

# The 2014 *TIP* Readers' Survey: Key Results and Current Directions

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With invited commentary from  
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In February-March 2014, SIOP conducted a survey of *TIP* readers to get a sense of the membership's reaction to the transition of *TIP* to a digital format. The survey was prepared by *TIP* Editor Morrie Mullins, with input from multiple members of SIOP leadership, and was reviewed prior to distribution by a group of SIOP members from numerous membership categories (academics, practitioners with emphases in both research and consulting representing both public sector and private sectors, and graduate students). An initial email was sent to all SIOP members inviting them to take part in a survey hosted on SurveyMonkey.com, with a follow-up email sent a little over 2 weeks later. A total of 1,069 SIOP members provided at least partial data for use in analyses (as ever, number of responses varied by question). Due to an oversight, an additional 26 members participated after the data were downloaded but before the survey was actually closed (March 11). Those members' responses are included in all frequency-based analyses. With under 1,100 responses and a total of between

6,000–7,000 SIOP members, the response rate is not particularly high, but it is reported to be in line with participation rates for such important SIOP activities as elections.

Data from the *TIP* Readers' Survey indicate:

- Two-thirds of respondents report reading digital *TIP* either a little less or much less than its print predecessor, often due to (a) announcements of new issues being not received, forgotten, or ignored in already-full email inboxes and (b) issues with the software/interface.
- Over 57% of respondents report enjoying digital *TIP* less than its predecessor.
- Around 52% of respondents report being either satisfied or very satisfied with *TIP*.
- About 22.74% of respondents prefer digital-only *TIP*, whereas 33.68% of respondents would prefer SIOP produce both digital and print versions of *TIP*.

Based on the data, the following action items were either implemented as of the April 2014 issue (the first three) or offered for further discussion (the final two).

- Improve communication concerning *TIP*'s availability and options.
- Add an external table of contents that allows readers to choose single articles to read either in the e-magazine or as pdfs, in addition to making the full issue available.
- Discontinue e-reader format support.
- Consider alternative software options.
- Explore print-on-demand.

### Respondent Demographics

Data were collected on self-identified primary work setting, student versus nonstudent status, years of SIOP membership, and preferred technology to access *TIP*. Of those responding to the work setting question ( $n = 1,018$ ), 493 were academics, including 179 graduate students; 258 self-identified as working in consulting (including 40 graduate students); 89 worked in government (including 28 graduate students); and 178 in industry/for-profit positions (including 40 graduate students). Of the total sample, 29.35% of respondents were currently students (discrepancies between the total percentage of students and the percentages derived from the above sample sizes are due to not all graduate students choosing to answer

the career question). In terms of tenure in SIOP, the two most heavily represented groups were those with 0–5 years of membership (35.29%, which includes the bulk of the graduate student respondents) and 21+ years of membership (23.74%). About 2/3 of respondents access *TIP* using a PC (either desktop or laptop), and almost 20% were Mac users; of the remaining access options, the largest single mode was with an iPad (8.28%), with small numbers of users reporting various other devices/tablets. Noteworthy was that only a total of 12 users reported using either a Kindle tablet ( $n = 10$ ) or an e-reader ( $n = 2$ ).

In addition to the above, the survey queried a number of factors potentially related to reactions to a digital publication. 39.85% of respondents indicated that they spent at least 50% of their work week online, with another 27.93% indicating between 30–49%. Of those who reported having read at least one issue of *TIP*, 60.89% indicated that they had read at least 20% of the latest issue they accessed, with 27.7% reporting that they read 1–19% of the issue.

### Key Outcomes

Respondents reported reading digital *TIP* a lot less (extreme anchor on a five-point scale) than the print edition; 53.95% of respondents selected this op-

tion. In total, almost two-thirds of respondents indicated that they were reading digital *TIP* less than they had read the print version.

Respondents reported enjoying digital *TIP* less (extreme anchor on a three-point scale) than the print edition; 57.22% of respondents selected this option, as opposed to 12.62% who enjoy the digital edition more.

