

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION FORMS
FOR PEOPLE INVOLVED IN SPEAKERS PROGRAMS

That's the domain of fledgling National Ass'n for Corporate Speaker Activities. Its 200 members are largely speech writers & speakers program coordinators (tho it's working on building a strong membership of media relations people, too). Org'n holds regional conferences and a nat'l conference yearly, publishes membership directory & newsletter, undertook the first of a planned annual survey of speakers programs.

12-pg questionnaire was sent to members and is now being tabulated. Profile is due in July. "First study of its kind," exec dir Fred Beck told prr. It'll show trends, average budgets, kinds of mgmt support, types of training. "It covers almost everything." Respondents were asked to send samples of their materials.

"NACSA now has a bank of things like booking forms, evaluation forms, outlines of training programs, so we can service our members when they have questions." (More info from NACSA, P.O. Box 690454, Houston 77269; 713/320-2114)

USEFUL ITEMS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Phil Lesly, Chicago based counsel, has produced a volume of excerpts from his work titled Ahead Of Time. It's 275 quotes from his managing the human climate, speeches & work for clients. Many have been quoted in key pub'ns or tv interviews. Many anticipated events & trends -- sometimes years ahead of time. (\$5 + \$1.50 shipping from Philip Lesly Co, 130 East Randolph, Chi 60601)

"You are a mooch & a deadbeat! You have been forever recorded on our books as 'Bad Credit.'" That's the final, "hardball" statement publisher Lauren Januz is sending to no-pays of the Januz Direct Marketing Letter. It sure gets attention! "We did this for a client some months ago and his phone literally rang off the hook, but he converted over 30% of his unpaid subscriptions. People yelled, they screamed, but they paid." That may be good marketing strategy...but what about the remaining 70% and the effect of word-of-mouth on reputation?

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. Sally Heet (35) murdered in her DC apt. She was press sec'y to Sen. Daniel Evans since '83; previously vp & mgr corp comms, Ranier Nat'l Bank (Seattle); well known in PRSA.

RETIRING. Frank LeBart, principal of Kearns & West (Lexington, Mass), will participate in an advisory capacity as sr counselor beginning May 1; will continue his current presidency of Foundation for PR Research & Education thru the end of the year.

AWARDS. Anne Hecker (comms constl, Washington State Dental Ass'n, Seattle) receives Georgina MacDougall Davis Award from Women in Communications Inc. for outstanding service to WICI.

HONORS. IABC names Alvie Smith (dir corp comms, GM, Detroit) & Richard

Wilmot (principal, Wilmot Assocs, Detroit) recipients of its highest honor -- Fellow Awards -- given for outstanding contribution to the ass'n & the profession.

"For the last several years I've been working to develop a framework & philosophy of communication as an essential ingredient of management. I've had a great deal of help and really fine support from top GM management," says Smith.

"Corporate communication has changed so rapidly. The change is dependent on the organization's culture & senior management, and the ability of professional communicators to drive the process forward. I expect the emphasis on communication to increase in the future, on an even faster track. That's our opportunity," Wilmot remarks.

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DRAMATIC SHIFT IN ACTIVIST RELATIONS FROM CONFRONTATION TO COOPERATION
MAKES COALITIONS & CONSTITUENCY RELATIONS A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY NOW

Recent nationwide survey of consumer activist leaders shows 71% of them now support working relationships with business. Environmental & other groups are seeking mutually agreed upon solutions to issues (pr 2/24). This is proof positive of the bottom line effectiveness of building public relationships.

"For those of us who pioneered in the business of what was then -- only 6 or 8 years ago -- called 'constituency relations' or 'public interest group work,' the speed of this evolution is remarkable," says Mary Ann Pires, who initiated Texaco's grassroots outreach program (pr 1/10/83), now heads her own firm, Pires Group (Armonk, NY). Texaco was careful not to deny or belittle the legitimate self-interests of those with whom it dealt.

"We sought the common ground. For that reason, more than any other, our coalition building was successful. And the program became institutionalized." She cites these important lessons -- guides to building relationships today:

1. Define your objectives in terms of the stakes others have in your issue. And know precisely who those others are. "This initial, critical step is most often overlooked in the 'rush to results.'" Profile each group. Meet with its leadership. Work with them on some non-legislative project. In short, get to know them, allow them to get to know you & test you.

2. Know your issue so well you can communicate it in simple, cogent terms. Don't be afraid to rewrite it & refine it as the process continues. To get others to buy in to your issue, they need to truly understand it. You are the all-important interpreter.

3. Allow the alliance you build to assume an identity of its own. It should not be a creature of your organization. Nor should it be a step-child. Commit to a shared process of decisionmaking to reach consensus. Useful aids are a) a white paper from which all can work; b) list of decisions & assignments that need to be made; c) strategic plan, including goals & timetable. Insist upon accountability.

"Any issue has natural allies. You identify them every day. It's throwing the net wide enough to bring unnatural allies into your coalition that represents the real challenge. And reward. But it's possible only with a threshold of mutual trust & self-interest. Developing such a threshold means working with others in your own organization, too -- other public relations people, the contributions staff, the strategic planners, the lawyers, the operations people. It's the business of building relationships, not putting together deals. It's slow. And unglamorous. And sometimes hazardous. But it works."



