

DIFFICULTY OF TEACHING ETHICS IN THE CLASSROOM:
ARE WE PHILOSOPHERS OR CRAFTSMEN?

Public relations professionals must "take responsibility for the organizational environment.

They have to become trustmakers...congruity watchdogs...keepers of the corporate conscience," explains Al Wann (AT&T) in a volume of proceedings from '84 & '85 IABC educator workshops on ethics in pr education.

Attendees identified & prioritized this list of ethical concerns: 1) How does the educator feel -- intellectually & in the heart -- about the fine art of persuasion, perception alteration & concept manipulation? 2) How does one teach ethics in pr? 3) Should educators produce what employers want...or what they need? What is the educator's role beyond producing more communicators? 4) What is the best way to exemplify & teach social responsibility -- in the classroom & in the field of pr? 5) What are the ethics involved in the use -- and abuse -- of student interns?

Philosophers Jack Seigle (American Univ), one of the 12 contributing authors, writes: "One must confront facts when teaching pr ethics to graduate students in business. Some pr practitioners indeed do believe that 'money isn't everything, my reputation is the other 3%.' Where does such thinking put the pr faculty member when he introduces pr ethics to a class of students who have had extensive job experience, some of it in pr?"

"Perhaps the best way to address the problem of ethics is to compare the practitioner with the craftsman & the philosopher. The craftsman is rightly proud of the work he does; he doesn't ask a customer about his background or reputation. When someone comes to him to get a job done, he simply does it to the best of his ability and gets paid. The philosopher, on the other hand, considers all of the ramifications of any request. He cannot divorce the proposed assignment from his role in society. In fact, the reputation of the potential employer or client is crucial in his decisionmaking.

"The pr practitioner who is truly outstanding is the philosopher, the one who not only believes in what he does but knows that the organization for which he works is serving society well. He may not make as much money as the next fellow, but he can live with his conscience." (Copy of "Ethical Trends & Issues In Public Relations Education" from IABC, 870 Market St, Ste.940, SF 94102)

ITEM PRACTITIONERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Nominations for PRSA's 3 top awards due July 31. 1) Gold Anvil honors a practitioner who has made a major contribution to the profession during a distinguished career. 2) Outstanding Educator Award signals a full-time professor whose teaching skills have advanced public relations education. 3) Paul M. Lund Public Service Award salutes the practitioner whose public-service activities reflect credit on the profession. (Nomination forms from PRSA, 845 3rd Ave, NYC 10022; 212/826-1750)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. Marvin Wilbur (ass't vp, United Presbyterian Foundation, NYC) receives 1st-ever distinguished life membership in Religious Public Relations Council for 27 yrs of mentoring

& leading RPRC. "It's not only for what he has done for RPRC. It's also for what he has done for the profession," RPRC pres Paula Kadel told prr.

pr reporter

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PILLSBURY RECOGNIZES ITS PEOPLE WITH 1ST-EVER EMPLOYEE ANNUAL REPORT,
CONFIRMS NEW MISSION & VALUES STATEMENT -- "PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE"

Proposed 2 yrs ago as an employee communication strategy, employee annual report was adopted last year simultaneously with the launching of a company mission & values statement.

Division Of Responsibility Employee AR came from the public relations dep't. M&V statement was a human resources dep't project with pr involvement. Tho separate projects, both had same goal -- stressing the value of company's people.

10 1/2 x 11", 4-color, glossy employee AR proved a good vehicle for showcasing the M&V statement. It is given prime location on page 1. AR reinforces message with profiles of employees who have been acting on M&V's concepts long before they were put on paper.

Support From The Top To keep the AR project from becoming too unwieldy in the number of people involved, "we worked directly with the CEO, vp of pr & several senior human resources people for decisions & approvals," Bill Belknap, mgr of employee comms & idea's originator, told prr. "A valuable asset" is CEO's strong endorsement of the project.

Statements from Pillsbury's Mission & Values:

The Pillsbury Company exists by public approval and our function is to serve the public interest.

Our Mission Is To Be The Best Food Company In The World.

In addition, we are committed to being an outstanding corporate citizen and creating an environment for our employees that makes Pillsbury an exceptional place to work.

People Make The Difference.

It is important that we: ¶Attract, motivate & retain the most talented people in our industry. ¶Promote mutual trust & respect for each other. ¶Encourage promotion from within & provide fully competitive compensation. ¶Practice open & timely 2-way communication, with the expectation & confidence that well-informed people will do the right thing. ¶Keep an open mind to new ideas and encourage innovation & risk taking with the knowledge that sometimes we will fail. ¶Provide opportunity for all employees to develop their potential and make the best use of their abilities.

Excellence Must Be A Way Of Life.

This demands that we: ¶Maintain a dynamic, growth-oriented environment that promotes teamwork & encourages individual initiative. ¶Provide leadership & rewards that will motivate employees to practice excellence in every dimension of their job.



Employees Favorable ARs were mailed to homes of all employees. "Their reaction was, 'Give me more!' They were very positive." Bi-annual survey coming later this year will formally record employees' reactions. Informal responses from management & employees "was so spontaneous & positive that we felt an earlier survey would be unnecessary." A 2nd employee AR is already in process -- due Sept. 1, just prior to the annual meeting.

Beneficial With Stockholders, Too AR was also sent to stockholders one month after mailing the corporate AR. Package included a cover letter from the CEO saying, "Our company is more than numbers. It's also people and the communities in which we operate." Behind the letter were 2 reports: 1) employee AR "showing the important role our employees play" and 2) community AR "talking about our charitable contributions & involvement in our communities."

