

Last year, bills were introduced in 15 states to restrict survey-taking -- most focusing on phone interviews, random & automatic dialing. None became law. Most were aimed at companies that sell products by phone -- which increase public's skepticism of legitimate researchers.

Your Opinion Counts has been working to "educate consumers about the importance & value of their opinions and why it counts in survey research," Marti DeGraaf, exec dir, Marketing Research Ass'n (Chi), told pr.

6 ass'ns now spearhead this education campaign: 1) Marketing Research Ass'n, 2) Advertising Research Foundation, 3) Council of American Survey Research Org'n, 4) American Marketing Ass'n, 5) Travel & Tourism Research Ass'n, 6) National Council on Published Polls. Others (e.g., AAPOR) as well as many individual firms have committed time, money. Campaign will heighten during American Opinion Week, May 11-17. For more info or to get involved, contact steering cmte chrm Priscilla Kamrath, Walker Research, 317/842-0090.

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PRACTITIONERS

"With so much of the corporate world under siege for ethics, integrity and golden parachutes, it's superficial & irrelevant to be talking about building corporate images. PR people are most effective as corporate ideologists: the skilled communications professionals who deal with the systems of ideas that comprise any organization's culture." -- John Budd Jr, Emhart Corp (Farmington, Ct.) to Southern New England Telephone staff seminar.

Community involvement can pay top dividends, says a 16-pg brochure that gives advice on volunteerism to small businesses -- equally applicable to local plants & facilities. "Your Small Business: A Big Contributor" contains practical suggestions for project startup, outlines social & business benefits to volunteering companies, provides case histories of successful projects, identifies community organizations which welcome involvement of small business volunteers. (Free from Betty Lee Hagerty, vp-pa, The Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Co, 520 Broad St, Newark, NJ 07101)

Most recent PRLink seminar gave tips on 1986 job market: a) fin'l svcs industry will provide new job opportunities in pr as banks, insurance, accounting & brokerage firms build their corp comms dep'ts; b) entry-level pr positions will increase as the economy continues to rebound. Upcoming seminars include: Feb 11, "Management Techniques for PR Practitioners"; Feb 25, "The Role of Public Relations in Hostile Takeover Attempts"; March 4, "Computers & Communicators: The Creative Partnership." In addition to seminars, PRLink provides news of the profession; access to case studies; nationwide job listings; electronic bulletin board; debate forum; networking between practitioners. Subscription fees: PRSA mbrs, \$50; nonmbrs, \$75. CompuServe starter kits, which include \$30 worth of connect time, are \$60.

Like everyone else, USAir is surveying customers' opinions. Message from chrm in its February inflight mag explains what the survey will provide, showing respect for their intelligence ...as well as their opinions:

"The survey will provide 2 principle types of information: quantitative & qualitative. With the responses to the quantitative questions -- such as how did you obtain your airline ticket (mail, travel agent, airport) and how far in advance did you plan your travel -- we can tailor our services to the needs of more passengers. On the qualitative side, the survey addresses our service, so you can tell us where we are doing well and where you think improvements are needed."

pr reporter

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EMPHASIZING MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS RATHER THAN PLACEMENTS PAYS OFF BOTH WHEN YOU'RE ATTACKED AND WHEN THE REALLY BIG OPPORTUNITY ARISES: RED CROSS TIE TO NBC A.I.D.S. SPECIAL WAS VALUABLE RESEARCH AS WELL

Key is understanding what news is. By definition it's the unexpected. Those who concentrate on hard-nosed media placements, rather than the relationship, can miss the best placements of all (in addition to angering journalists and reinforcing their stereotype of "pr flacks").

American Red Cross has a "strong, ongoing media relationship" with NBC, Terry Gautier, AIDS media specialist for ARC, told pr. Back in October, ARC board of governors passed a corporate objective -- "unusual for us because we have so many mandated services" -- to establish an AIDS Public Education Program. When NBC decided to do a second special on AIDS, ARC was ready. NBC called in December, program ran Jan 21.

NBC's earlier special resulted in thousands of calls to its switchboard. Network wanted to do something this time to take care of that problem -- a hotline. "Since our strategy is to demystify the disease, to reduce the fear, we didn't want hotlines. They connote fear. We wanted local numbers where people could call and feel comfortable discussing their questions as thoroughly as they needed. With hotlines you can't take the time to do that," Gautier explains.

Result was local Red Cross chapters worked with the 201 affiliate stations across the country that would carry the special. Importantly, "we were given 3 weeks lead time to notify our chapters and get prepared before the affiliates were contacted." Headquarters offered to help any chapters having problems lining up volunteer medical professionals to cover the phone lines. But even in areas not affected by AIDS, "people were delighted to help." All 201 stations were covered by chapters providing, on average, 10 medical professionals & 20 phone lines.

