

World Future Society sees a significant change in what futurists do and who listens to them. In the main, futurists have shortened their time horizon, increased the rigor of their analyses, become more solution oriented. 5-20 yrs is the accepted time horizon for most futurists. Less than 5 yrs is uninteresting because many of the shaping actions & decisions have already been taken. Beyond 20 yrs, uncertainty makes useful scenarios difficult if not impossible to develop.

Futurists -- as do pr pros -- seek 1) a deeper understanding of social change at macro & micro levels; 2) better integration of qualitative & quantitative components of planning; 3) more balanced, multidisciplinary approach to planning, with the social sciences full partners with the physical & analytical sciences. Barbara Hubbards warns against forsaking the cutting edge for ideas that are more readily acceptable. What's coming, she says, is rarely acceptable. (More info from World Future Society, 4916 St. Elmo Ave, Bethesda, Md. 20814; 301/656-8274)

ITEMS PRACTITIONERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

"Dynasty" dilettante's dilemma is how to "do" public relations for her "daddy's" oil company, having no talent, skills or experience whatsoever. 3 episodes ago, Amanda Carrington became a pr practitioner. Coming to her (and the profession's) rescue is Hunt Marmillion Associates with an AMANDA ALERT, seeking "concise, easy-to-read (preferably illustrated) public relations primers." Says Dennis Hunt, "We care too much for this vacuous vamp to see her vanquished vicariously in front of viewers. With enough 'pr in a nutshell' and 'how to' communications manuals, we believe we can have Amanda issuing Denver Carrington quarterly shareholder reports by mid-season." HMA asks fellow practitioners to "report any further slurs against the profession on 'Dynasty,' 'Dallas' (see pr 2/8/81), 'Days of Our Lives,' or any other socially significant program" by contacting them. "Owing to our proximity to Hollywood, we will gladly relay all complaints to the appropriate entertainment authorities." (10880 Wilshire Blvd, LA, Calif 90024)

"Information liability" is a new concern for practitioners. If a piece of faulty info results in injury, someone, somewhere is liable and must pay, is the new legal theory. According to Information Industry Ass'n, organizations that disseminate information are being viewed as targets when people are hurt economically or physically by bad info. Recent court decision held US gov't responsible to the tune of \$1 million for an erroneous weather forecast. The predicted fair weather was instead stiff winds & high waves. 4 fisherman who ventured out in it drowned.

PR firms are likely to benefit from the new tax laws. "Altho there will be some tightening in a variety of business deductions, the lowering of the maximum federal corporate tax rate from 46% to 34% of operating profits is seen as a plus," explains Hal Warner in a report to the Counselors Academy. But there is reason to be prepared: Those select corporations that find their net tax is raised by the new law may be forced to cut budgets to compensate. "This will be a good test of the value of public relations firms to corporate executives." For answers to 10 pertinent questions, write Hal Warner, exec vp, Manning, Selvage & Lee/Washington, 1250 Eye St NW, Ste.300, Wash DC 20005)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. National School Public Relations Ass'n officers: pres, Lew Armistead (Nat'l Ass'n of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Va); pres-elect, Dawn McDowell (St.Louis Park Public Schools, Minn); vp's, Robin

Beck (Cherry Creek School Dist, Englewood, Colo), Patti Coleman (Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp, Evansville, Ind), Naomi Zaslow (Marple Newtown School Dist, Newton Square, Pa).

pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations,
Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.29 No.40
October 13, 1986

TO MAKE PR ETHICS CODES WORK, APPLY THEM TO THE WHOLE FIRM OR DEP'T;
OR MUST WE GO FURTHER & SET PERFORMANCE STANDARDS TO BE FULLY ETHICAL?

"As it now stands, PRSA's Code only governs members. The most it can do is kick the offender out, which means little other than the stigma attached to it," Joe Epley told prr. To strengthen the Code, Epley Associates (Charlotte & Raleigh, NC) builds it into overall operations...and has done so "for years":

1. "When a person comes to work for us, regardless of the position, they have to sign an employment agreement which says they have read our firm's policy and will abide by it." PRSA's Code is an integral part of the policy.

2. Reinforcement of this policy is given at staff meetings and when employees have questions.

3. Two references to the Code are included in firm's letter of agreement with clients. One refers to what the firm will do for clients -- "We will operate under the Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations as adopted by PRSA."

4. The other says the client "will not ask us to do anything in violation of the Code."

Go Beyond Thou-Shall-Nots,
Tell Organizations What We Stand For

An ethic is "a principle of right or good conduct, or a body of such principles," according to the American Heritage Dictionary. "Because of our timidity to define standards for the organizational performance of public relations, we contribute to the public's lack of understanding of the function and weaken our standing as professionals & our counsel to organizations," says Mel Sharpe of Ball State Univ.