"That's not the traditional stuff you send stockholders who stereotypically are worried only about whether or not their investment is a good one. But our CEO has an enlightened attitude about the long-term success of this company. He acknowledges the importance of our role in the community and the treatment & recognition of our employees."

Response from stockholders was "overwhelmingly favorable. 9 of 10 said, 'I feel good about investing in a company such as yours.' Only 1 of 10 thought we shouldn't waste our money. That confirms what we feel is important."

Is It Expensive? "Compared to most stockholder reports, no. Compared to most employee ARs, yes. Our intention is to convey the message that the investment we make in our stockholder reports is as important as the investment we want to make in our employee reports. So we deliberately made the design similar. And when you do that, the cost is similar, too. Interestingly, no employee has said, 'Why do you spend all that money on something like this?' That tells us they see acknowledgement of employee accomplishment not as a waste of money but as an investment."

MARKETING, LEGAL & QUALITY CONTROL DEPARTMENTS CLAIM RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRISIS COMMUNICATION

In the event of a product-tampering incident, only 20% of 101 consumer-product company execs say the public relations dep't would be involved in crisis communications. Only 19% would involve top management. Instead, it would most likely be handled by marketing (35%), legal (34%) or quality-control (28%). This from a recent survey by Strategic Information Research Corp (SIRC).

While a major concern of business is making products tamper proof, many are unprepared for dealing with a product-tampering crisis. 85% believe packaging cannot be made completely tamper-proof. Even so, only 56% have a crisis plan or are in the process of designing one. 44% remain without one.

Reasons given for not having a crisis plan include "no need," "we've never had a crisis," "we have adequate tamper-proofing" and "we'll wait until the need arises." The it-can't-happen-to-me syndrome persists.

"Producers & distributors of consumer products, whose sales depend in large part on the consumer's trust, can suffer dramatic & long-lasting damage in the marketplace if they respond too slowly or take the 'no comment' approach. Speculation about the cause & extent of a crisis often can be worse than the problem

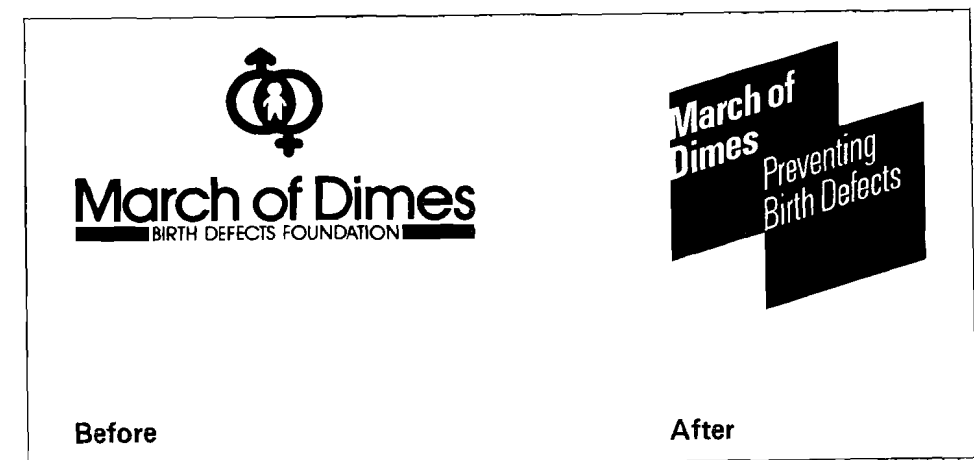
itself. Information is the cure," says Robert Dilenschneider of Hill & Knowlton (NYC). He recommends top mgmt answer this key question before a crisis occurs: "How can we ensure that every dealer, customer, legislator & regulator gets fast, accurate information if a problem arises?"

Among the execs whose companies have or are organizing crisis teams, 20% say their plan includes staff training. All those currently assembling a crisis team have sought the advice of outside consultants.

NEW LOGO "SAYS IT STRAIGHT," GETS MARCH OF DIMES' MISSION ACROSS

While most people are aware of the March of Dimes, surveys found that many didn't know what the foundation does. Its mission was often misunderstood. "Although we are a nonprofit foundation, we have the same kinds of marketing & communication problems than many corporations face," explains M of D's pres Charles Massey.

To increase awareness of its mission, M of D now has a new visual symbol. The previous logo, which combined the genetic symbols for male & female with an infant-like shape, did not convey the idea of preventing birth defects -- the foundation's mission.



"Sometimes there's just no substitute for saying exactly what you mean. Symbols are said to be worth a thousand words. But how do you go about symbolizing an idea like the prevention of birth defects? It's a difficult concept with lots of opportunity for misunderstanding. That's why we felt no symbol would be as effective as coming straight out and saying it," explains Gene Grossman of Anspach Grossman Portugal, designers of the logo.

JOURNALISTS MAY BE YOUR BEST FRIENDS BUT SURVEY FINDS IT WON'T AFFECT ABILITY TO GET IDEAS IN PRINT

Good media relationships are advantageous when trying to get your message to the public, advise many pr pros. Now, along comes a survey that says, "It ain't necessarily so!" Survey found that a long-term relationship with a pr person is not a significant factor affecting a reporter's decision to use a suggested story idea. Instead, it depends most heavily on story's relevance to the publication's readership. Newsworthiness, content & a local angle are other important considerations.

50% rate a previous relationship with a pr person as not at all important. 23% rate it fairly important. An equal percentage say it is moderately important. Fewer than 4% say it is highly important.

Conducted by Carol Morgan Associates (Mpls), survey was mailed to 150 hi-tech & medical editors & reporters. 35% responded.