

Networks holds monthly general meetings during lunch, after work. Open to all employees & agents. Topics are broad interest, help employees understand political, corporate environment. In addition, a number of support groups also meet for middle management, administrative assistants, women, even one for those returning to workforce.

Foden admits at first some management & fellow employees looked at Networks suspiciously. "There was a lot of fear we'd be an advocacy group or unionize," she told prr. But she & other organizers believed "there was a supportive environment for this kind of activity" so they took the risk. Coy Ecklund, Equitable pres., has since provided backing group needed to thrive. Keynote speaker at first annual luncheon, this year he will host it "in recognition of our achievements & what we've done for the company," Foden says. Group has received favorable coverage in tv documentary, other media, "another way in which Equitable has benefited."

NEW FORD VP-PA TAKES OVER
AT TOUGH -- OR OPPORTUNE -- TIME,
HAS OVERSEAS, EDITORIAL BACKGROUND

Walter Hayes becomes vp-pa at Ford Jan. 1 succeeding Ted Mecke. He's already not only vp of co. but vice chmn of Ford of Europe, has been on boards of British, Swiss, Belgian

subsidiaries. Significant because of recent company news, Hayes was vp-pa for Ford of Europe in '68. Nov. 15, co. leaked to press fact it is losing \$1 billion annually on North American car operations. Int'l operations are profitable -- which ties to Hayes' background.

Some commentators wonder whether overseas profits are due to fact small, fuel-efficient cars are made & sold there, whereas in U.S. & Canada Big 3 automakers said people wouldn't buy small cars. (Announcement could affect Chrysler's chances of federal financial aid.)

One area Hayes may want to look into is current promotion equating "high fuel economy" with "longest estimated driving range." Ford & others now push number of miles per tank ... questionable manipulation of data. Unlikely to fool many customers but may reinforce buyers who really want bigger vehicles and need rationalization to purchase. "For example," reads release on pickups & vans, "the all-new Ford F-100, when fitted with an optional 19-gallon tank, has an estimated highway range of 1,102 miles between fill-ups." Omitted is word "additional" (or "auxiliary") before "optional": if total capacity was only 19 gals., trip described would provide astounding 58 mpg.

Hayes, 55, was assoc. ed. of London Daily Mail, ed-in-chief of Sunday Dispatch before joining Ford.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. PRSA Section Officers - 1980:

Corporate: Foster Smith (BFGoodrich, Akron, Ohio)

Counselors: Robert Drohlich (Robert Drohlich Assocs, St. Louis)

Educational Institutions: Eugene Kennedy (Catholic Univ. of America, D.C.)

Educators: Dennis Wilcox (San Jose State Univ., Calif.)

Association: Thomas Kraner (Amer. Paper Institute, NYC)

Financial Institutions: Donald Hill (Federal Home Loan Mortgage, D.C.)

Government: Kenneth Wheeler (City of Norfolk, Va.)

Health: Frank Weaver (Baylor College of Medicine, Houston)

Investor Relations: Alan Quinby (Doremus, NYC)

Utilities: William Miller (Amer. Gas Ass'n, Arlington, Va.)

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HARBINGER OF ACCEPTANCE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS THINKING?
U.S. CONGRESS ADOPTS BILL TO PROBE "DE-LAWYERING AMERICA,"
FIND ALTERNATIVES TO LAWSUITS AS DISPUTES REACH CRISIS LEVEL

Dispute Resolution Act passed the House last Wednesday 205 - 197. Had already passed the Senate. Only minor differences remain for conference committee to iron out. The bill, S. 423, seeks to establish fair & inexpensive mechanisms for resolving disputes without lawyers. Passage despite fact many federal lawmakers are attorneys suggests scope of concern over "litigious society."

Funds for demonstration projects will be available to citizen groups, bar ass'ns, the states, others. Goal is "fair and reasonable procedures for dispute resolution that are 1) free of technicalities, 2) easy for potential users to understand, 3) open at convenient times & locations," according to HALT, bill's prime backer (pr 9/10).

Legal advisor Bob Tigner told prr this will make alternative methods to litigation more conspicuous, serve as role model for accommodation, conciliation, arbitration, talking out problems -- what practitioners call "the public relations approach" as opposed to "I'll sue you." While consumers and small business can gain most, potential for retailers, auto dealers, hospitals etc. could affect every organization. "The principles are the same whether you're a homeowner in dispute with your neighbor over the fence or two rival multinational corporations in some kind of sales dispute," says Tigner.

Bill is small start, with minor funding (\$10 or \$15 million, to be resolved between houses), covers demonstration projects only. But incisive article by Laura Nadler in current Psychology Today shows seriousness of complaint/dispute issue: 1) efforts to settle disputes for constituents cost members of Congress & staffs one-third of working time; 2) one of every six purchases leads to

ROOTS

It was your President Thomas Jefferson who in 1807 made the first actual use of the phrase "public relations." While drafting his Seventh Address to the Congress, he scratched out the words "state of thought" in one place and wrote "public relations" instead.

Let us go back to the root of the word "communications."

Communication is derived from the Latin verb communicare, "to talk together, confer, discourse, and consult, with one another."

It is intimately related to the Latin word communitas, which means not only community but also fellowship and justice in dealings with one another.

-- Sanat Lahiri of Calcutta pres., IPRA

reasonable complaints that are not resolved. Title of her forthcoming book is revealing, supports trend of S. 423: No Access to Law: Alternatives to the American Judicial System.

