Burnham



Trade publication articles written by engineers shout "believability" to prospects. But engineers often aren't polished writers. (The Solution? Talk for 30 minutes to a specialty writer.)

When considering a purchase, what do prospects find to be a more reliable source of information—a website packed with self-promotion, or a published trade publication article written by a technical expert? Easy question. An article based on an expert's work, then published in a na-

tional trade publication, provides a credible message that's impossible to doubt. Why is that?

According to a study by Siegel & Gale, trade articles enjoy the highest of credibility rankings. In fact, articles top the list over all other information

Continued on page 2

Engineers as Credible Marketers

Continued from page 1

sources, including staff-written stories in the Wall Street Journal, Business Week, and Newsweek.

Articles penned by engineers, describing how they solved a customer's problem, generate trustworthiness. They're powerful endorsements, and the result is influence that can bring more business to an engineer's company. Because readership in a single trade publication ranges from 50,000 to half a million, the potential to favorably sway thought is enormous. Engineer Jennifer Borkovich notes how a published article about her work at Coding Products recently secured new contracts. She says, "Another company had end-users completely locked up. Before the story ran, those users didn't know we even existed. We gained ten new clients—a very significant number in this small market."

How Articles Benefit Engineers

For engineers, the payback when publishing a case study article can be significant—job security, recognition, promotions, and even raises. For example, co-principals Pat Whitcomb and Mark Anderson of Stat-Ease, Inc., say, "Years ago we wrote up ideas on process monitoring and control. They developed into an article published by Chemical Engineering Progress. It got picked up by the home office of Henkel in Düsseldorf and reprinted with other articles published by Henkel scientists worldwide. That gave us valuable visibility within this multinational corporation, which led to promotions and higher salaries."

Here are a couple other examples: Kip Hillshafer works in Stepan Company's R&D group. A published article about his work has led to, "Recognition, but I've kept this low-key." And after Mary Kay, Inc.'s Renee Wickham had a trade publication article appear that featured her work, the recognition helped her career. She explains, "I was promoted to Director of Quality Assurance, and the article played a big part."

"I Have No Time To Write Articles!"

Usually, technical experts are so focused in their pursuit of solutions, they haven't the desire or time to write for publication. And sometimes they're just not adept writers. So here's an action item for companies and individuals seeking credibility and influence: Use specialty writers to interview your scientists and engineers. Specialty writers are experienced in weaving complex concepts into informative, interesting articles that yield authority. They know how to extract the best information and merge it all into compelling trade publication articles.

A Niche Apart—Ghostwriting

Specialty writers can even ghostwrite articles that appear under an engineer's name and company. It's an approach worth noting, because when they ghostwrite for engineers, they write very comfortably and specifically in the first person. For example, instead of an engineer writing, "The formulation was optimized through the utilization of a statistical software product," ghostwriters state, "We optimized the brake-lining formulation using XYZ software." The engineer's problem and solution are presented in clear and upbeat sentences, simplifying readability.

Articles ghostwritten for engineers provide readers with credible technical solutions that increase productivity, reduce costs, and/or improve quality. The stories tell how real engineers or other technical experts solved real problems. The result is influence.

A ghostwriter makes it possible for engineers and companies to communicate their work with one 30-minute phone call and a few follow-up e-mails. This allows technical experts to quickly get back to what they do best—solving problems. The bottom line—a ghostwriter/engineer collaboration generates business. "We get more calls from

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potential clients reading articles about us than we do from paid ads," says Don Muehlbauer, president of Techworks, LLC, in Milwaukee. "The articles definitely generate sales."

