

Voice of America. Its China bureau head, Anthony Sariti, contacted PRSA for help in arranging & structuring them, Donna Peltier of PRSA told prr.

First interview, 1) John Paluszek (Ketchum Public Relations) on public affairs, was yesterday at 6:15am, 6:15pm & 10:15pm (Beijing time). Remaining three interviews, scheduled for Dec 15, 22 & 29, will be broadcast at these same times. Interviewees to come are 2) John Felton (vp corp comms, McCormick & Co) on corporate public relations; 3) David Ferguson (PRSA pres) with an overview of the profession & its role in a democratic society; 4) Leone Baxter (pres, Whitaker & Baxter International) on the role of public relations in politics. Interviews have been taped; answers translated into Chinese and superimposed over each of the 4 professionals' responses.

DO BIASED POLL QUESTIONS BACKFIRE, COMMUNICATE OR IRRITATE? UTILITY TRIES THE TECHNIQUE

In surveys, pollsters struggle to ask unbiased questions. Not so with Public Service of NH's "We Want Your Opinion" questionnaire on the Seabrook Nuclear Plant. "Our questions are purposely centered on our position. People are free to agree or disagree with that. We've received a whole range of comments. Folks have even made them along the edges & margins of the mailer," explains John Cavanagh, mgr pub comms (Manchester).

Is this type of research ethical? Does it really work? There's a strong chance people will be insulted & turned against the company by such blatantly biased questions. For instance, "Do you think NH needs Seabrook Station's power in order to meet growing demand and deal with the insecurity of foreign oil?" And, "Do you think it would be wasteful to cancel the plant, since it's more than 90% completed?"

It may be an effective way to hear from your supporters, but doesn't it make all research more difficult and less meaningful? Several editorials & columns blasting the mailer have appeared, including one humorous rewriting which substituted the query: "Should PSNH be allowed to go peacefully bankrupt now that they have ruined their finances with Seabrook?"

"Our real purpose is to provide 2-way communication with our customers" using a questionnaire format. "Because it's not a quantitative, valid study, it's just going to provide us qualitative information on how we should approach communication with them in the future. And it allows folks an opportunity to respond to issues that have been tossed around in the newspapers. It's a way for them to let us know how they feel."

CORPORATE CULTURE SEARCH FADING?

Low relative concern among practitioners for corporate culture -- as reported in last week's Part II of the Annual Survey of the Profession -- could be a trend. Or should one say a reversal of a trend. Despite apparently massive interest, "management style/corporate culture" was seen as an important issue in only 7.9% of responses. Perhaps the wording of the question, which sought to identify "issues/problems" skewed the result. Practitioners don't see it as either of those but may still feel it's an important challenge. Nonetheless, there is a growing literature questioning corporate culture.

A.I.D.S. CREATES AN ENORMOUS CHALLENGE FOR PRACTITIONERS: HOW TO DEVELOP, COMMUNICATE & GAIN UNDERSTANDING FOR AN A.I.D.S. POLICY

Industry, military & gov't institutions are already rampant with employee testing, or the desire to test, for the disease. If you uncover AIDS victims, what do you do? This knowledge affects 1) general morale of the organization, 2) all group insurance coverages (health, life & disability), and 3) willingness of workforce to accept the situation.

Colleges & universities are pressing educational literature & seminars. Hospitals, who perhaps should have a head start due to their very nature, appear to be utilizing the time honored "clinical protocol" -- isolating victims from patient contact -- and many are reluctant to discuss handling "new hires" who may have ARC (AIDS related complex). AIDS victims, regardless of employer, are persona non grata.

That such a devastating disease exists should come as no surprise. The list of deadly diseases people have suffered, endured & conquered is long. The surprise lies in managements' loss of rational thinking.

Some guidelines for an AIDS policy:

1. Keep your fences mended. Know the opinions of your publics, employees & managers. Strengthen the positive ones, educate to eliminate those based on fear.

2. Question rising insurance rates because they reinforce the panic. Remember that today's mortality rates are based upon some very deadly diseases which are no longer prevalent. Care should be taken to assure reduction in actuarial numbers has been made.

Part of the AIDS dilemma stems from media's attempts to translate scientific information, explains the Document Design Center's "Simply Stated." "It's very difficult for a scientist to tell a reporter that something is impossible. Scientifically speaking, it's possible to be struck by lightning on your way to work," explains Richard Johnson, an AIDS expert & spokesman for the US Conference of Local Health Officers.

The dilemma arises when media say it's possible to transmit AIDS thru saliva. The public perceives this possibility as a threat. But scientists know the probability is too low to even calculate because it hasn't yet happened.