Article picks up on "pr approach." Legal system worked when people knew or knew of one another, "public opinion was an important mechanism of social control." Today, she claims, "the belief that right should prevail is starving for lack of attention."

Business and its strategies for dealing with complainers are largely to blame, Nader feels. In addition to de-lawyering, she proposes stiff remedies: licensing businesses, lifting their permits for misconduct; putting burden on product and maker, not consumer and "caveat emptor"; no-fault compensation in certain cases; a complaint bank monitored by FTC; making products or ads carry notices advising the manufacturer has violated consumer laws. (For copy of article, write prr.)

HALT represents consumer movement applied to a profession, just published Citizens Legal Manual. It tells how to "shop for a lawyer." First step is to find out if you can do it yourself. Then, try arbitration. If must have attorney, phone around to compare prices & services offered. Shows how to interview lawyers, gives exact questions to ask. Explains fees, urges getting written billing agreement. Interesting bibliography. (Copies from HALT, 201 Mass. Ave. N.E., Wash., D.C. 20002.)

SOME "PERSONAL MEDIA" TECHNIQUES:
ONE IS QUERYING OTHERS ABOUT FEELINGS
TO ACHIEVE TRUE COMMUNICATION

Only if non-verbalized feelings of people engaged in conversation are brought into the open can real communication result, interpersonal relations expert Charles

Tucker told PRSA Counselors Section/Chicago. Practitioners must candidly feed back their perceptions about the other party's underlying feelings, thought & desires to facilitate communication. "The other person's tone of voice, gestures, facial expression give you their own message whatever the accompanying words may be."

Tucker suggests stating, "It sounds to me as if you feel (think, want, etc.)...." This provides opening for person to spell out what's rally in his or her mind & heart. Both risk & trust are involved. But environment of any face-to-face discussion includes personal relationship as well as content.

Gestures are another overlooked communication device, say authors of new book titled simply Gestures (Stein & Day Pubrs). They've been considered second class message senders, but for expressing changing moods or emotional states authors "would go as far as to claim that gestural information is more important than verbal." Particularly potent subject for practitioners involved in picketing, demonstrations, other confrontations.

Available responses to remarks made in conversation have been typed by Gerald Goodman. One can 1) question; 2) advise (explanations, demonstrations, suggestions); 3) be silent; 4) reflect (tossing back original thought in another form); 5) interpret; or 6) offer self-disclosure by voluntarily relating the material to one's own feelings, opinion, etc. He used technique to rate tv talk-show hosts in current TV Guide. Useful for television & press interviews, meetings, adversarial situations.

TO HEAT OR TO EAT
IS OLDER AMERICANS' QUERY;
WHAT THEY EXPECT OF UTILITIES

50% of federal budget is transfer items, such as Medicare. Older-population demographics ensures continued growth of these expenditures. Also 40% of those voting in last major election were 55 or over, points out George Will, contributing editor, Newsweek.

Still, "to heat or to eat" is a daily question for 3¼ million older Americans whose income averages \$65.39 per week. Nat'l Senior Citizens Law Ctr. forecasts low income older persons may have to spend 40 - 50% or more of incomes to heat their homes this winter. Lu Patrick, pres., Tulsa Coalition for Older People, told PRSA's Utilities Section older consumer has these expectations of utilities: 1) availability of supply of heat, light, telephone; 2) management efficiency, including reasonable (not unreasonably high) investment return; 3) special social responsibility in monopoly situation.

Patrick emphasized utilities are not expected to become social welfare agencies. Senior citizens want these evidences of social conscience:

- 1) Develop extended and averaged payment plans for fixed-income customers.
- 2) Adopt Oregon Plan in which investor-owned utilities implement PUC-approved weatherization plan. Subsequent free publicity gets more space than most utility advertising budgets can buy, she reports.
- 3) Work for legislation on weatherization standards for homes.
- 4) Promote conservation education and name energy efficient brands of appliances. But don't just tell older people to insulate homes -- they can't afford it without local or federal help.
- 5) Don't penalize conservative user of scarce product thru higher per-unit rates than profligate consumer pays.

Cooperation between service agencies, utility companies, PUC at local level brought prestige to Tulsa utilities, heads off "Big Brother Government," says Patrick. (For full text, write prr.)

SOCIOLOGICAL CLASSIC,
THE FEARED INFORMAL GROUP,
PROVES BOON TO EQUITABLE

At Equitable Life Assurance Co. (NYC) what started as a women's discussion session 3 yrs ago has grown into vast informal employee group. Known as "Networks," "a self-formed group of women & men," it boasts 450 members -- at least 10% men, according to Joan Foden, group spokesperson & pension consultant.

"Basically, we're a communications organization," says Foden, "to help people utilize Equitable's resources -- which are vast and which you, as an individual, often don't know how to get to." When Networks started, Equitable didn't have active training program. Group also aimed to help company "use its human resources -- us."

GOV'T RESPONSE TO UTILITY CONSUMERS

Tennessee is the only state with no official utility consumer advocate, according to U.S. Ofc. of Cons. Affrs. These officials in 20 states have formed Nat'l Ass'n of State Utility Consumer Advocates. Titles vary from consumer advocate to people's counsel and "dir., utility intervention ofc." (NY). Asst. Atty. Gens. have responsibility in some states. (For lists, write prr.)