"What will occur once performance standards are established is a gradual recognition as to what we professionally endorse. Then organizations will gradually find their public relations activities being evaluated against our professional standards," claims his paper, "The Professional Need: Standards For The Performance Of Public Relations." As a start, he suggests each organization should:



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1. Define & publish an ethics policy.
2. Define & publish a communications policy.
3. Define policy for the employment & use of public relations counsel, demonstrating commitment to the performance of ethical public relations practice.
4. Define policy that indicates sensitivity to and awareness of public opinion for the organization's stability & longevity.

Sharpe's document goes before IPRA's Council in Japan later this month. "The principles are ones that need to be recognized. We can see the problems they address with what's going on right now in our own government in terms of disinformation. That hurts our credibility internationally." (For copy of his paper, write prr)

How many departments or firms are taking concerted action on ethics codes? Do you incorporate a professional society code in your employment agreement? Do you do this for all employees of public relations units? Do you have an organizational code of ethics? Does it deal with public relations concerns? Please share your answers with prr. We will report findings in a future article.

THE "TRIED & TRUE" HAS DURABILITY

The old isn't always quickly replaced by the new, even if the new is more exciting. Survey by American Demographics of how its readers use census data shows the present isn't much different than the past -- people still use printed reports more than computer tapes & disks to obtain the data, the county is still the unit of geography they analyze most frequently, and they still use data from the 1980 census.

1. 4/5ths still use '80 census data, despite widespread availability of current-year estimates. 3/4ths use current estimates in combination with '80 data. 16% are content with census results alone. 9% with current estimates alone.

2. 75% use the county as the unit of geography to analyze -- even tho marketers insist that small units like blocks or block groups are the way to go. After the county, next most popular unit is metropolitan areas, followed by states & regions. Among smaller units, zip codes are favored.

3. Tho 85% have personal computers & over half have modems, printed reports are the way most get census data. 93% bought a printed report. 89% expect to use printed reports to get 1990 census data.

"It is a mistake for the Census Bureau or private data companies to think that just because there are new ways to get and use data, people are going to give up the tried & true," reports American Demographics.

INVESTMENT IN CORPORATE REPUTATION HAS A TANGIBLE PAYBACK, FINDS STUDY OF OPINION LEADERS

This is documented in a recent study of "winning" organizations by Brouillard Communications. According to the research, "winning" status translates into:

- 1) Greater likelihood that the company's products will be purchased...even at greater price. 8 of 10 affluent consumers say they prefer to buy products from companies they consider to be winners, even if they have to pay more.
- 2) Ability to attract the "best & brightest" employees.
- 3) 6 of 10 sr execs would recommend their firms enter joint ventures with companies that they consider winners, compared to 27% who say they'd do the same for other companies.
- 4) Increased investment in the company.
- 5) People are more likely to encourage winning companies to locate manufacturing facilities in their communities.

Attributes people perceive as important to being a winner and those they actually associate with winners vary (see box). Most notably, only 1 or 3 consumers -- and fewer leaders -- cite good communications as critical in assessing a winning company in the abstract. However, good communications emerges as one of the key attributes of specific, top-rated organizations. Additionally, if a respondent knows a company well, he or she is more likely to rate that company a winner.

"Given the importance of a winning reputation, management of this corporate asset becomes imperative. In the past, it was difficult for corporations to justify expenditures in this area. The results of this research, however, provide new & actionable information about the returns on corporate communications investments." (More info from Brouillard Communications, 420 Lexington Ave, NYC 10017; 212/867-8300)

KEY ATTRIBUTES OF WINNING ORGANIZATIONS	
<u>In The Abstract</u>	<u>Of Specific, Top-Rated Organizations</u>
<p><u>Affluent consumers:</u> Good value & a good place to work.</p> <p><u>Business execs:</u> Good value & clearly defined goals for the future.</p> <p><u>Directors of research:</u> Staying power & clearly defined goals for the future.</p> <p><u>Portfolio managers:</u> Consistent record of financial performance & clearly defined goals.</p> <p><u>Consensus characteristics from all 4 groups:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superior quality products Quality service to consumers Flexibility -- ability to adapt to changes in the marketplace High-caliber management Honesty & ethics in biz practice 	<p><u>Affluent consumers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality products Flexibility Good communications Market leadership Quality service Good value High-caliber management <p><u>Business execs, directors of research & portfolio managers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-caliber management Good financial performance New products Clearly defined goals Market leadership Good communications

FULL-TIME FUTURISTS ARE GROWING IN NUMBER

From 200 in '60 to over 2,000 today. The movement has brought ideas into the culture about the acceleration of change, the decline of industrialism, systems thinking. "Clearly something has happened in the culture -- some change in attitudes about change," believes Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock and The Third Wave.