VOCUS®

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Donna Hedge, Public Relations Specialist

Proof in the Numbers: Vocus Analytics Delivers Critical Metrics for Demonstrating PR Team's Value

Spanning five decades, Cincom Systems claims the title of the world's most experienced software company. The Cincinnati-based company's solutions simplify data access, integration and analytics; process automation; customer communications; and management of complex manufacturing operations. Cincom serves thousands of clients on six continents, including BMW, Citibank, Boeing, Northwestern Mutual, Federal Express, Ericsson, Penn State University, Messier-Dowty, Siemens, Rockwell Automation and Trane.

Challenge

Though Cincom has been in business for decades, its PR department is in its infancy. In 2003, the company created the department as a result of the CEO's mission to increase awareness about the company. Though new, the 2-person PR team has its work cut out for it handling PR for six different divisions or messaging campaigns: the call center, small talk coding language, manufacturing solutions, knowledge builder, international groups, and the CEO, the longest-serving CEO in the computer industry.

Demonstrating the new department's value was essential. Initially, the department kept paper copies of clips, which made it challenging to show coverage easily to PR's internal client groups. For reporting, Donna Hedge, public relations specialist, manually entered key metrics into Excel spreadsheets – a process that took an entire day and kept her from more strategic activities. The department needed a system that would track all its coverage and allow team members to analyze and sort the coverage. Also, as a new department Public Relations had to build most of its relationships, processes, lists and campaigns from the ground up.

Vocus Public Relations Software Solution

Cincom brought in Vocus' PR management software to automate and simplify many of its activities. "Vocus was much less expensive and much better in terms of what it could do," Hedge explained. "Another product we considered didn't have key elements we were looking for like searchability or ad equivalency."

With Vocus, Hedge can tap into extensive, up-to-date information about reporters and media outlets. The level of detail about reporters, more than other sources the team had tried, allows it to tailor

pitches and communications for each journalist. Drawing on the depth of the media database, Vocus lets PR know whether publications accept photos and the delivery methods they prefer.

The database also supports the team's need to build a variety of unique lists. In fact, Cincom PR created 13 different lists to date. With continuous access to current information about media contacts that are automatically updated, the team can easily revise lists to ensure they remain fresh.

Working with an external clipping service, Cincom PR brings all clips electronically into Vocus. Hedge can search for clips by date, type or geography to find desired articles, and then forward them on to interested individuals. Besides supporting the department's need to share coverage with various divisions, the search capability helps Hedge provide the sales team with articles that they can pass on to prospects. She creates a monthly "News You Can Use" email with links to stories of interest.

Instant Reporting Cuts Steps, Demonstrates Results to Management

However, Hedge has noticed the greatest benefits in reporting. "I used to spend a whole day coming up with reports. With Vocus, it only takes a couple of minutes," she said.

On a quarterly basis, she taps into Analytics to extract information from Vocus. Because the department keeps track of all activities and coverage in the system, pulling the information out is a simple process. Quarterly reports, which go to various divisions and the director of worldwide marketing, show the percent of the team's workload that is allocated to each division. They also provides important details about the various activities PR completed for each division, and measures coverage by type, tone, industry, geography and ad equivalency. The latter measurement helps quantify the value of PR to those not as familiar with it.

Hedge also generates ad hoc reports regularly to show results after a major release or campaign. Or, she can pull results together on the fly for a board presentation.

Numbers Enable PR to Refocus Efforts in Pursuit of Goals

PR also leverages the reports to inform its own efforts and make changes. For example, at the outset the team wanted to reduce the percentage of electronic coverage it received, while increasing the level of print and broadcast. Continuous reporting that shows the breakdown helped the team keep up with its progress and focus its efforts on achieving a better balance. With reports, PR could see that its percentage of electronic coverage shifted from 78 percent electronic before to 41 percent now. More print and broadcast stories made up the difference. Such insight lets PR shift its resources to the activities that will best support its goals.

"With so few resources and so much to do, with Vocus we can do things that are effective," Hedge said. "We can look at clips and tag the releases based on categories or key publications. It really allows us to see how we're doing and whether we're going in the right direction. It also helps us validate the whole reason why we have the department."

Results: Less Tactical, More Strategic Efforts

Vocus effectively gives the small staff extra manpower by automating daily activities and reporting. That lets Hedge shift from tactical to more strategic activities. “Vocus has freed up my time,” Hedge said. “With a two-person staff, it didn’t make sense to be doing administrative stuff. This allows me to do more. We’re getting ready for a press tour. Before, I wouldn’t have had time to prepare for all this. In addition, it helped us to get an understanding internally about what PR does.”

With immediate access to key metrics, the team has the important proof it needs to demonstrate its value to the organization. The CEO, as well as the various divisions, have clearly seen the results: From one year to the next, with the founding of PR department, the company increased its total impressions from around 25,000 per month to over one million per month now. Additionally, overall clips increased by 333 percent, while coverage in key publications jumped by 200 percent.