

THINGS PROFESSIONALS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

¶People would rather lie than admit ignorance to a researcher. Tendency to protect the ego -- and skew data results -- has been reconfirmed by new study (see prr 2/11). Marketing profs. Kevin Clancy (Boston Univ) and Lyman Ostlund (Univ of Ariz.) and Phila. mktg analyst Gordon Wyner asked 1000 subscribers to a magazine whether they'd read the most recent issue, & if so, to recall specific articles & ads.

Despite warning that some material was phony, about 30% claimed recall on at least one bogus article. Almost 40% claimed recall on bogus ads. All respondents may not be intentionally deceptive to save face, Ostlund believes. Some may be making subjective judgement about probability of having seen article. The researchers recommend greater reliance on "recall" method in which readers must prove recollection.

¶Obfuscation pulls high marks -- at least in academe. Wharton School prof. J. Scott Armstrong asked 20 mgmt profs to rank prestige of several mgmt journals. Result: the journal hardest to read was rated most prestigious; the most readable, the least prestigious. Then Armstrong gave another group of mgmt profs several versions of the same passage. Asked to rate the competence of research being reported, profs rated the easy version as less reliable.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

PEOPLE. John Tucker named vp-cons & urban afrs, American Gas Assn (Arlington, Va.)...Eamon Brennan leaves post as vp-pa, NY Hospital to join wife's pr counseling firm, renamed Brennan & Brennan PA/PR (NYC)...Amer Nuclear Society (La Grange Park, Ill.) appoints James R. Heelan svcs hd, resp for pub info...Bozell & Jacobs/PR (Union, N.J.) promotes Richard G. Small, gen'l mgr...Geri Haber named mgr special events at Bruce Rubin Assocs (Miami).

Creamer Dickson Basford/NE (Providence, R.I.) promotes Stephen D. Barrett to group mgr...H. William Falk joins CBS Radio Network (NYC) as dir, press info...Data Terminal Systems (Maynard, Mass.) appoints Ronald Jasper dir, corp comms...Jennifer Joyce Reid named asst dir, pr & adv, for Dallas Market Center (Dallas)...Ursel T. Dougherty promoted to new position of mgr-pub info, Eaton Corp (Cleveland)...Ebasco Services Inc. (NYC) promotes Nicholas Alexis to dir, mktg & corp comms...Ford Motor Co. (Dearborn, Mich.) appoints Jerry L. Sloan dir, corp info; William J. Goodell dir, publ'ns & creative dev.

Grocery Products Div of McCormick & Co. (Baltimore) promotes Carolyn Mormann Manning to mgr-trade comms...Olin Corp. (Stamford, Conn.) appoints Alexander M. Houston pr mgr.

Fuji Magnetic Tapes (NYC) appoints Len Stein as pr rep...GalaVision (NYC) names D. Suzette Grimm dpr...W.R. Grace & Co. (NYC) promotes Frederick E. Bona to press rels dir, & Corinne A. Forti to info svcs dir...Rolf W. Utegaard joins Gulf Oil Corp (Pittsburgh) as public comms mgr...Lee Oberlag joins Hudepohl Brewing Co. (Cincinnati) as adv/pr dir...Gulf & Western Natural Resources Group (Nashville) promotes Ryland L. Hoskins to comms dir.

Jos. Schlitz Brewing Co. (Milwaukee) appoints Willa J. Benge dir minority afrs...Diane B. Pucko appointed mpa, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Ohio (Cleveland)...John M. Maddigan Jr. named assoc dir of Ketchum MacLeod & Grove (Pittsburgh)...Martin Williams Adv. (Mpls.) appoints James M. Jarvela assoc dpr...Lutheran Brotherhood (Mpls.) appoints Charles DeVries hd of newly created comms div.