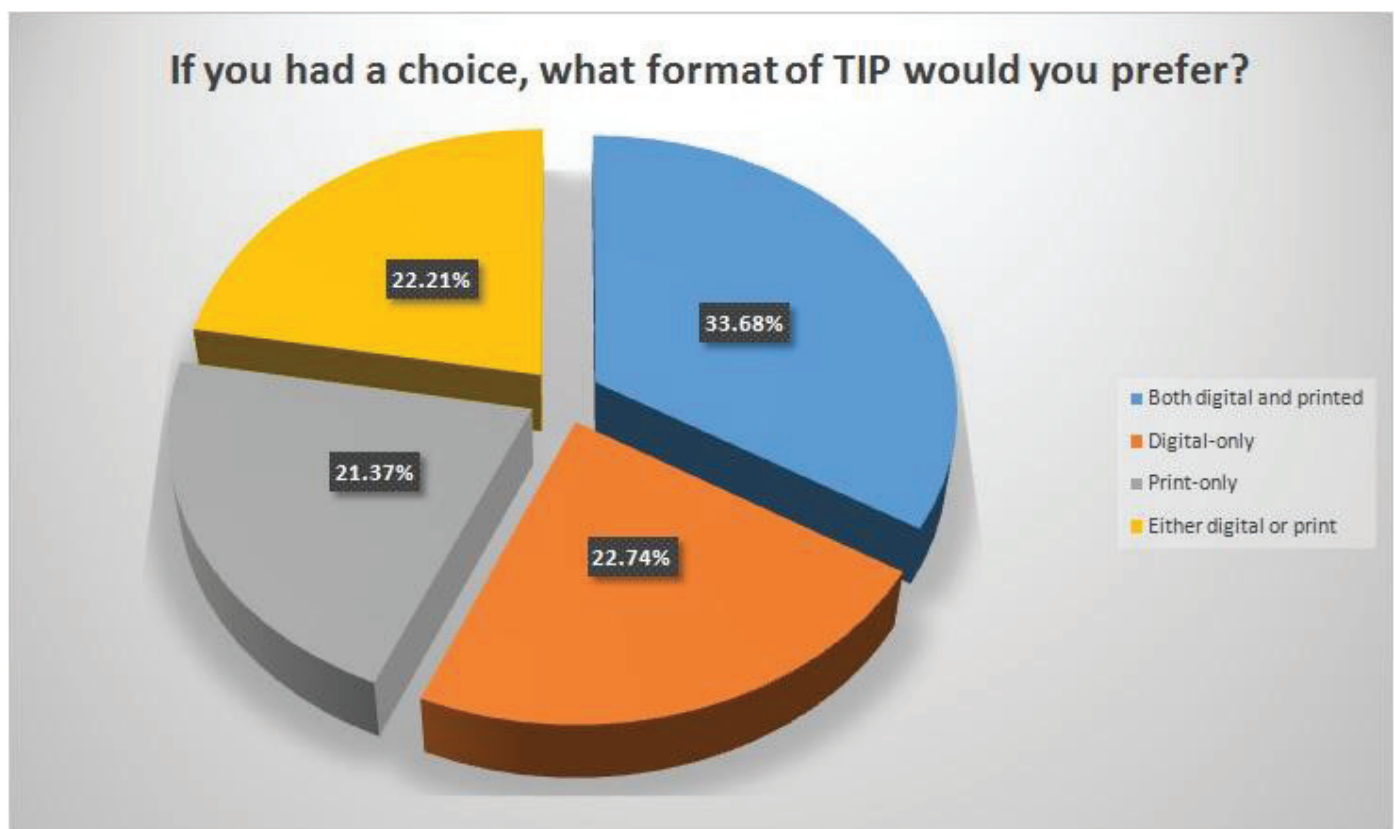
Another metric indicating current reader attitudes was gathered with a question asking, “If you had a choice, which format of *TIP* would you prefer?” The distribution of responses is presented in Figure 1.

As you can see, the most-preferred option based on this survey was both digital and print support, with pure digital

and pure print receiving almost the same level of support as the “either digital or print” option. Given the reasoning behind the transition to digital publishing, however, supporting both digital and print options may not make good sense for the organization.

We contacted SIOP leaders for background on the decision to transition to a digital format and the issues that were considered at the time.