"Health officials need to emphasize that AIDS is transmitted through sexual relations and by sharing used hypodermic needles. What you lose in scientific precision, you gain in sensible awareness."

The solution, says Johnson, is to offer an additional version of scientific information -- written in simple English so the general public can understand.



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3. Take the time to find out what is occurring in medical research and learn why the process is so laboriously slow. Pass this along thru widespread communication with your publics. Over-expectation has become the bane of the healthcare field.

4. Help your organization deal realistically with the need for policy statements. Know medically & legally what your options really are, not what some suspect them to be.

5. Educate management in how an AIDS victim dies. It's a long degenerative disease. Management should be a little less anxious in prescribing a sudden, emotional corporate policy statement.

If A Policy Is Planned, What Should It Be? Bank of America's policy deals broadly with all life-threatening illnesses -- not just AIDS:

"Employees with life-threatening illnesses including but not limited to cancer, heart disease, and AIDS may wish to continue to engage in as many of their normal pursuits as their condition allows, including work. As long as these employees are able to meet acceptable performance standards, and medical evidence indicates that their conditions are not a threat to themselves or others, managers should be sensitive to their conditions and ensure that they are treated consistently with other employees."

Policy lists resources available to employees and 10 guidelines for managers:

- 1. Take precautions to protect info regarding employee's health.
- 2. for guidance or specific info on the illness;
- 3. if concerned that illness is contagious;
- 4. to determine if employee's physician should be contacted for statement that employee's illness isn't contagious.
- 5. Make reasonable accommodations.
- 6. Attempt to transfer employee if requested.
- 7. Be sensitive & respond to co-workers' concerns.
- 8. Give no special consideration beyond normal transfer requests by threatened co-workers.
- 9. Be aware that continued employment may be therapeutic.
- 10. Encourage employees to seek assistance from community support groups.

Additional info available from:

- a) Don Bohl, editor of guidebook on AIDS in the workplace, American Mgmt Ass'n, 135 W. 50th St, NYC 10020
- b) American College Health Ass'n, AIDS Task Force, 152 Rollins Ave, Ste.208, Rockville, Md. 20852

Two video cassettes on AIDS are available from:

- c) Dr. Sende, San Francisco General Hospital, 1001 Potrero Ave. 94110, titled "AIDS, An Incredible Epidemic"

d) KPIX - Channel 5, 855 Battery, San Francisco 94111, titled "Our Worst Fears, The AIDS Epidemic"

If your organization has a written policy and is willing to share it, please send it to prr. We'll serve as a clearing house.

THE FUTURE OF VIDEO
COULD BE MUCH DIFFERENT
THAN HEADLONG RUSH INDICATES

As the various video technologies proliferate, their barriers as well as strengths begin to emerge:

1. You can't skim a tape as you can a written document. Can executive summaries or indexes be developed that enable tapes to become a personal communication medium?

2. Films, while very powerful, must be heavily promoted to get an audience.

3. Tapes & films are beginning to put 'em to sleep in meetings. A flip chart is often better, if the group is small enough. Many practitioners report that sleep is the operative word. When you close the curtains and dim the lights -- especially at after-meal time periods -- large portions of the audience doze off.

4. New evidence that "a word is worth a thousand pictures" puts the script back into play. Flashy pictures & music aren't everything.

5. The "theory of the frame" underlies all visual communications. A newspaper photo sticks in the mind, because it is a frozen image. The same scene in the flow of film may have far less impact. Of course, the reverse can also be true.

6. Computer screens are visual... but they also mean users must again be readers. So language skills, ironically, are critically important to getting the full communications impact from video.

The overall implication seems to be that people have to want to see videos. This means super targeting of interested audiences. Good old brief, scannable print materials are far from outmoded.

VOICE OF AMERICA
SENDS PUBLIC RELATIONS ABROAD

Public relations' story will be told this month to a "huge audience" within the Pacific Rim -- China, Hong Kong, Philippines, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, Korea. Four 15-minute interviews with PRSA members will be broadcast over

SALARY SURVEY ADDENDUM

"Why are first year professionals making such high salaries?" many are asking. (See prr's Annual Survey of the Profession, Part I, Table 10, 9/30/85.) Findings show the median salary of practitioners with 1 yr or less experience is \$32,400. For men, \$35,000; women, \$31,250.

Reason is many aren't entry level people. For example: 28-yr-old teacher, 27-yr-old reporter, 28-yr-old tv news professional, 29-yr-old broadcaster, 38-yr-old educator, 60-yr-old magazine editor are all 1st yr practitioners. The editor was making \$20,000; salary rose to \$45,000 upon joining a pr firm. This is additional verification that experienced people from other fields -- but without pr training or background -- are still able to move into the field.

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