

PREPARING FOR A PRINCESS' VISIT
TEACHES LESSONS IN COPING

1. Don't take for granted that your internal audiences will all share the same viewpoint. When Princess Margaret was to visit UBC Health Sciences Center Hospital (Vancouver), energies & money were expended on general cleanup & wall painting. "Some staff were...or pretended to be...furious over the money spent. A strange reaction when those of us in administration wished we had a royal visit a week -- parts of the hospital never looked better. Interestingly, there seemed to be little understanding by those who are not environmental workers (what we call housekeeping/maintenance types) of the pride & interest taken by some in the appearance of the hospital when visitors are here," Francine Gaudet, exec ass't, pr & development, told prr.

2. Don't forget to expect the unexpected. Princess Margaret's visit took place on a Saturday. "We planned a luncheon for those who volunteered and visiting dignitaries remaining after the Princess left. It was an RSVP. I felt fairly safe when I told the caterer to plan for 50. I was only slightly stunned when 15 unexpected, enormous Royal Canadian Mounted Police arrived. Our caterer, a member of the hospital staff, managed to fly thru perfectly. But it was obvious we weren't going to have a place for them to sit in the room set up for the event. Our security person said to them, 'Come on, we don't have to sit with these people' and took them to another section of the cafeteria that was private."

ITEMS OF CONCERN TO PROFESSIONALS

More evidence that news media no longer penetrate our overcommunicated society -- at least in the case of mass audiences -- is poll on Supreme Court nominations. Reports UPI: "59% said they did not know who Justice William Rehnquist is, despite his well-publicized nomination to replace retiring Chief Justice Warren Burger." As for the other nominee, Judge Antonin Scalia, only 16% were familiar with his name. But there's good news in the Penn & Schoen study for National Law Journal: lawyers don't get much respect. Only 12% of respondents want their children to have a law career.

Procter & Gamble's lawyers are succeeding in keeping the "Satanic" trademark issue alive -- which assumedly is not the public relations dept's objective. Now they've sued a 72-yr-old part-time editor of a California mobile home park newsletter with circulation of 140. But several million circulation was achieved when wire services picked up the item. P&G's suit claims the newsletter's story, which the editor labeled "kind of a joke," caused it "harm in its business affairs."

Tip sheets on eldercare are available for reprint in newsletters & distribution thru employee assistance programs. New series from National Council on the Aging, called "Caregiving Tips," offers "one way that organizations can respond to the needs of their employees who are also caregivers to frail older people. The 'tips' provide basic, practical information to help caregivers understand their situation, find programs available in their communities," writes Lorraine Lidoff, dir of the program. For copies write NCOA, 600 Maryland Ave SW, West Wing 100, Wash DC 20024; 202/479-1200.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. Fernando Valverde (pres, Public Relations Group, Puerto Rico, receives Puerto Rico Products Assn's

annual Arturo Torres Braschi Award for his work in pr.

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USING PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES TO TACKLE THE BIG ISSUES,
LIKE WORLD PEACE, SHOWCASES PROFESSION'S RELEVANCE AS WELL AS POWER

"We are the peacemakers," said the late Kerry King of public relations practitioners. Person-to-person program between nations is the best road to world peace, advocates Edward L. Bernays. Minnesota/Moscow Children's Space Bridge, an interactive simulcast between the 2 locations, put public relations technology to work on the subject -- with a positive response that surprised its coordinator, David Speer of Padilla and Speer (Mpls).

"During the whole time we were working on this, we never received so much as one disparaging phone call. There wasn't a single picket. Not a single problem associated with the program at this end -- which surprised me," Speer told prr.

OBJECTIVES. 1) Improve relations between the US & the Soviet Union. 2) Give children a voice to express their increasing concern about the arms race & nuclear weapons. 3) Improve trade between Minnesota & USSR.

BACKGROUND. Peace Child Foundation played an instrumental role. Org'n is dedicated to promoting a deeper understanding of world issues thru participation in a musical play entitled "Peace Child." Story is about Soviet & American children becoming friends & promoting peace thru educational & cultural exchanges. Performance of the play has been shown to reduce children's fears about the threat of nuclear war. Also to increase their sense of personal ability to deal with the possibility of war.

Many analysts say today's children are fear-ridden by war, militarism, violence, stories of kidnappings. Last week, the lead singer of Steppenwolf was widely quoted as saying they face "a rather bleak future. I feel they're a betrayed generation from the standpoint of the education they never got and the security they never got."

State Dep't was consulted to determine best way to approach & interest the Soviets. Russian sentiment regarding resumption of cultural exchanges was also monitored.

TIMING. When a thaw in the cold war appeared, letter proposing the Space Bridge was sent January 1985. Response, slow to come, was noncommittal. Then came the tragic death of Samantha Smith, the 13-yr-old Maine schoolgirl whose efforts as goodwill ambassador won her international acclaim. News reports indicated the Soviet Union was profoundly moved by her death. Shortly after her funeral, Speer sent a telex over Minn. Gov. Perpich's signature suggesting the project be done in the "spirit of Samantha Smith." Soviet response was immediate & positive. Agreement was reached in Moscow October 8, allowing only 7 weeks for preparation.



KEY STRATEGIES. 1) Schedule broadcast as soon after the Reagan-Gorbachev Summit as possible. 2) Air telecast during the holiday season when peace & goodwill are uppermost. 3) Exchange questions & responses between the American & Russian children during transmission. 4) Have an American boy & Russian girl appear to touch each other's outstretched hands as they sing a duet.