**Doug Reynolds:** *“This issue was discussed over the course of several meetings in 2012 and was a tough decision for the Executive Board because everybody had such a positive orientation toward the publication. Many Board members voiced personal views about how the*



*print publication has been a valued asset over the course of their careers and were reluctant to move away from the print version they were accustomed to.*

*“However, the Board also was presented information about implications of maintaining a print publication in light of the trends and costs for print compared to now-available options for digital. Some of the important facts included (a) the decline in requests for the paper version (approximately 2,000 members were already opting out of the print version at the time of the discussion); (b) cost—we were paying about \$50,000 a year to produce and mail it; (c) significant revenue shortfall (estimates ranged from \$12,000 to \$28,000/year shortfall in advertising revenue); (d) timeliness concerns resulting from the long publication lead time (by the time the issue was produced, many topics were out of date); and (e) the large amount of staff time required to produce the printed version could be allocated to more strategic SIOB objectives.*

*“These facts, paired with the industry trend for smaller circulation publications to move toward digital distribution and the low cost for the tools required to make the transition (less than \$3000) swayed the group to pursue digital options. Aside from the obvious cost considerations, the digital platform allowed for more flexibility in format and con-*

*tent, as well as a shorter production window. Given the trends in publishing, the fact that we would end up having to take TIP digital was pretty clear. The only real question was when the transition would occur and how much of SIOB’s funds were we willing to lose by lengthening the transition time.”*

**José Cortina:** *“SIOB made the decision for the same reason that every organization is making this decision: Print is very expensive, and more and more people prefer these sorts of things to be electronic. For myself, last year I jettisoned 30 years of journals that I had received or inherited because they took up space and I didn’t use them anymore. In 20 years, most SIOB members will have had very little experience with hard copy journals and will wonder why anyone considered this to be a close call. There are things that we need to do better with the digital version, and we are working on those things. But suggesting that we go back to print is like suggesting that we go back to LPs: Some people still prefer them because of the nice big package and the exposure to tangential stuff that they might not have experienced otherwise, but most of us are happy getting individual songs with a mouse click.”*

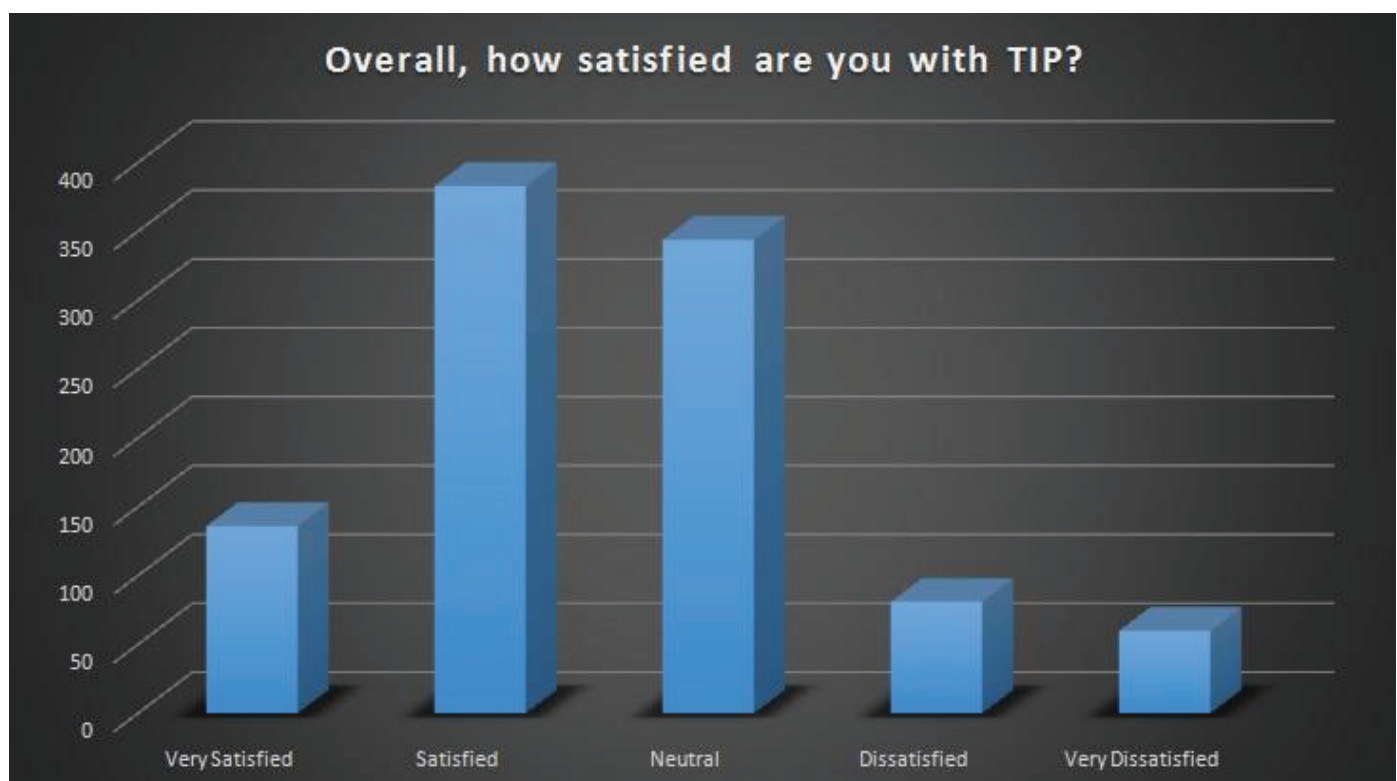
Data from the 1004 members who responded to the question, “Overall, how satisfied are you with TIP?” are presented

