

## PRINCIPLE TECHNIQUES OF THE NEW PUBLIC RELATIONS

1. Research: Informal useful more often than formal (i.e., blind samples & statistical calisthenics) due to demand for real-time, cost-effective findings on a continuing flow. Qualitative often more applicable than quantitative, since goal is to discover potential or actual behavior, not just position, opinion, attitude. Some say research now constitutes half the public relations process.

2. Audience/Message/Activity Strategy: Careful plotting, aided by research, of when to say & do what, to & with whom, to bring about specific desired behaviors, i.e., getting publics to do something, not do something, or let the organization do something.

3. Prioritizing Internal Publics: Because true public relationships & reputations are neither built nor validated by the messages from the power (management & pr staff) but by the interaction of all members of the organization with friends, neighbors, casual acquaintances, customers, vendors & other publics. This is where the rubber meets the road...not in news releases or annual reports.

4. Personal Media: Turning on opinion leaders & cheerleaders to understand & beacon the organization's values, messages, positions to the circles in which they move, adding the power of social rewards/punishments, supplying One Clear Voice to the quest for positive relationships.

## USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶See how your newsletter or its promotions compare with others in the field. 14th annual Newsletter Awards Competition and the Newsletter Promotion Competition are now accepting entries. Deadline May 5. Gold & silver awards will be made in 5 categories: 1) ass'n, 2) organizational, 3) corporate-internal, 4) corporate-external, 5) subscription. Entry forms from The Newsletter Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 311, Rhinebeck, NY 12572; 914/876-2081.

¶Four North Carolina pr firms form state network, The Strategists, Inc. Firms are Medical Marketing Services (Charlotte), Upton Assocs (Raleigh), Eric Williams & Assocs (Asheboro), The Wolfe Group (Winston-Salem). It's the 1st network in NC; 2nd in the country. PROhio was country's 1st back in '83 (see prr 10/31/83).

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. PRSA district chairpeople for 1986: East-Central, F. David Cotten (Consolidated Gas Transmission, Clarksburg, WV); Mid-Atlantic, Eileen Koegh (McCormick & Co, Hunt Valley, Md); Mid-west, James McKee Jr (BHN-PR, St. Louis); Northeast, Jerry Engel (Eastman Kodak, Rochester, NY); North Pacific, Erik Peterson (Murray/Bradley & Peterson, Inc,

Anchorage); Southeast, Robert Upton (Upton Associates, Raleigh, NC); South Pacific, Sharon Weiner (Stryker Weiner Associates, Honolulu); Southwest, Gary Conwell (Providence Memorial Hospital, El Paso); Tri-State, Charlotte Klein (Needham, Porter, Novelli, NYC).

## pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations,  
Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.29 No.7  
February 17, 1986

"RESEARCH SHOULD BE USED MORE TO DETERMINE 'PERCEPTIONS' THAN 'FACTS'"  
BECAUSE PERSUASION BEGINS WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE REAL PROBLEM;  
THE 13 PROBLEM TYPES AND PERSUASION STRATEGIES FOR EACH

"It is not the facts (a better machine or what the numbers show) that are important," believes Jim Arnold of Chester Burger & Co. (NYC), "but the perception of the audience that must be understood by those who would be effective persuaders." He defines a problem as the image of "what is" contrasted with the image of "what should be" -- thus the need to deal with perceptions. To bring about desired action, "keep the problem at the center of what you do." The 13 problem types:

1. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (Storyteller): Identifies problem, puts it in historical context. Strength: creates sense of continuity, momentum toward a future path.
2. CRISIS: Involves danger & opportunity. Sketch out the danger -- do not blame audience for it -- then show opportunity exists in overcoming it.
3. DISAPPOINTMENT: Useful when some plan has miscarried. Avoid blame. Show how the failed plan was best for the time, but now face a mismatch between what was hoped for and what has occurred.
4. OPPORTUNITY: Springs from a possibility not heretofore available. New vision of the future rests on external events, new discoveries, new knowledge.
5. CROSSROADS: Past success or achievement requires a new course of action for the future. The old road has run out and a choice must be made for a new route.
6. CHALLENGE: Call for a contest, struggle; often useful with top management. A mismatch between what exists and what someone dares to accomplish.
7. BLOWING THE WHISTLE: Mismatch between behavior observed and behavior demanded by principles, laws, customs, conscience. Policeman role: a delicate tactic of persuasion.
8. ADVENTURE: Risky & uncertain image of the future compared with safety of the present. Its appeal is the lure of the unknown -- chance to test mettle against unpredictable forces. Adventure doesn't lend itself to a "pro & con" presentation. This opposes the spirit of adventure. It is a call to arms, not summation to a jury.



EDITOR, PATRICK JACKSON • PUBLISHER, OTTO LERBINGER • ASSOCIATE EDITOR, JUNE DRULEY  
READER SERVICE MANAGER, LAURIE ELDRIDGE • MARKETING DIRECTOR, ROBIN PETERS  
A PUBLICATION OF PR PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC. DUDLEY HOUSE, P.O. BOX 600, EXETER, N.H. 03833-0600  
FOUNDED 1958 • \$125 YEARLY • ISSN 0048-2609 • COPYRIGHT 1986 • ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

9. RESPONSE TO AN ORDER: Comparison between what someone else wants (a superior authority) and current conditions.

10. REVOLUTION: A mismatch between an unfavorable image of the future that will occur if the present state of affairs continues, and a better state that is possible only by bringing down the status quo. Caution: the mismatch between images must

be so great that the will to "solve the problem" overcomes the fear of the consequences of failure.

