

about his bank account because the other fin'l institutions went out of business. He had to explain things to himself, and maybe got HonFed mixed up with the two that closed."

CONTEST POSING SOPHISTICATED PROBLEM TO STUDENTS CO-OPTS COMMUNITY ON POTENTIALLY TOUCHY ISSUE

A contest for students effectively channeled community thinking about a potentially negative issue. Gas '84 contest challenged the mathematical ability, geographic knowledge, journalistic skills & ingenuity of students in the West Country of England. Object was to design a route for a pipeline to bring a newly discovered supply of natural gas down from Morecambe Bay to their counties.

Sponsored by 2 gas utilities & 2 newspapers, contest required students to write a newspaper article on the benefits of getting the gas that the pipeline would bring to the community. Entrants had to calculate cost of laying the pipeline over the route they proposed, explain why they chose the route. Handsome gifts plus the spark of competition led to concentration on the pros of pipeline construction -- not the cons.

USEFUL ITEMS FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶ Attacking opposing viewpoint may give it unintended but valuable spotlight. Court of public opinion refuses to be told how to think. Justice Dept's label of "political propaganda" on nuclear war documentary (pr 3/28) has increased film's popularity. American Friends Service Cmte reports requests to use film since gov't questioned it have more than doubled. Downtown theater has offered to use it for an entire week, tv stations are trying to work it into evening programs. "Thank you, Justice Department, for the publicity! It's never been so easy to get our films out," says Frances Crowe of AFSC. The old "Banned in Boston" ploy still works.

¶ Health is a hot topic, high on the public's interest list, thus a good way to demonstrate your organization's concern for employees (or other publics). Dep't of Health & Human Services is offering an audiovisual prgm called "Breast Cancer: We're Making Progress Every Day." Developed by Nat'l Cancer Institute, prgm includes 1) 16-minute slide show or video cassette, 2) user's guide, 3) pamphlets for audience, 4) reference & resource guide, 5) sample press release, 6) posters & 7) a print ad. Prgm was field tested at 3 AT&T offices. 5 months after the prgm, the number of women practicing breast self-examination had increased by 20%. (Kit with slide-tape presentation, \$41; videocassette format, \$65. From Ofc of Cancer Comms, Nat'l Cancer Institute, Bldg 31, Rm 4B39, Bethesda, Md. 20205.)

¶ One Clear Voice is a difficult policy to accomplish. Dow Chemical has had many unpleasant public issues to defuse because of its production of napalm & Agent Orange ingredients. It has shown social concern in spite of such attacks. But it recently told the Wall Street Journal "The business of a corporation should be the conduct of business." Statement appeared in an article on proposed SEC alterations in rules governing proxy votes. "Political debate is intended for the realm of the commonwealth and not that of the corporation," Dow said. Journal reporter Richard Hudson commented that the declarations "would make Calvin Coolidge proud."

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. Theodore Braun, 82, founder & chrm emeritus of Braun & Co. (LA).

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WAS LIFE/DEATH DRAMA LURE OF LIVE TV OPERATION? IS THAT VOYEURISM? SHOULD IT HAVE BEEN TAPED JUST IN CASE? HOW ABOUT EGO DEFENSE? WHAT CAN BE LEARNED ABOUT TACTICS FROM THIS TRAILBLAZER? (PART I)

Along with stirring up public awareness of heart disease, live telecast of heart surgery stirred up controversy over the public relations tactics involved. Asks Les Hauser (mgr comty rels & dev'l, Michigan Hospital Ass'n, Lansing): "Why was it necessary to broadcast live instead of video-tape where the outcome is certain? Did the live nature of the surgery appeal to the base morbid nature of people to see others in life-threatening situations? Will tomorrow's surgical theaters become a modernday Roman Colosseum? Perhaps this is a bit exaggerated, but a nonetheless real concern."

83% of the healthcare communicators responding to prr's 3/14 article are generally in favor of the broadcast, but split in half over whether it should have been live or taped:

¶ "We had cameras in the operating room when we separated siamese twins in 1974. We did it with the proviso there be no voice because it would be an additional pressure on the surgeons. From an educational point of view, it's fine as long as it doesn't pressure the doctors & isn't done in a flamboyant way. Public information is important, but there should also be some caution that something could go wrong. It would have been just as effective to have it taped." -- Shirley Bonnem (vp, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia)

¶ "If such surgeries dispel fear & increase public understanding of what a procedure will or won't do for an in-

Experience, including information, can have a demotivating effect. Some stations didn't carry the operation because of its shock effect. Did this factor call forth defense mechanisms in viewers as well as keep some from watching? Several aspects of psychology are at work. In Public Relations In Action, author Rob't Reilly reviews how people "protect themselves from frustration, or from anxiety, or from a self-perception that is in conflict with reality." Such ego defenses have been studied in programs to promote safe driving. When pictures of bad accidents or mangled victims are used, most people simply do not see them -- to avoid the shock & horror. Did persons vulnerable to heart disease respond similarly to the telecast?

Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance suggests that heavy smokers, the obese & other probable future heart patients rejected the inference such an operation could be needed by them. People act in ways that are not consistent with their knowledge or with information that is presented to them. They seek to maintain consistency between what they know or learn and how they behave. Faced with the living-color reality of a heart operation, such persons maintain consonance by denying attitudinally that their problem exists or is of a magnitude that would ever require surgery. And go right on smoking, overeating, avoiding exercise & increasing stress.



dividual, that's positive. They should, however, be presented with alternatives. Live coverage probably added to the educational value. Had the surgeon made an error, had there been complications, had anything gone wrong, it would have been there for the public to see. There's truth in that. I respect the surgeons for taking that risk." -- Mary Fears (dpa, Providence Hospital, Everett, Washington)

¶ "Our cardiologists agree it was valuable. Making information available

Was broadcast's appeal public education, voyeurism, doctors' ego gratification? Or all 3? While we decry our baser human characteristics, truth is all play a part. And if sensitively handled by program planners, can work to the good:

¶ "In the long run it will prove beneficial for people in public relations because we are trying to demonstrate the value of this kind of public exposure. I'm not ready to go with live operating room material but can take what Dr. Diethrich has done and help my physicians to feel more comfortable in taping & filming. In a nutshell, I thank them for blazing new paths, counsel careful progress and continue to depend on nearly-live tape with live feedback." -- Mike Kaufher (vp-pa, Geisinger Medical Ctr, Danville, Pa.)

¶ Les Hauser adds: "While I am in total agreement with the need for an informed healthcare consumer, I question the motivation of the institution/organization engaging in the activity. Are they really doing it to obtain greater consumer awareness? Or are they doing it for regional or national recognition and the resulting ego massage for key physicians, board members and administrative staff?"

¶ "There is an extremely fine line between educating the public about medical procedures and accusing the physician of reveling in self-glory. The fact is, you cannot have one element without the other because the personality and the procedure are unalterably linked in the public's perception,

is always worthwhile. They do question the live presentation. Putting it on live appeals to the same thing in people that auto racing does -- something could happen. They point out that during that kind of operation it's very important the team be in constant communication with each other. Some of that was interrupted by camera, commentary, answering questions." -- Jim Richard (dir comms ofc, Medical College of Ohio, Toledo)

no matter how self-effacing the physician. I have had numerous doctors appear on tv and in print to discuss a surgical procedure or other aspect of medicine. In every instance I cautioned that their role is to educate the public, so to include the names and efforts of others who worked with them. To a person, they did as I asked because they wanted to avoid the weight of peer pressure. It hasn't worked...because the reporter does not want 'extraneous' names or other people to 'complicate' the story. But it certainly complicates the lightning rod existence of the pr person." -- Paul Umansky (dir comty rels, Sinai Hospital, Baltimore)

¶ Umansky adds: "As for the LA Times charging that the program increased 'voyeurism,' I don't agree. Why is educating the public in a fascinating aspect of medicine any more voyeuristic than publicly dissecting the private torment of an unemployed worker, one who was selected to represent millions of others in this country? The technique is simply using the reporter's (and communicator's) device of 'personalizing' the event."

RESEARCH SUGGESTS TELECAST DIDN'T REACH THOSE WHO NEED THE INFO

Existing level of involvement in a subject determines whether a person will seek information or merely process it when he or she happens to come across it, finds a '78 study by Jim Grunig:

1. If aiming at a low involvement public, which doesn't need the information, use mass media, especially tv, because it forces audiences to process the data.
2. If aiming at involved publics, who are actively seeking information on the subject, use specialized media such as newsletters, topical magazines, direct mail.

According to this theory, live telecast of heart operation probably didn't reach present sufferers of heart disease. But it did sensitize the uninvolved mass audience who will be aware should heart trouble strike them or their circle.

CLASSIC RUMOR-STOPPING TACTICS  
MAY NOT WORK -- OR BE TOO SLOW

Rumors about Honolulu Federal Savings & Loan caused a "run" resulting in withdrawals of \$31 million in 2 days. Rumors apparently began Feb. 10 but received no media comment. By Feb. 14 rumors spread, especially in suburbs. Rumor said the state was going to close HonFed as it had 2 smaller institutions. By Feb. 16 some 200 people were lined up at one of the 27 branches wanting to withdraw their money. Bank honored all withdrawals, but suggested customers check the source of their information.

By 10am that day media mentioned the run. Even tho coverage emphasized there was no substance to the rumors and those withdrawing money were receiving cash, soon every branch had long lines. Crowds then became a media event. \$24 million was withdrawn the first day; \$17 million the second. (Much of this was redeposited later. HonFed received full support from the fin'l & biz community. Millions of dollars were made available to take care of withdrawals.

To neutralize the rumors, denials were first tried: 1) Federal Home Loan Bank Board assured that the bank was in no financial trouble; 2) one of Hawaii's congressmen made a statement saying he believed rumors were "without foundation." But denials may spread the rumor & give it credibility. Next, blanketing was used. Several business execs publicly made substantial deposits. These tactics eventually worked, but only when rumor had run its course.

Two UHawaii psychologists analyzed the case: "Rumors like this happen in times of insecurity, emotional stress & emergencies. One person probably felt insecure

Rumors, passed thru the grapevine, are more important than supervisors & group meetings for providing information to middle managers, according to studies by Opinion Research Corp. "We need more research on this important communication medium which can be so destructive," says Roy Leffingwell, pres, International Public Relations - Social Science Research Center (Honolulu).