4. Maintain flexibility: coalitions involve negotiation & compromise. To negotiate you'll need a civil relationship with the other parties as well as a clear mandate from senior mgmt. Compromise achieves consensus. Consensus motivates legislatures & gov't administrators to act.

5. Treat people decently. Seems obvious, but "repeatedly I heard horror stories of companies violating civilities." Keys are a) listening...to mesh both sides' goals & objectives rather than force-feeding them yours; b) respecting other people's time; c) keeping confidences. "Often you will need to protect your source, or embargo information for a period of time, or control the dissemination of certain information, to safeguard the position of a key contact. Do it." d) Giving as well as getting. "Reciprocity goes with the territory. The sooner you educate your senior management to that reality, the easier your life will become."

6. Maintain & share your contacts. Expose them to others in your organization & vice-versa. This breaks down stereotypes. "Remember, today's issue might not prove to be as important as tomorrow's. It's a kaleidoscope out there. There's rapid movement & reconfiguration."

NEW INSTANT LINKAGE BETWEEN AN EVENT AND HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE RESULTS IN POLITICAL & ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS

This has "implications we are just beginning to understand," says Robert Moore, sr vp, Alexander & Alexander (NYC), & former emerging

issues coordinator of The Conference Board. "We live in a time when occurrences unrelated to our traditional business activities can suddenly undermine productivity & profitability." Walter Wriston, ex-chrm, Citicorp, feels it "puts every power structure at risk."

Impact of a) media's increasingly aggressive newsgathering & b) breakthroughs in electronic communications "is a new phenomenon. We are racing to cope with its effects as they shape our lives in new & baffling ways." No organization, individual or country is immune, he says, and advises all to have a strategy & action plan. At a minimum, he suggests, organizations should:

1. Take very seriously the trend of greater public accountability and recognize how this relates to revolutionary changes in electronic linkage.

2. Conduct periodic internal analyses of where your organization is most vulnerable to critical press or hostile public scrutiny.

3. Correct or modify organizational practices where the end results do not justify this new, and perhaps previously unevaluated, risk exposure.

4. Identify & monitor socio/political & economic trends which are outside your organization's traditional sphere of activity, but which could have a sudden & costly impact on basic lines of business.

"As we witnessed recently in Tripoli, the actions of policymakers are reported so aggressively and efficiently by the electronic media that the effects of actions are frequently known to reporters before the policymakers. Coverage from news organizations apparently out-paced internal communication channels at the State and Defense Departments. Subjects as diverse as Ferdinand Marcos, Prince Andrew, Union Carbide, Johnson & Johnson, NASA, Michael Deaver and Lloyd's of London bear the mark of this scrutiny."

USING THERAPY SYSTEMS FROM THE HEALING ARTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDES "THIRD LANGUAGE" THAT REVEALS FEELINGS

Conventional messages to unhappy or alienated workers often bounce off the "tuned out & turned off employee -- akin to shooting a B-B gun at a

Sherman tank," comments counselor Ron Goodman (Des Moines). To penetrate communication barriers -- often caused by problems in mgmt -- Goodman began looking into using techniques therapists use when dealing with people or families who are dysfunctional. For example:

Physio Technology, Inc. resulted from the merger of 3 companies. President complained people weren't following his lead. Chrm, founder of one of the merged cos, was competing for power. 1 1/2-day workshop was held for all top mgmt. Goodman & 2 assocs conducted a "confrontation type therapy session. We used art therapy techniques to get them to see what they were doing and what their out-of-kilter leadership was doing to harm the company."

Art Therapy Exercises 1) Draw a horizontal life-line. Above the line is positive; below is negative. To the left is your birth or the present; to the right is where you hope to be. Draw all the positive & negative

things that have occurred in your life. Then tell the group how you felt about those events. 2) Draw the kind of animal you see yourself as. Tell the group why you chose it and what its characteristics are. "What it does is strip away the veneer behind which people hide their feelings. They begin to reveal themselves without pretenses." This "third language" helps resolve conflicts in business relationships, Goodman finds.

After these exercises "we got them to examine why they were dysfunctional, why they weren't able to work as a team." After much discussion, a contract was begun. "We who are gathered here today do solemnly pledge we will do the following things." All present participated in filling in the words. When everyone agreed with what was written, one-by-one they walked up to the board and signed their name to it.

Results Workshop resulted in chrm voluntarily giving up his position, closing his plant and moving from Chi to Topeka hdqtrs in order to streamline operations. "That's how powerful this stuff is." Robert Ault of the Menninger Foundation & Dorothy Anderson of Mercy Hospital are art therapists who work with Goodman. Ault is former nat'l pres of American Art Therapy Ass'n.

"I submit this is the way the public relations profession must go over the next 20 years. It has nothing to do with press releases. Very little to do with media. Everything to do with the leaders at the top and how they manage," says Goodman.

"Our job is to sort out what's on the collective mind of the workforce thru indepth discussions. Then to be a resource to the leader. Part of it is strategic planning. Part is explaining to him how his behavior is perceived by employees and what he should say & do to shorten the communication lines & clarify what he expects from the troops -- direct line communication without distortion. Then setting up a system so the executive can do 'active listening' to hear what the employees are saying & reacting to. That's an ongoing task that never finishes. That's what public relations should be. In that process new techniques & methodologies are needed -- one of which is art therapy."