

PERCEPTIONS OF AN OLE PRO

PUBLIC RELATIONS ... is not anything that a company or an institution or an organization does. Rather, it is the result of what is accomplished ... The most important fundamental of public relations is the attitude of the mind. It is partly a philosophy, or perspective in thinking about things ... Good results can be attributed to a rare combination of specialized skills and correct judgment. In this regard, I perceive public relations as an art ... Public relations is also a science since it can be properly oriented to a set of objectives or a statement of purpose ... Public relations becomes the unique know-how of getting things done successfully. It is a keen sensitivity to people and timing in terms of markets, competitors, community crises or world affairs.

-- Charles H. Zeanah
Dir corp/comty rels
Ethyl Corp. (Richmond, Va.)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. John J. Mesaros, 41, sr specialist comms & pr dep't, Battelle's Columbus Laboratories (Ohio), on May 26. Broad background in pr & mktg comms.

AWARDS. Barry B. Combs, dpr, Union Pacific Railroad (Omaha) honored as Professional of the Year by Nebraska Chap PRSA and Earle A. Clark, retired vp, Northern Natural Gas (Omaha) receives Chap's Pioneer Award...Winners receiving Women in Communications' 1980 Clarion Awards in public relations div include: Calif. Judges Ass'n (SF) for "Criminal Courts Project"; Columbia Gas (Ohio) for "1979 HEARTS Campaign"; Children's Hospital (Phila) for "Special Event in Honor of Internat'l Year of the Child"; Bethesda Lutheran Home (Watertown, Wis.) "Celebrating 75 Years of Reaching Out to the Retarded"...
F. Michael Lorz, pr & comms mgr, Battelle (Columbus) honored by Central

Ohio Chap PRSA as Distinguished Practitioner...Dr. Alan Scott, prof of journalism, U of Texas, receives College of Comms Teaching Excellence Award 1980 ...Jean Marie Tanner (Cranford, N.J.) is recipient of Foundation For Public Relations Research & Education 1980 Graduate Scholarship Award.

VICE PRESIDENTS. Jean Monaghan, Lobsenz-Stevens (NYC)...James J. McCaffrey, asst vp, William M. Mercer Inc. (Boston) ...Shelagh Hackett Thomee, Carol Moberg Comms (NYC)...Fabianne W. Gershon, vp & dir corp comms, Morgan Stanley & Co. (NYC)...Gene Ward, P.R. Assocs (NYC)...Candace Leeds, vp & group supvr, and Cherry Pemberton Scarborough, The Rowland Co. (NYC)...Patricia Hart McMillan, exec vp, Sweet & Co. (NYC)...Hal Stroube, Underwood, Jordan Assocs (D.C.) ...Dennis D. Chapman, vp & pr dir, The John Volk Co. (Chi).

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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY CAN HUMANIZE BUSINESS, SAYS EXPERT;
COLLECTING STORIES PROVES WAY TO BUILD EMPLOYEE & STOCKHOLDER PRIDE

Organizational history may be an overlooked "equalizer" for softening public perceptions of institutions as "impersonal" and "monolithic," believes Mimi Stein, pres, Oral History Associates (SF). "History is often one of the only ways people can relate to business," she claims. "Profit and loss, return on investment -- that doesn't mean much to the average citizen."

Histories can be used for "articles, books, in-house publications, films, slide shows, advertising copy," Stein told pr. History adds a "human dimension" to corporate image. Tracing the story back to its inception shows "it is still possible for somebody to start something in his garage and have it grow into a billion dollar corporation with markets all over the nation, and maybe all over the world."

Backbone of histories consists of interviews -- with founders, former CEOs, long-time employees: "Much of the real story of what happened in the course of growth exists only in the memories of people who actually made it happen -- and only by capturing that information on tape will it ever be saved at all." Interviews are recorded on broadcast-quality tape -- for voiceovers in case company should want to do a film. Tapes are then transcribed, checked for accuracy and indexed. "Sometimes that's all a company wants," she said, "but sometimes the company wants a book, also."

One such company was Consolidated Freightways (SF). It commissioned a history in honor of its 50th anniversary. "At first I had mixed emotions about this...on one hand you could say '50 years -- who the hell cares'.... On the other hand, we felt we really ought to do something," Wilbur Grant, dir corp comms, told pr.

Pride Is One Result The product, 64-page illustrated 9x12 paper-bound book, was "wonderfully received," reports Grant. Sent free to employees & stockholders, it elicited "letters from employees saying how proud they were to work for the company, stockholders writing that they were proud to have stock in the company -- including attorneys writing on prestigious law firm stationery, and one professor who ordered additional copies to use as classroom material."

Grant estimates project cost \$60-75,000, "a very reasonable cost." Convincing management to go along with this project of "intangible" value "depends a lot on how your CEO feels about history, and whether he trusts your judgment," Grant finds. "It's a touchy subject when you start talking about former chief executives. We didn't want to point fingers, but you can't ignore history, either."

Both Stein and Grant advise going outside to produce a history. "Because of hierarchical problems, an employee may not be completely frank," Stein reveals, "and

it does take considerable skill to conduct a good interview, one that will elicit useful historical information." Grant adds that having a good insider for editing is essential, however.

