

NEW STUDY REINFORCES VALUE OF A-V IN MEETINGS: IMPROVES REACHING OF CONSENSUS BY 21%

There are two standard criticisms of public relations people: 1) they use too many audiovisuals; 2) they don't use any audiovisuals. Evidence for avoiding category 2 comes from a new study on the effectiveness of overhead projectors done by Wharton Applied Research Center of the Wharton School, Univ. of Pa., for 3M.

Findings show how "visual aids -- and overhead projection specifically -- improve the productivity of business meetings." Use of projector decreases lecture time & increases conversation on the subject, makes meetings shorter. Also, projection influences decision making by the group, presenters are viewed more favorably.

Study claims "When positions are clearer and communications more open, agreement and consensus are facilitated." Without overhead projection, consensus was reached in 58% of the meetings. Use of overhead boosted it to 79%. (Copy of study from A-V Div, 3M, Box A-P, St. Paul, Minn. 55144; 800/328-1371)

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶To whom are we communicating? A better educated work force, according to latest Census Bureau figures. More workers have completed college than have failed to complete high school: 15.8 million have less than 4 years high school; 17.7 million have 4 years or more of college. Unemployment percentages show full effect of educational deficiencies: 10.1% unemployment for those with 4 years or less of high school; 2.2% unemployment for those with 4 years or more of college. (For statistical table, write prr.)

¶O'Dwyer's Directory of Public Relations Firms 1982 lists 1200 pr firms & pr dep'ts in adv'g agencies -- an increase of 100 firms/dep'ts since last year. Directory includes: 1) 50 largest US pr operations with net fee income; 2) 59 largest independent pr firms in US with net fee income; 3) 15 largest pr operations associated with adv'g agencies with net fee incomes; 4) pr firms divided according to specialized skills; 5) geographical index of pr firms, US & foreign; 6) article on "How To Hire & Get The Most From Outside PR Counsel" (which emphasizes hiring publicity service); 7) alphabetical listing of pr firms with address, phone, officers, clients; and 8) alphabetical listing of client companies with representing firm. (\$50 from J.R. O'Dwyer Co, 271 Madison Ave, NYC 10016)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. PRSA Section chrm for 1982: Association: Reynold Malmer, dir comms, American Optometric Ass'n (St.Louis); Consumer Afrs: Joanna Maitland, pres, Joanna Maitland Assocs (High Point, NC); Corporate: William Pruett, vp, Coca-Cola (Atlanta); Counselors Academy: James Strenski, chrm, Public Communications (Chi); Educators: Donald Wright, assoc prof, Univ of Georgia (Athens); Financial Institutions: James Day, vp & mpr, First City Bancorporation (Houston);

Government: Jack Reed, info ofcr, Bureau of Land Mgmt, US Dep't of Interior (DC); Health: Daniel Scannell, dpr & comty rels, Kaiser-Permanente Medical Care Program, (Oakland, Calif); Investor Rel: Robert Taft, sr vp, Hill & Knowlton (NYC); Public Afrs: Edith Fraser, pres, Fraser/ Assocs (DC); Social Services: Sunshine Janda Overkamp, dir comms, United Way (Houston); Utilities: John Whittaker, vp gov't afrs, GTE Service Corp (DC).

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WHAT HAPPENS TO LANGUAGE IN ERA OF COMPUTERVISION?
"PROPER" GRAMMAR, LOGICAL CASE VS. MEANING, MEMORABILITY

Computers talk. Television substitutes oral for written language as the norm for most of the population. Johnny can't read. Many of us speak Spanglish. How important are the details of language at such a time?

Judging from the materials they produce, many practitioners hold to the belief that conventional, "proper" language is a priority. In their hierarchy it comes right after building a logical case, step-by-step. Others argue that language is growing & changing continually, that such sins as dangling participles & group nouns followed by singular verbs are not important if the meaning comes across. Many old-fashioned but "correct" forms of usage are cumbersome, they note -- e.g. "about which I will tell you" as opposed to "which I'll tell you about."

In today's Babel there is much to be said for giving precedence to 1) meaningfulness, messages that have meaning to the audience in its (not your) terms; and 2) memorability, so the idea sticks. Here are some memorable examples from recent press reports:

¶ "As soon as rocks start flying, we are no longer concerned with freedom of speech." (State police commander at Ku Klux Klan rally)

¶ "We use manual clocks; they get CB radios. We use radar; they get radar. Now we have enlisted the help of aircraft. Don't be surprised to see surface-to-air missiles on sale at Radio Shack!" (Highway safety article by patrolman)

¶ "I never use the words Democrats and Republicans. It's liberals and Americans." (Interior Sec'y James Watt in speech to farmers)

It may be worth noting that such messages often come from those whose work involves action, not intellectualizing -- like the policeman quoted above. Their use of words is ingenuous -- and pungent. The question is, how can practitioners capture such bon mots to put into print or into the mouths of CEOs? Tape recording con-

ORWELL'S FOUR-STEP

In The Language & Symbols of Politics, George Orwell proposed this method for creating messages that truly communicate:

1. What am I trying to say?
2. What words will express it?
3. What image or idiom will make it clearer?
4. Is this image fresh enough?