Categories of questions asked in order of interest:

1. Transmission of AIDS (What is "safe sex"?)
2. AIDS, the disease itself (What are the symptoms?)
3. HTLD-3 antibody testing ("We thought people would be most interested in this.")
4. AIDS & blood donations
5. Other (Can you get AIDS from mosquitoes? What does not cause AIDS?)
6. Prevention & education
7. Community resources
8. Statistics on AIDS
9. Legislation & policy issues
10. Prank calls



Program ran from 10-11pm EST and phones were to continue 1 hr after the broadcast. "But some were answering calls till 3am. They took time with each caller" -- at least 3 minutes, some up to 10 minutes. 15,000 calls were received. Nielsen reported 10,140,000 households viewed the program -- a 20% share. "We were programmed against a Miss Teenage USA contest and Moonlighting. It shows the amount of interest in this subject."

Chapters charted all calls against a list of 10 potential categories (see pg 1 box). "It turned out to be a nice survey for us as well. It'll be a big help in producing printed materials because now we know the questions people have." Calls were equally divided between males & females. ARC feared prank calls but got only 10.

A.I.D.S. INFO GAP PHENOMENON MARCHES ON CREATING FEAR CLOSE TO HYSTERIA; MAJOR CASE STUDY FOR PRACTITIONERS TO FOLLOW

AIDS misinformation is rife. "There is an epidemic sweeping the nation much faster than AIDS. It's called hysteria," reads an

Abbott Laboratories' ad. Information, it says, is the key to preventing the spread of this disease.

Recent Gallup Poll found these startling opinions:

¶72% believe a blood test should be given to the general public to see how far the virus has spread. (Goodbye old Bill of Rights.)

¶61% say homosexuals should be barred from being day care nurses; 55% say they shouldn't be food handlers; 53%, shouldn't be doctors; 49%, shouldn't be teachers.

¶50% believe AIDS carriers should be legally barred from having sex with non-AIDS carriers. (Small enforcement problem here.)

¶52% say the gov't has failed to take adequate measures to protect the public against AIDS.

¶21% believe AIDS is a judgment from God; 55% disagree; 24% don't know.

Results Of The Fear Total sales of rubber gloves grew by 7%-8% last year, or double the pre-AIDS rate. Biggest surge was in last 6 months.

Food companies are reluctant to discuss what the fear of AIDS might do to them "Their worry is that talking about it might only heighten the fears," reports Ad Age.

Condom sales are increasing by about 10% annually because of AIDS & other sex-related diseases. Especially since UCal research showing condoms can prevent the spread of AIDS.

"The potential for mass consumer boycotts triggered by a rumor or incident involving AIDS will be with us as long as tens of millions of Americans continue to think the disease can be spread by casual contact," says a report from consumer research firm Leo J. Shapiro & Assocs. Of 300 people surveyed, 23% believe they can catch it from "being near or touching" an AIDS victim. 38% believe it can be contracted from touching things an AIDS carrier has touched. 42% from touching dishes, towels & pillowcases at restaurants & hotels. There's a lot of "free-floating anxiety" concludes the study.

ALL EYES ARE ON WASHINGTON AS NEW CONGRESS BEGINS DELIBERATIONS PORTENDING MASSIVE EFFECTS ON THE ECONOMY

1. Congress has reached a point where it is unable to resolve issues, especially in the Senate.

2. It is absolutely futile trying to predict what Congress is going to do, especially with 22 Republican Senate seats & 32 governors up for re-election and a lame duck President.

3. Posturing during an election year is intense. Self-preservation is of primary importance. Party loyalty, helping the President, etc, are definitely secondary.

4. Time spent in session is usually shorter during election years. Absenteeism is high during campaigns. Tough or unimportant issues are put off.

5. 1986 theme: How to live with -- or evade -- terms of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings. Even Warren Rudman calls it "a bad idea whose time has come." Bob Dole was afraid someone would read it before they could get it passed. Remember: it starts with FY '86 which began 10/1/85! March 1 is D-day.

38% OF THE PUBLIC NOW REFUSES TO TAKE PART IN OPINION SURVEYS

That's the finding in a first-of-its-kind study done for 4-yr-old public education program, Your Opinion Counts (see pr 4/30/84). Program's nat'l chrm George Gallup Jr. attributes resistance to 1) public's fear of crime if they give personal info to strangers, 2) lack of time, 3) a sense of invasion of privacy.

Refusal is predominantly caused by initial rejection, study finds. Other observations:

¶Refusal rate is 30% on phone surveys; 54% on personal interviews.

¶Phone surveys refusal rate is higher when using random dialing (38%) than listed numbers (25%).

¶Personal interviews bring more refusals when respondent is shopping (56%) than when done door-to-door (29%).

Terry Rice, respected "old Washington hand" with Conoco division of DuPont, shares his insights on the '86 session:

6. Keep political rhetoric in perspective. "The President has threatened to veto 500 bills. He has actually vetoed about 5."

7. Collision course ahead: President's tax reform (which is revenue neutral) vs. Congress' desire to get money to offset Gramm-Rudman.

8. Senate rules -- which say no cloture, encouraging a free-for-all -- countenance unlimited debate. Always a factor, moreso in a year like this.

9. PAC contributions need a cap. "5 years ago I never thought I'd support this. But it's getting out of hand now."

10. Groundwater will be the next big environmental issue within the federal gov't. Sen. Durenberger is leading it.

11. "Our old friend 'Rosy Scenario' is back on the job & living at the Council of Economic Advisors."