NORTH AMERICAN ANOMALY:
CANADIAN CONSTITUTIONAL POLITICS SHOW
FRAGILITY OF TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED FREEDOMS

The practice of public relations rests on a set of individual & organizational freedoms. They make possible the court of public opinion. Without them, the

people would not be able to participate in social, economic & political decisions. Without that, there would be no need for public relations as we know it. Canada's current debate on a new constitution spotlights how basic freedoms are taken for granted.

Toronto Star headline tells the story: "Civil liberties hang on whim of Commons." Article states: "The freedom to join the political party of your choice, the right to demonstrate and openly oppose government policies, the right to a fair hearing and a trial by jury and freedom of the press are just some of the liberties every Canadian enjoys as a birthright. But at any time, a majority of MPs in the House of Commons could vote to abolish or suspend civil liberties.

"The contradiction between our fundamental safeguards and the arbitrary powers of Parliament is one of the key structural problems of Canadian democracy; and the often-conflicting responsibilities for civil liberties shared by the federal and provincial levels of government are at the heart of the Great Constitutional Debate."

At issue is guaranteeing civil liberties, as U.S. did in Bill of Rights. Several provincial leaders are strongly opposed. Manitoba premier Sterling Lyon went to last week's initial meeting to discuss a new constitution with one non-negotiable position: opposition to a bill of rights. Prime minister Trudeau is chief spokesman for entrenching rights in the constitution.

In the U.S., every so often someone takes a poll asking whether people are in favor of what turns out to be Bill of Rights rephrased. Inevitable the response is that these are radical ideas which should not be tolerated. Gallup's recent survey for the First Amendment Congress shows a majority of Americans feel this amendment is not important today.

Also of interest to practitioners is question of who controls telecommunications & broadcasting. Federal government does now, Quebec wants complete powers over cable tv and telephone company activities.

THINGS PROFESSIONALS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Biggest conference ever on futurism will be held July 20-24 in Toronto. Sponsored by World Future Society with cooperation of other groups, First Global Conference on the Future is titled: "Through The 80s -- Thinking Globally, Acting Locally." Over 100 leading futures researchers are on program including Marshall McLuhan, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Ted Gordon, Hazel Henderson, Lester Brown, Willis Harman, Graham Molitor et al. Segments of several sessions each -- with well-known discussion leaders -- will be devoted to human behavior & social organization, human settlements & their networks, health & medicine, human values, science & technology, energy, resources, information & telecommunications, education & knowledge, work &

careers, business directions, economics & finance, and politics & government. (For information, write World Future Society, 4916 St. Elmo Ave., Washington, D.C. 20014.)

Consumer representatives are being installed in 35 federal agencies. Move by President Carter last week circumvents Congress which refused to create separate consumer affairs agency. Programs will be headed by high level officials who report directly to agency heads on how policies affect consumers. Response to strategy has been mixed. Rep. Benjamin Rosenthal (D-NY) called it "a major step forward." Ralph Nader says program is "structurally deficient," among other reasons, because consumer officials won't challenge their bosses. Both are supporters of an independent agency.

Dow Chemical USA will provide consumers with direct access to a computer for safety information starting this fall. Notification system also includes less timely data sheets on such items as spill, leak & exposure procedures; first aid; notes for physicians; emergency Dow contact.

"Percs" -- from using company plane to take children to college to entertaining at company lodge -- reduce public support for the business system, believes Murray Weidenbaum, J.E. Lundy Visiting Scholar, American Enterprise Institute. He advises: "Curtail what is the Imperial Presidency in the private sector."

Electronic news bulletins are replacing print handouts at Rockwell International's Rocketdyne Div. (Canoga Park, Calif.). Portable lightboxes use b&w or color negatives to display news. Company has installed 13 so far. Claims system is faster, more cost-effective and reaches greater number of employees.

When abroad, multinationals need to be sensitive in their communications to nuances of host language. Modern-Day Almanac, 1980 carried these humorous headaches: GM found that its Chevy Nova (No va) in Puerto Rico translates into "it doesn't go." Company had difficulty in Belgium, too, where slogan "body by Fisher" in Flemish is roughly "corpse by Fisher." Pepsi-Cola lost face in China with its "Come alive with Pepsi" slogan. That became "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave."

INFO KITS CAN HELP DECENTRALIZE PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES; NON-PROS LIKE CANNED MATERIALS

How can you guide local plant personnel or staff at non-profit chapters thru routine public relations activities? Info kit can fit bill -- if it's carefully planned & packed with ideas

like folder from Volunteer: The Nat'l Center for Citizen Involvement.

Designed to help promote Nat'l Volunteer Week, compendious kit emphasizes importance of public relations. Resource list details prof'l org'ns & helpful reading. "Public Relations Checklist" asks right off, "Are you committed to the idea of PR and convinced of its importance?" Materials provide how-to's and educate. For instance, they explain that recognizing volunteers can become stimulus for new recruiting, thus org'ns should gear up for response.

Distributed free to members, folder also goes gratis to major corporate donors to encourage recognition of employee voluntarism. This year 2500-3000 kits have been given out or sold, says Special Projects Director Richard Mock. One of greatest strengths is built-in feedback mechanism. Evaluation form comes in every kit. Over years greatest growth has been in ready-made materials -- artwork, bumper stickers, buttons, posters & canned editorials. "People at the local level aren't sure of their public relations skills," Mock acknowledges. (Available from Volunteer, P.O. Box 4179, Boulder, Colorado 80306. Cost is \$9.50.)