

POPULAR PR TEXT AUTHORS  
UPDATE THEIR VIEWS IN SPEECHES

Both Cutlip & Center, of Effective Public Relations, and Phil Lesly, of the Handbook, have delivered recent addresses that keynote where their readers and listeners ought to be today:

Center: Get into long-range policy. "We and the institutions we serve suffer relationship problems deriving in great part from decisions made and actions taken, with good intentions, 10, 20, or 40 years back. Short term plans and results became the best game in town in the names of success, progress and advancement. Longer term consequences all too often became the game that would be played some other time."

Cutlip: Get into research and evaluation. "Despite our long experience in business & organizational communication, our work is still rather primitive. What else can explain the practitioner who still publishes a 'house organ' or the one who spends money on news releases that wind up in an editor's waste basket 90% of the time. That we are still horse-&-buggy primitives in an age of space travel & laser weapons can be chalked up to our failure to invest in research. The research-evaluation step in our 4-step problem-solving communication process is still pitifully neglected in most communication programs I observe. We spend billions on communication but very few cents on determining its effectiveness. We go merrily along shooting our arrows into the air, to land we know not where."

Lesly: America is becoming a 2-tier society ... "those who will have a place in the new knowledge-demanding workplace & those whose low-knowledge, high-muscle skills we will have little use for. It's estimated that between 20-40% of the population is functionally illiterate. Yet that segment of the population is increasing rapidly, while the functional segment is not even reproducing itself. This negates the 200-year ideal of a society with a continuous progression of people from the low-paid worker to the high-paid professional."

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PRACTITIONERS

Another use of computer data banks in public relations is to check out applicants for corporate contributions, finds Mike McDermott, mpa, BP North America (NYC). He runs a Nexis search on organizations requesting funds or volunteers to discover 1) whether they're trying to reach the public with their story, 2) any incidents in their management, financing or programs.

IMPORTANT NOTICE & REMINDER  
TO OUR READERS

Following our tradition, pr reporter will not be published next week -- to celebrate Independence Day and Dominion Day. Our office will be closed from June 27 thru July 4.

Have you contributed your insights & information to pr's 19th Annual Survey of the Profession? While we're away it's a good time to fill out your questionnaire and send it along. If you've misplaced yours, let us know. We'll send another to you right away.

Popularity of sports tie-ins brings sophisticated promotions. Alluding to the durability of its copiers, Xerox dubs its new machines the Marathon line, sponsors running events in 14 cities worldwide. New twist is "corporate invitational marathon relays" that challenge a team of runners from a company to go the marathon distance. Number of companies competing dramatically illustrates acceptance of health & fitness programs as a corporate activity.

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HERE'S A NEW VIEWPOINT: THERE MAY BE A LABOR SHORTAGE SOON  
AND IT WILL REQUIRE EXCEPTIONAL SKILLS IN KEEPING PRESENT EMPLOYEES,  
PROMOTING LOYALTY, JOB SATISFACTION, RETRAINING

Here's more evidence that workplace issues will require major attention from public relations practitioners -- & new levels of effective application of public relations skills. Contradicting pr's article of 6/13, some analysts say there's a labor shortage coming. "We're so wrapped up in the problems of today's labor surplus that we are making almost no attempt to prepare for the challenges of the future," says human resource consultant Lawrence Olson, Sage Associates (DC).

He cites 3 reasons: 1) During the last half of the 80s, population growth will be about half what it was in the 70s -- 1.3% vs. 2.6%. 2) With new tax incentives, there should be much more investment in the 80s than the 70s. Also, technologies that were in their infancy in the 70s are now ready for full exploitation -- microprocessing, fiber optics, lasers, satellite communications. 3) Growing awareness that we have to compete in world markets, which could create millions of new jobs.

Despite an unemployment rate exceeding 10%, thousands of factory-related jobs are going begging, according to research by International Research Development (Norwalk, Ct.). "While our machinery is now less obsolete, our workforce is more obsolete. It's going to take a painful readjustment to bring the workforce up to the technical & literacy standards required for employment in computerized factories," says researcher David Ledecy. (See Phil Lesly's comment on pg. 4.) Ledecy notes that the lack of properly trained & skilled technicians might well be a major problem into the mid-1990s -- corroborating Olson's predictions.

The number of Americans 65 and older who work is on the increase. 100,000 will stay in the work force in this decade, Olson projects. This coincides with a rapid decline in younger workers. By 1995, there will be 28 million fewer workers than there would have been had the population trend of the 70s continued. The age makeup of the population will change radically. The 18-24 age group has peaked and will drop by 5 million in the 80s. People 65 & over will rise from 25.7 million in 1980 to 31.8 million in 1990 & 64.3 million by 2030, according to Census Bureau.

With cuts in student aid, fewer of the diminishing group of young people will finish college, predicts Olson. And the programs that are most vulnerable to cutbacks are the high-cost technical programs whose faculty members are continually leaving to take attractive positions in industry. Demand for newly trained young people will be perhaps 2 to 3 times as great as the supply over the next decade. Vacancies will take longer to fill and salary, training & recruiting costs will rise sharply for young workers.