11. EVOLUTION. A mismatch between the present condition and the desired future. Arises when an institution, well adapted to its previous environment, faces a changed environment that calls for further adaptation to remain viable.

12. THE GREAT DREAM. Method of presenting utopia, paradise or hell on earth as an image of the future. Uses fantasy, e.g., Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech.

13. CONFESSION. Mismatch between what the audience believes exists and what really does exist. Implies a difficult act of honesty with an element of sacrifice for some great cause. Get audience to believe they would have acted the same in similar circumstances. Take full responsibility, otherwise strategy is not credible.

NO WONDER WE HAVE SO MANY CAR ACCIDENTS; DRIVER'S MANUALS TOO DIFFICULT TO READ

Have you checked the readability of your publications lately? John Savage, Boston College prof, surveyed driver's manuals of 42 states and found many

CLIPS vs. RESULTS  
Kathy Lewton, St. Vincent Medical Center (Toledo) chides prr on its 1/13 coverage of "Herb" that seems to equate clips with results:  
"Since when do we say that 300 clips are results? I thought results had something to do with the objectives of the campaign. Citing clips & internal management 'excitement' as results is really evading the bottom-line question: Did they sell more hamburgers & fries? And it's yet another example of why so many CEOs see pr as something unbusinesslike, because we can't quantify the organizational value of our work. Maybe the folks at Burger King aren't as picky, but I'd sure want to know what that \$500,000 campaign did for my company, and measuring it in clips wouldn't mean much."  
prr agrees and has written often on this point. In future we'll indicate that the number of clips merely shows that outbound communication occurred. Clips are no indicator of effect on publics, but do indicate effective media placement.

require college education to understand. They use 1) legalistic language, 2) long sentences, 3) complicated sentence structures & 4) words that are beyond a person's normal speaking ability.

He applied standard readability formulas, found 16 require college level reading skills. Toughest to read is Vermont's, followed by Ct & Wis. Others requiring college ability are from Minn, Ark, Ala, Mass, Tenn, Ill, Colo, Nev, Okla, NM, Ariz, Maine, Mo. High school level skills are required to read manuals from Idaho, Md, Wash, Neb, Kans, RI, SD, WVa, Mont, Fla, Iowa, Calif, Del, Ky, Ind, Miss, Penn, Wyo, Ga, NH. High school & junior high school level skills are needed to read manuals from Alaska, Mich, Va, NJ, La, NC. "People who produce materials for mass consumption ought to be aware of consumers and take them into account. Newspaper & magazine writers do it and it's about time for the government to do it too," notes Savage.

THE NEW ACCOUNTABLE, EVALUATED, BOTTOM-LINE PUBLIC RELATIONS

A careful review of trends in the field, arising over the last decade, suggests the following syllogism:

EMPHASIZES

1. Outcomes -- Focuses on verifiable results. Asks, "Why are we doing this? How will it advance the organization's goals, objectives, business plan...today as well as tomorrow?"

2. Behavior -- The only evaluation that counts. As GM's chrm said, "I don't care if they love our cars; the question is whether they are buying them." Applies Behaviorist psychology when appropriate, designing systems that stimulate behavior first, with attitude change following -- instead of vice versa per the classic model.

3. Relationships -- By personalizing, humanizing, targeting, using opinion leaders & peers, building participation & rewards into all possible activities. Keys on value sharing. Understands the positive aspects of the Hawthorne studies, i.e., what people really want is to be given attention. Events, gatherings, networking, consultation 1-on-1 become major program elements.

4. Perception -- Accepts & works with human nature, which means emotion, intuition, peer pressure, experience, sensory responses outweigh logic & data. Realizes unpredictability of humans so always builds in a fail-safe or fall-back plan. Can live with disorderliness, Murphy's Law, ambiguity.

PLAYS DOWN

1. Process -- Avoids measurement by clips or audience count, number of newsletter issues or pages, speeches given, appearances before analysts, etc. Stops treating more messages, more frequent publication, etc. as anything but wheel-spinning -- unless they deliver behavioral results. Eschews doing things just because they're traditional.

2. Opinion/Attitude -- Avoids treating transitory opinion as a viable goal. Recognizes the long time required to truly change attitudes by finding ways to "usurp existing positive feelings" & associate them with products, services, ideas. When possible, simply does not target publics where attitude change would be required. Still, realizes opinions/attitudes can affect, or more definitively, lead to behavior... so treats them as means to an end.

3. Communication Per Se -- Which is too often impersonal, lecturing, focusing on information transfer, aiming at masses. Realizes that even at its best (when 2-way) communication tends to spotlight facts not feelings. "People can communicate with one another for years and not build a relationship -- which requires risk & openness." But understands that true 2-way communication is a means to building relationships.

4. Facts -- Avoids simply "getting the facts out" since studies of effective persuasion reveal their weakness when compared with perceptual responses. Doesn't expect data, statistics or logic to carry the day. But knows a rational case can be used to validate an emotional appeal.