in Figure 2. Although the distribution certainly skews toward the “satisfied” end of the spectrum, having only a little over 50% of respondents indicate that they are satisfied with *TIP* is not satisfactory from an editorial perspective, and having one-third indicate that they are neutral about it is troubling as well. Our mission over the next 2 years is to continue to do everything we can to work with Publications Manager Jen Baker and the SIOP Administrative Office team to improve reader satisfaction.

Because concerns had been raised (a consistent theme in the open-ended comments as well) about the software/interface used to present digital *TIP*, a question was included about satisfaction with that interface. The plurality of responses (43.37%) indicated that readers were neutral on the matter, with a total of

28.6% being either very satisfied (7.79%) or satisfied (20.81%), and a total of 28.03% being either dissatisfied (14.77%) or very dissatisfied (13.26%). These numbers are certainly sufficient to warrant exploration of other software options.

We also probed general perceptions of usability of the digital version of *TIP*, asking respondents to rate the usability of the online journal with the technology they utilize most often; the results ( $n = 802$ ) were parallel to responses on satisfaction with the interface but trended slightly more positive. A total of 42.27% of respondents indicated that digital *TIP* was either very easy (10.6%) or easy (31.67%) to use, with 23.06% finding it either very difficult (8.6%) or difficult (14.46%). Data from a follow-up question indicated that of those individuals who had experienced frustration with our digital edition, 68.73% cred-





ited that frustration to the interface (including the “zoom” feature, which has also been heavily remarked-upon in prior communications and open-ended comments to the survey, including questions preceding the “frustration” question) and 31.27% ( $n = 116$ ) indicated frustration was due to “The fact that *TIP* is online at all.”

### Digging Deeper

In an effort to identify patterns that might help us better understand the data, a number of supplemental analyses were run. ANOVAs indicated that despite the fairly large sample size, there were no differences in any key outcome variables (overall satisfaction with *TIP*, satisfaction with the software, changes in enjoyment of *TIP*, or changes in reading habits) based on self-reported employment setting. The shift from print to digital seems to have affected our members without regard to the source of their income.

Differences did emerge, however, based

on tenure in SIOP. This was reported in five categories (0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, and 21+ years), but upon examination of the ANOVA results it became clear that most of the significant differences based on tenure in the organization centered around the 0-5 year group being different from other groups. Because this group ( $n = 383$ ) contained the student members ( $n = 318$ ), it seemed more elegant to eschew the ANOVAs and focus instead on significant differences between student and nonstudent respondents. The results of significant *t*-tests for these groups are reported in Table 1.

As can be seen, students reported spending significantly more of their week online (anchor points: less than 10%, 11–29%, 30–49%, or more than 50%<sup>1</sup>), had read or accessed fewer of the digital issues of *TIP* (range from 1–3), showed less change in enjoyment (anchor points ranged from enjoying digital *TIP* less than print to enjoying digital *TIP* more than print on a 1–3

Table 1

#### *Significant Mean Differences for Student Versus Nonstudent Respondents*

	Portion of week spent online		Digital issues read		Enjoyment change		Change in reading habits		Overall <i>TIP</i> satisfaction	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Students	3.32	0.82	1.73	0.88	1.73	0.74	2.17	1.32	3.62	0.91
Nonstudents	2.89	0.96	2.21	0.86	1.48	0.67	1.67	1.05	3.37	1.05
	$t(1049) = 6.90$		$t(539) = -5.72$		$t(901) = 4.75$		$t(884) = 5.51$		$t(977) = 3.53$	

Note: All *t*-tests are significant at the  $p < .001$  level; the *df* are lower for the "Digital Issues Read" variable because only respondents who indicated at least one digital issue read were included; with those who had read no digital issues included the pattern remains the same but the means drop for both groups ( $M = .85$  for students,  $M = 1.15$  for nonstudents).

scale), reported slightly less decline in their reading of *TIP* (five-point scale ranging from reading digital *TIP* “a lot less” to reading it “a lot more” than print), and were slightly more satisfied with *TIP* than were nonstudent respondents.