Workforce will grow in numbers of women (60% of all new workers in next 2 decades), minority, foreign-born, middle-aged & older workers. There will also be geographical as well as occupational imbalances between the availability of workers & the needs of the labor market. Firms with the youngest & most skilled workforces, highly technical product lines, fastest-growing markets, and main plants located in the North or Midwest will experience the greatest dislocations as labor surplus turns into shortage.

"The huge annual influx of ever more educated young workers over the past decade & a half has ill-prepared us for a time when both the numbers of young workers & their level of education begin to decline. Unfortunately, current focus is on the problems of labor displacement & technology anxiety, the organizational inconveniences of automation and the loss of local tax revenues from plant closings. While these are important, future improvements will come almost entirely from retraining those who already have jobs."

The vast majority of future workers are already in the labor force -- 90% will still be in the labor force in 1990, 75% in 2000. Therefore, 1) serious retraining must become an integral human resource strategy. 2) Closer cooperation with colleges & universities can ensure that workers will be trained in the most critical skills. 3) Improve job satisfaction of younger workers. 4) Encourage continued productive contributions by older workers. 5) Attract more women, minorities & immigrants into technical specialties and make sure they have an opportunity to learn the most important skills. 6) Offer enhanced key-employee compensation packages. 7) Use Employee Stock Ownership Programs & other benefits to nurture company loyalty in valued workers. 8) Give bonuses to employees who acquire critical skills. 9) Improve employee communications.

ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT, SECOND OPINION WOULD BE ADDED TO PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS BY INNOVATIVE STATE LEGISLATION

Massachusetts' patients' bill of rights is being amended to give cancer patients the right to "information on all alternative treatments & possible adverse effects of recommended treatments. Said information shall be in print form using simple non-medical language." Bill also gives patient right to 1) a second opinion for both diagnosis & treatment, 2) treatment in a "holistic manner," 3) information from hospital's dietician, 4) printed material listing cancer support groups "in recognition of the important sensitive approach toward the feelings of said patient."

Bill is still in the Senate. "It had a hearing and was favorably reported, but hasn't passed yet," reports legislator who filed bill. "The most important aspect of the bill is that a patient will have the right to know alternative treatments which before was often denied."

There are legislated or mandated patients' bills of rights in several other states -- Calif, Colorado, Minn, Mich, Penn, NY. "I don't know of any except the one in Massachusetts that has a specific reference to a certain disease. Others make reference to having sufficient information to make an informed consent, but they don't single out one particular illness," Alexandra Gekas, American Hospital Ass'n (Chi), told prr.

Patients' bills of rights are either passed by state legislatures or are part of licensing regulations. "The effect is the same whether they went thru the legislature or came out of the Dep't of Health," Gekas explains.

ISSUE CHARTING RULE, "NEVER ASSUME," REPROVEN ON AIR BAGS, PEACE, HANDGUNS

Interest groups do take unexpected positions, as illustrated by several instances last week. American Medical Ass'n, long noted for its laissez faire position on business issues, reaffirmed a previous stand favoring air bags or other passive restraints in autos via its Council on Scientific Affairs. Federal gov't had adopted rules requiring them by next year, but Reagan administration cancelled the action. Move rebuffs Reagan -- but is logical for physicians. They cite thousands of crash deaths & injuries each year ... which they must treat.

Southern Baptist Convention, largest protestant denomination, refused to pass a peace resolution which included mutually verifiable disarmament. Instead the group passed a resolution aimed at "not compromising the security of the nation." Said one young preacher, quoted by AP, "It's a sad thing that we cannot catch the vision of the Lord to be peacemakers in the world." Moral majority influence was blamed. (71% of US citizens now favor an immediate, verifiable nuclear freeze, according to Gallup.)

History Can Hurt. Meanwhile, AMA's past conservatism was cited by pickets at its annual convention. "There's very little in its history to suggest a significant progressive attitude," one picketing M.D. told AP. A handout by International Committee Against Racism asked, "The same AMA that fought private insurance in the 30s, Medicare-Medicade in the 60s, National Health Insurance in the 70s, is now calling for a National Health Policy?" Reference is to a health policy agenda being developed by AMA.

Trend?? Like some other issues, gun control may be an urban/rural split. Gallup poll finds local ordinances favoring sale or possession of handguns are now favored 2 to 1 in cities of a million or more, 5 to 4 in cities between 1/2-1 million. Rural areas and small cities, however, are opposed by 2 to 1.

CORPORATE CULTURE IS KEY CONCEPT, INCLUDES NECESSITY FOR CHANGE

prr was too simplistic in its approach to the term "corporate culture" feels Alma Triner, vp-pr, Arthur D. Little. The management consulting & research firm finds this a vital concept.

"Corporate culture is more than just 'a new euphemism for morale, pride & the other positive internal relationships brought about by open communication and policies attuned to people' (prr 6/6). The term culture connotes 1) a system of shared values; 2) the existence of a generally recognized hierarchy which may or may not be related to organizational status; and 3) commonly agreed-on, clearly understood channels and processes for communicating & getting things done.

"Corporations and other organizations and institutions, like nations and religious or ethnic groups, have their own cultures & values. If we as communicators are going to function effectively, we had better understand the constraints & leverage afforded by the cultures of the organizations we serve.

"In addition to the need to communicate appropriately within the cultural context, sophisticated public relations people increasingly are being called on to help modify or change corporate cultures -- for example, in previously regulated industries struggling to adapt to unaccustomed competitive environments." (Well said; we agree.)