THE EVENT. John Denver & WCCO-TV news anchor Don Shelby were Minnesota's co-hosts. Vladimir Posner was Moscow's. Students of Russian language & culture were invited to be part of the audience in the Minneapolis Children's Theater. "Space Bridge" was transmitted by satellite on Dec 5 to 180 public tv stations across the US. Once the proposal was accepted, difficulties were mostly with language, difference in time zones & a Minnesota blizzard that caused schools to close on the day of the broadcast.

"My one major mistake was in pressing to be first, thereby not allowing enough time to raise sufficient funds. When it appeared the funding wouldn't come forth in time for our deadline, I pledged personal resources to the project and had to swallow \$20,000 in costs." Speer's firm also donated its pr services. Only cost to Minnesota was air transportation & hotel accommodations in the Soviet Union for Speer & Gov. Perpich.

RESULTS. 1) "Space Bridge" aired on prime time tv in the Soviet Union Saturday, January 11, reaching 92% of the households in 12 time zones -- 100+ million people. 2) Peace Child Foundation received 6,000 letters from children & adults thruout the US to be forwarded to children in the Soviet Union. 3) It was the 1st such program to be widely publicized in the US. Because of AP & UPI coverage, hundreds of daily newspapers carried the stories & pictures. 4) Program "generated much interest and a strong emotional environment for future exchanges -- cultural, scientific, educational," Speer sums up. Program won a Golden Trumpet from Publicity Club of Chicago and the Shaughnessy Award -- PCC's highest -- for outstanding contribution to quality of life.

ANNUAL APPRAISAL OF CORPORATE PERFORMANCE SPOTLIGHTS ISSUE PROBLEMS & OPPORTUNITIES

46% of 550 public relations professionals & 43% of 500 major company execs feel biz is doing a "poor" job

of using its influence to prevent the flow of illegal drugs into the US. The significant "poor" rating indicates respondents feel they have a role to play in this area. Interestingly, 19% of pr pros & 27% of execs say biz has no responsibility.

Other areas where biz is perceived by both groups as doing a "poor" job include: 1) paying a fair share to clean up hazardous industrial waste dumps, 2) retraining workers whose skills are obsolete, 3) improving the quality of public education. PRSA & Opinion Research Corp cooperate in this annual survey (pr 12/17/84, 9/2/85).

"The 'poor to fair' rating seems to provide a basis for public relations people who work for corporations to approach their management with suggestions of what their companies might do to respond more effectively to the relevant issues," says Tom Campbell, chrm, PRSA's Issues & Policies Cmte.

Rankings of corporate performance on issues are consistent with last 2 years. However, execs dropped "supporting

nonprofit org'ns" from the top 3 issues rated "excellent" or "good." They inserted "paying a fair share of the public tax." PR pros stuck with 1) protecting the health & safety of employees, 2) supporting NPOs, 3) managing the assets of pension funds in a responsible manner. (More info from PRSA, 845 3rd Ave, NYC 10022; 212/826-1750)

CONOCO SPEAKERS PROGRAM, ONE OF OLDEST & MOST VIGOROUS, IS MODEL OF PUBLIC OUTREACH WITH 350 VOLUNTEER ORATORS, 38,000 TALKS GIVEN

In 1974, as oil prices rose and consumers fumed about the Arab oil embargo, Conoco seized an opportunity. It launched a

speakers program for an information-hungry public. That year, 230 speakers delivered 750 talks. Today, 350 speakers deliver an average of 200 talks per month. To date, "more than 38,000 speeches have been presented to an audience of over a million by the company's contingent of totally volunteer speakers," Arlene Dana, dir spc'l projects, pr dep't, told prr.

VOLUNTEERS do the work in addition to their jobs. Only 2 of 24 coordinators carry the responsibility as part of their public relations function. All 24, located in 20 cities, solicit & assign speaking engagements and maintain records of performance & results.

Today, organizations must manage public policy as well as the bottom line. Broad objective of the speakers program is to present energy info and Conoco's views on energy-related public-policy issues at the grassroots. This is in "recognition of the impact public opinion has on the legislative process, and the potential impact legislative change has on the energy business." Platforms are available everywhere. Kiwanis, Lions & Rotary clubs alone number 30,000, meeting weekly or twice monthly.

SPEAKERS, also volunteers, are 1) provided with pattern talks on key subjects but encouraged to adapt them to their own style & the interest of the audience; 2) given training to learn speaking techniques; 3) not asked to travel beyond a 50-mile radius to any engagement; 4) from all disciplines -- salesmen, engineers, accountants, economists, lawyers. CEO also participates; 5) kept informed about the issues, given updated facts & figures for use during Q&A.

MOTIVATION is provided thru 1) recognition -- certificates for 6 talks, wall plaques for 20 are presented annually; 2) senior mgmt encouragement & example; 3) self improvement -- employees recognize the need for communication skills, and the program sharpens those skills; 4) enjoyment -- many simply enjoy public speaking. As a measure of employee interest, Dana reports virtually no dropouts.

EVALUATION is done to see if anyone is really listening. Speakers fill out forms documenting their impressions after each speech, list questions asked. Degree of interest is evaluated by the questions. Program chairpeople also return evaluation forms. Best measure of success, according to one coordinator, is repeat bookings. "In virtually all cases, we are asked to come back again. This shows people are listening and are interested, and it reflects credit on our speakers."

Program has developed into a major part of the overall corporate communications effort. "This is the most effective way there is for the company to take its case before the public. There is nothing like communication on a face-to-face basis," says Ed Mulligan, vp-pr.