In some respects, it shouldn’t be surprising that the group of SIOP members with the most positive reactions (relatively speaking, of course) to the digital transition is also the cohort with the fewest positive associations with the print version of *TIP*, unlike those of us for whom it has been a part of our professional landscape for most of our careers.

A final set of exploratory ANOVAs was conducted utilizing the “If you had a choice...” preference question as a research factor. The four groups differed significantly on their enjoyment of digital *TIP* [ $F(3, 849) = 219.32, p < .001$ ], satisfaction with *TIP* [ $F(3,908) = 45.87, p < .001$ ], satisfaction with the software [ $F(3, 807) = 33.38, p < .001$ ], and how

much they read *TIP* relative to its print incarnation [ $F(3, 831) = 114.43, p < .001$ ]. As can be seen in Table 2 (Tukey post hoc patterns are reported in a footnote to the table), the mean differences on these outcome variables are generally consistent with what would be expected based on respondents’ stated preferences.

## What We’re Doing About It

### Improving Communication

Beginning with the April 2014 issue, the announcement email linked readers to the *TIP* “launch page” rather than the “flipbook,” and included information about the contents of the issue. Being linked directly into the “flipbook,” with its sometimes-unintuitive controls, was an issue raised by no small number of respondents and led to a lack of awareness of other options. The announcement email also made it clear that readers had the option of either the flipbook

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Outcomes<sup>1</sup> Differing by Reading Preference*

	Enjoyment change <sup>2</sup>		Overall <i>TIP</i> satisfaction <sup>3</sup>		Software satisfaction <sup>4</sup>		Change in reading habits <sup>5</sup>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Digital only (DO)	2.25	0.71	3.83	0.88	3.31	1.19	2.90	1.33
Digital or print (DoP)	1.82	0.57	3.84	0.73	3.34	0.91	2.05	1.03
Digital and print (DaP)	1.22	0.22	3.31	1.10	2.78	1.01	1.42	0.56
Print only (PO)	1.05	0.50	2.90	1.03	2.41	1.04	1.14	0.87

1 On the outcomes, the “Enjoyment Change” variable was measured on a 3-point scale such that higher scores indicated more enjoyment of digital as opposed to print *TIP*, whereas the other variables were measured on 5-point scales. For the “Reading Habits” question, the low anchor point was “I read the digital version a lot less than the printed version” and the high anchor point was “I read the digital version a lot more than the printed version,” with a value of 3 indicating “About the same.”

or .pdf version of not only the issue as a whole but of each individual article (a request that turned up several times in the open-ended comments to the survey). The availability of a .pdf option was clearly not communicated by us as well as it could have been because although we have offered a .pdf since launch, when asked whether they were aware that *TIP* offered this option about two-thirds of respondents indicated they were not.

**Tammy Allen:** *“Although involved in the discussions concerning the transition to digital TIP, I was one of the readers who did not realize that a .pdf version was available! There have been some bumps in the road. We are all busy and anything that busts our usual routine can make for a difficult adjustment. I know there are other members like me who miss not having print TIP available to drop into their tote bag for airplane reading. However, I also appreciate the greater flexibility that the digital format provides, and with the .pdf available I can print and read when convenient. Moreover, the content is better than ever. I hope members who reported they enjoy digital TIP less continue to support and read TIP as we continue to improve the product both in terms of content and format.”*

Communicating options very directly and making sure the link to the launch page highlighted the availability of both

flipbook and pdf versions have so far seemed helpful.

In addition, announcements about *TIP* have been (and will continue to be) made through SIOPT’s various social media outlets as well as the initial email. Because of concerns about the sheer volume of emails received (SIOPT understands how busy all of its members’ inboxes are!), utilizing social media (both the @SIOPTweets and @TIP\_Editor twitter accounts, the SIOPT Facebook page, and the SIOPT LinkedIn group) to announce new issues and to provide links to specific articles, as well as occasionally highlighting *TIP* articles on the main SIOPT page, will help provide reminders without further exploding your inboxes.