Editors Want Information

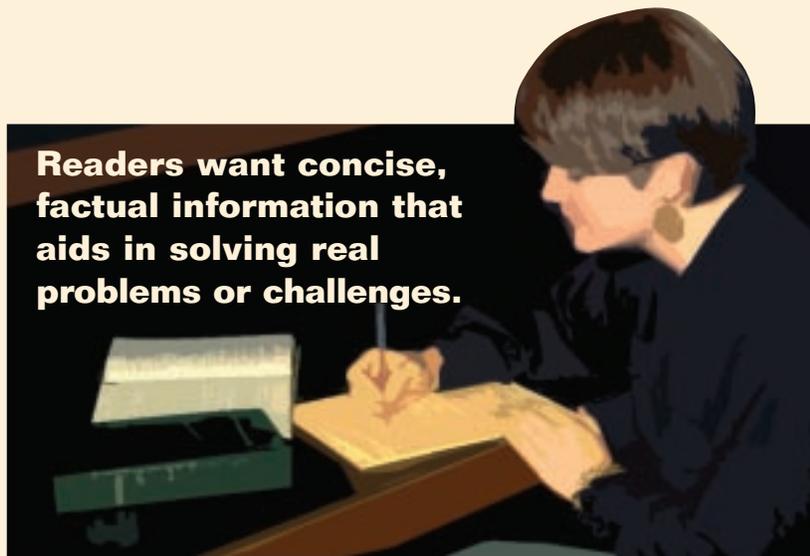
If you're an engineer who is understandably skittish about sharing proprietary information, simply mask it as "Formula A" or "Data Set B." Don't give the ghost-writer false data—just information that tells readers an accurate story, but doesn't reveal company secrets.

Trade publications frequently look outside their staff for stories. In fact, you're reading one of them right now. Specialty writers forge arrangements with trade publications, solidifying the process of getting articles seen by large numbers. This isn't a task to be viewed lightly, for it takes key writer-to-editor communications to attract editors, entice their willingness to run a story, respond to their requests, and coordinate timely story appearances. That's why it's important to work closely with a talented writer who can mine and polish publishable stories that interest editors as well as readers.

It Takes Organization and Time

Once a story is completed, a good writer obtains all necessary approvals and sign-offs in writing before forwarding the article to only one editor at a time. Editors demand exclusivity. If an editor turns down your article, a professional writer only then forwards it to another publication. The writer's organizational and tracking skills must be impeccable.

How long does the specialty writing process take? From the initial in-



terview between the technical expert and the writer, it usually takes several weeks for the writer to secure actual publication. Four primary factors cause this delay:

- Drawn-out reviews. No matter how motivated an engineer is when interviewed, once it's time to review revisions of about 1,400 words, time seems to stand still. (For comparison, this article has about 1,300 words.)
- Extended approval periods. Obtaining signed releases from managers, lawyers, and marketing personnel within the expert's company is important.
- Harried editors. Trade publications are pressed for time from too many requests for PR, favors, and other article submissions.
- Production lags. Once accepted by an editor, an article slogs through art directors, proofers, assistant editors, and the publisher. This takes time.

Why Bother?

In addition to the personal benefits to the engineer, and the new business that comes when an article hits the stands, another advantage occurs after it's published. For example, Stat-Ease, Inc., sellers of design of experiments software and training, keeps handy a 'library' of articles about themselves. When prospects inquire whether Stat-Ease will be able to solve their problem, they make

sure to forward a reprint of a similar problem they've previously solved. With over 60 articles published about Stat-Ease over the years, it's a highly effective marketing tool. (Stat-Ease articles and other examples can be viewed at www.PublicationCoordination.com/8228.html)

Article reprints are also

effective in a number of other ways:

- Trade Shows: Reprints inspire trust and validity when handed out in person.
- Direct Mail: Send reprints to prospects for impact.
- Requests for Proposals: Furnish reprints (and their inherent trustworthiness) with your proposals.
- Point of Purchase: A reprint in a kiosk or display has the power to sell by itself.
- Investor Relations: Reprints are captivating and influential inserts in your annual reports and are helpful in other financial offerings.

A trade publication reader's interest can be stated in two words: practical information. Everyone enjoys reading stories from experts. Readers want concise, factual information that aids in solving real problems or challenges. Magazines welcome and publish these stories if they tell an interesting, top-notch story. The result is multi-faceted "win" situations for engineers, companies, prospects, editors, and salespeople. ■

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