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LONG-AWAITED QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE VOTE PROVIDES PR CASE STUDY;
CAMPAIGN AIMS AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL,
PITS COOL LOGIC AGAINST "THE BIG ADJECTIVE"

On May 20 Quebec will vote on long-debated independence. Complex of public opinion and communications strategies make good case study for practitioners.

Form of ballot question reveals Parti Quebecois tactic. Instead of asking voters to say yes or no to outright independence, it asks for approval to negotiate terms with Canadian gov't. As a result, many voters will cast "soft yes" decisions, according to Monty Berger, pres, Berger & Assocs (Montreal), in hopes negotiation will be "a lever to win more rights and concessions" within Canada. "Many don't realize a 'yes' outcome does carry the risk of being a slippery road to total independence," Berger told prr. Reason is that rest of provinces don't want to negotiate. For this reason, Claude Ryan, leader of opposition Liberal Party, calls question "vicious and dishonest."

Jacques LaRiviere, vp, Public & Industrial Relations (Montreal) likens campaign to "labor-management dispute." Parti Quebecois makes "frequent use of oversimplified statements" -- the big adjective, the not-completely-accurate challenging statement. The other side is faced with a proposition that is less emotional -- the old raw emotion versus cool logic debate."

On the other hand, LaRiviere says, "Federalists have been traditionally timid about displaying their political colors." Berger agrees that potential 'no' voters are less vocal. Grassroots efforts on both sides, therefore, have worked to advantage of separatists, who have concentrated on "friendly territory" anyway, according to corp vp-pr who asked to remain anonymous. "The strategy is to make it seem as if there is no opposition."

Liberal Party's slogan, seen on buttons & posters throughout Quebec, is "The more I think about it, the more it's no." "It's an interesting speculation," Berger told prr, "whether sober-minded citizens will be emotionally caught up in making a fundamental decision, that will effect them and their descendants for generations, based on communications razzledazzle rather than substance."

Altho polls indicate close race, Berger believes question will be defeated "in the order of 60% against 40% for." Quebecers are "immensely proud of being Canadians" and in the "privacy of the polling booth will cast a sober vote against sovereignty."

Whatever the outcome, sources agree issue will not be settled by the vote. The 20% English-speaking population of Quebec, felt to be virtually a 100% 'no' block, can defeat question even if majority of French Canadians vote in support. Speculation is that this divisive "worst result" could revive separatist violence which broke out in '70. Already, LaRiviere reports emotionally charged words "Cuba" & "Zimbabwe" have been heard in heated debates.

Federal gov't ruled against corporations taking public stand on issue. Many individuals within corporations have come out strongly on the 'no' side, Berger reports. This stance can be "counterproductive" to companies in Quebec, he feels. Fear of reprisal by Parti Quebecois led many people prr wanted to interview to refuse comment -- forestalling possible public and gov't relations crises.

WHAT LIES BEHIND PUBLIC'S MOOD?
TWO INTERPRETATIONS CALL FOR
DIFFERENT PR STRATEGIES

Most efforts to restore public confidence in institutions falter because they ignore the public's mood, says Jim Lindheim, former sr-vp at Yankelovich, Skelly & White (NYC). But diagnosis of the mood depends on who takes the pulse -- and, it seems, previous academic training. Two principals of the social research firm, Daniel Yankelovich and Florence Skelly, prefer different analyses. Yankelovich has B.A. in psychology and M.A. in philosophy from Harvard. Skelly has done graduate work at Columbia in sociology.

Both Yankelovich & Skelly believe antipathy toward institutions stems from reversal in trend toward a constantly rising standard of living. Result is "anxiety and a lost confidence in the future," says Lindheim. "Instead of 'pulling their act together,' people have become cynical and less likely to sacrifice."

Yankelovich sees this as a psychological phenomenon, "a shock reaction which has an effect similar to losing a loved one -- shock, disbelief, anger." He believes this "mourning" is temporary, so "society will eventually work things through and revitalize itself."