### **External Table of Contents**

The *TIP* “launch page” to which the email announcement directs readers now includes a full table of contents for the issue. This allows readers to skim through the article and column titles and click ones that sound interesting; it may not be the same as flipping through a physical copy, but it also doesn’t require opening the flipbook version of *TIP* at all because, as noted, all articles are now available as downloadable individual .pdf files. Of 964 readers who answered the question, “If individual articles were made available as web pages through



SIOP.org, how likely would you be to access them?” 575 said that they would be either likely or very likely to do so. The .pdf can be viewed as its own page or saved locally and makes for more convenient sharing of articles than was possible with the pre-April setup. This also addressed a concern voiced by a number of readers in open-ended comments, specifically that it was difficult to print off single articles using the flipbook interface.

### ***Discontinuing e-Reader Support***

This decision was not made lightly, and we apologize to any readers who utilized a basic Kindle or Nook to read *TIP*. Not just for removing those options but for the quality of the version of *TIP* you received for the prior three issues. Put bluntly, the translation to e-reader format of a publication as feature-rich and complex as *TIP* was never satisfactory to anyone involved in the publication process. When we saw that only two respondents listed “e-reader” as their primary means of reading *TIP*, it was decided that we needed to focus on doing fewer things but doing them better. Discontinuing e-reader support in favor of the external table of contents and individual article .pdfs is a change that Publications Manager Jen Baker and the AO team handled with grace, and we hope that the change is one that our readers agree is worthwhile.

### ***Consider Other Publishing Platforms/Programs***

I (the editor) have been researching other publishing programs, but my experience with sample publications is that many of them have the same kinds of functionality problems that open-ended responses indicate have been problematic for *TIP* readers, and some either do not support the full range of mobile devices or are targeted solely to mobile device users. Many of them have limited “zoom” functionality, and although not all of them have the same scrolling features that some respondents noted as problematic, many of them still do not utilize the same kinds of commands/interface that readers are used to in interacting with plain pdf files. That being said, the pdf-to-e-magazine market seems to be proliferating in terms of publishing options, so continuing to examine potential solutions if reader satisfaction numbers do not improve is important.

### ***Exploring Print-on-Demand***

An ideal solution would be a publishing program/publisher who (a) provides software that can do the kind of digital conversion we have with 3D Issue (our current software), with comparable or better functionality, and (b) can provide readers with the option to order a paper copy directly from the publisher. At least some readers have indicated that they would

be willing to pay extra for a paper copy of *TIP*, and at least one service (HP Mag-cloud, which will soon be merged with Blurb.com) does exist that does digital and print-on-demand. Unfortunately, the cost to order a copy through this service would be \$.20 per page, or about \$40 for a 200-page copy of *TIP*. This is unrealistic, so the search for print-on-demand options will continue.

### **Ongoing Data Collection**

More frequent “sensing” of *TIP* readers is important, but not every survey will focus on the same elements as the one we recently completed. Moving forward, we will look at further tailoring the publication, getting your reactions to the content, the layout, and the other elements that are central to our number one goal: Providing a high-quality publication to SIOP members. With that in mind, starting now we will be conducting a survey to go along with each new issue, for at least the next year. These surveys will ask you about what you read, what you enjoyed, what aspects of the publication you appreciated (or didn’t), but they will stay relatively brief. To help encourage feedback, for each issue we will be giving away two \$100 credits to the [SIOP Store](#), where you can pur-

chase SIOP gear, books from SIOP’s Organizational Frontiers and Professional Practice Series, and more! All you have to do to enter is submit a survey. In other words, it goes a little like this: Read *TIP*. Give feedback. Get entered to win SIOP swag. It’s just. That. Easy. Given how many of you were willing to take time out of your busy schedules to give us feedback without any direct incentives, I hope you will make time to do so again by clicking this link, [LINKY], which you’ll find at other points throughout the issue.

### **Final Thoughts**

Thank you to everyone who contributes to *TIP*—our regular columnists, SIOP committee chairs, article authors, the AO, members of SIOP leadership who took the time to contribute their thoughts to this piece, Jen Baker—and to you. Thank you, the reader, for caring enough to share how you feel about *TIP*. We continue to listen and continue to be committed to providing you with the best possible reading experience.

Endnote: 1: Oops. Apparently, there was no way for anyone to spend exactly 10% of their work week online...

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