Alden Wood, The Tychochondriac, thinks Orwell's system charts the fine line between traditional language and effective expression.

versations with the folks "out there" is one way. Go into the plant or office and ask employees to express themselves on the issues. George Orwell offers another method (see box).

Few topics divide public relations professionals more than this one. prr has collected substantial materials and will share them in coming weeks. Readers are invited to send opinions & examples to enrich this forum. It is a central question: how do we balance protecting the integrity of the mother tongue with communicating effectively to publics that may not care about the mother tongue?

ST. JUDE INCIDENT SHOWS EXTENT OF PREPARATION NECESSARY TODAY FOR MEETING "IMPOSSIBLE" CRISIS

It can't happen to you? Wrong. A lesson can be learned from St. Jude Hospital (Memphis). Non-controversial child cancer facility had no crisis preparedness planning. Suddenly it faced a hostage situation, which became a national media event. An ex-patient's father held staff members at gunpoint.

"We called in the police tactical squad which works specifically with hostage situations," Jerry Chipman, dpr, told prr. "Hostage negotiating team" idea began with Frank Bolz & Edward Hershey who wrote the book Hostage Cop, now conduct seminars training police for this job. Leader of negotiating team, dir of hospital & Chipman coordinated all details. It was negotiating team leader's decision that Chipman be the only spokesman. And they briefed him every hour before he spoke with media. Media was briefed every hour on the hour for 30+ hours.

Taking hostages at gunpoint is the number one terrorist activity worldwide. It can happen anywhere. Check with your local police. Find out what their capabilities are should it happen to you.

PLAIN OLD NEWS RELEASES, PUBLICATIONS HAVE TOUGH TIME COMPETING WITH PLASTIC COVERS; ARE LAMINATED BOXES, FOLDERS "COMMUNICATION INFLATION"?

Trend in packaging information is to bigger, more colorful, laminated folders or boxes that stand

out from the ordinary news release or publication. Impressiveness is supposed to catch the reader's eye, inhibit tendency to throw away. Such "communication inflation" can lead to overkill, but for the moment it makes for pretty packages.

Two examples recently arrived at prr from Coca-Cola and Kodak. Coke folder has close-up color photo of bottle in ice. Inside, two flaps hold photographs of people drinking Coke, song sheet of new commercial, news releases & product history magazine. Back cover is white with small red & white logo. Cover stock is laminated outside.

Kodak package is laminated cardboard notebook with eight plastic pockets holding product info -- releases & photos. Extensiveness & size give it quality of book-shelf permanence.

Another eye catching package came from Goodwin, Dannenbaum, Littman & Wingfield (Houston) -- their capabilities brochure. All-blue cover has firm's initials in

tiny red print across top, embossed design. Inside cover is contrasting red. Inside flap holds 4 folders, which in turn contain data sheets or samples of work. Brochure is enveloped in red cardboard box with gold seal. Definitely an eye-stopper.

One organization specializing in presentation packages is The Jones Colad Group. Its sample folder illustrates a number of packaging styles & techniques. Front cover, for example, has half with lamination, half without. (Info & sample folder from Michael Smith, Colad Inc, 701 Seneca St, Buffalo, NY 14210)

SUBSTITUTE PROJECTS, HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE FOR COMMUNICATIONS IF YOU WANT TO EDUCATE PUBLICS, ADVISES EXTENSION SERVICE

History's most effective public education organization is one title given Cooperative Extension Service. Founded by federal legislation in 1914 as an

outreach arm of the land grant colleges, CES is credited with the unparalleled success of American agriculture. 50 years ago one farm fed itself and a handful of others. Now US farms can feed the world. CES had to train farmers -- not the easiest audience -- in use of constantly evolving science & equipment...at the same time farm population was declining, demands of production escalating.

CES is so deeply immersed in effective information transfer that it sponsored basic research on diffusion process. Effectiveness of learning increases, according to its experience, as one moves from listening to seeing to doing. Speakers teach the least!

People remember: 20% of what they are told; 30% of what they see; 50% of what they see & hear; 70% of what they say; 90% of what they do. Forget your news releases & speaker's bureaus: design projects that involve audiences!