No such optimistic regard in Skelly's sociological assessment. She sees a society "adrift" in the aftermath of the "social values revolution," Lindheim told prr. Emphasis on individual comfort & personal ethics "will make it hard for Americans to come to grips with the sacrifices they face."

From Yankelovich's view, programs to restore confidence should logically present facts since healing is matter of time. Skelly's scenario calls for a more "manipulative" approach -- "making it seem as if there's something in it for them personally," Lindheim says.

"People feel in pain -- and companies are not positioned to ask them to sacrifice. If they do, the response will be 'I've sacrificed quite enough already, thank you.'" Approach should aim to ease individual pain, for example, "giving information that helps consumers save money."

Lindheim cautions business against the tendency to communicate in its own self-interest. "That is the least relevant, most counterproductive approach," he says.

HOSPITAL MAINTAINS LOW PROFILE
DURING COMMUNITY RELATIONS CRISIS --
QUESTION OF "ETHICS," DPA SAYS

When Wilmington Medical Center (Del.) announced plans to relocate hospital to suburbs, inner city minority & elderly groups countered with a civil rights suit. Five yrs. of litigation later, the Center has received a favorable ruling. But community relationships are badly bruised. Throughout litigation the Center maintained silence on the issue. Case study raises question of whether it's ethical -- or productive -- to defend institution in court of public opinion while being tried in court of law.

Med Ctr DPA Max Elder told pr reporter decision to keep quiet was a matter of institutional ethics: "We didn't feel it was ethical to put our case before the court of

public opinion until it had passed through the legal court." However, silence took toll on "public understanding of the Medical Center's goals." The other side was "very vocal," took full advantage of "public relations techniques." "We took quite a beating in the media," he says.

First effort to "heal the wound" was brief pamphlet sent to 15-20,000 area residents -- right before Court decision. "We were pretty sure that when it came down to a decision, the vote would favor us," he says. Booklet explains why new med center is needed and enumerates successes of present facility. There's no fundraising pitch -- or mention of litigation. "Our goal was to re-orient people. We wanted to let them know the new Center is still on the horizon and educate them as to why it's needed."

Postage-paid reply card, addressed to Wilmington Med Ctr president, encourages readers to ask questions. Feedback mechanism has brought vigorous response: 5200 -- close to one-third of recipients -- have written. Inner city residents have been predictably skeptical while suburbanites are generally supportive -- leaving the Center's public relations work cut out.

Despite this, Elder maintains he'd "still vote for ethics" if he had to choose again. The Center will "now begin to think of programs to regain trust of disgruntled minority groups," he says. However, there is also a chance that the plaintiff will appeal the Court decision.

80s WILL REPLACE "ME" VALUES OF 70s WITH "WE" VALUES

Major trend of past decade will decline, believes IABC pres. Lou Williams, for the following reasons:

1. Families are coming back. This emphasizes the human need for love, which takes 2, i.e. "we."
2. Religious organizations are rising rapidly, and reinforcing family activities (see article on Catholic Church's World Communications Day, prr 4/28.)
3. "Roots" approach: deep seated belief in the need to know where we came from, i.e. a "we" value.
4. We are still joiners, because of the need to belong, to be more acceptable, to find friends. New organizations of all types continue to spring up, and old ones are rising in membership.
5. Gov't remains paternalistic & socialistic -- which is a reflection of interdependence, a "we" value. (Even a Reagan presidency couldn't change it.) Public participation is still a key trend.
6. The return to public transportation and carpooling is a "we" value emphasizing togetherness & sharing. The continuing oil crisis will increase the trend.
7. Business sees an increasing co-authorship of policies: workers participate, the public is proposing corporate democracy, gov't regulates in the name of us all, and shareholders rights is a rising issue -- all "we" values. Many feel gov't should do even more. (See article on Union Carbide's probing of public attitudes toward institutions, prr 4/28.)

-- Address during Communications Week at California State Univ, Fullerton.