## USEFUL ITEMS FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶Profile of the new professionals verifies Yuppie value system is in place. It shows over half the college grads surveyed had more than 1 employer 18 months after graduation. "Changing Career Values" describes this group as willing to work hard & pay their dues. But they see risk taking, organizational commitment & office politics as unnecessary for success. High turnover early in their careers reflects willingness to pick up and move on if things aren't "right." While 60% are willing to work 41-50 hrs/wk, less are willing to be away overnight. 80% prefer more than 1 formal appraisal a year. They are self-confident, want to be rewarded based on their own performance, and prefer money as the reward. (126-pg study from CPC Foundation, 62 Highland Ave, Bethlehem, Pa. 18017; $14.95)

¶Listing of over 300 issues managers -- names, addresses & phone numbers -- is available from Issue Action Publications. Specifically the roster lists members of 1) Northeast Issues Network, 2) Midwest Issues Network Dialogue, 3) Issues Network of Arizona & 4) Issues Network of California. ($12 -- $3 for Network members -- from IAP, 105 Old Long Ridge Rd, Stamford, Ct. 06903)

¶Increasing "bigness" of pr firms threatens the progress of the field, believes counselor Lou Williams -- who was a sr-exec at several biggies, now has his own firm. "Although theoretically increased size should bring about greater resources for clients, that's not always the case. Many of those in senior management positions of large firms are not spending enough of their time worrying about a client's problems. They spend it worrying about managing managers who manage other managers who manage still other managers, or productivity, or growth, growth & more growth," with the overall results that "people -- the single major resource of a pr firm -- become redundant and training becomes secondary. Meeting profit targets set by non-pr managers is the new ball game. We, the people who know our business and should be running our business, are losing control of the business." (Copy of his speech to Ass'n for Education in Journalism & Mass Comns from Cliff McGoon, IABC, 870 Market St, SF, Calif 94102)

¶"The power of public opinion" can bring about a change in the editorial value system, believes veteran print journalist Michael O'Neill. He argues in "Terrorist Spectaculars," a Twentieth Century Fund Paper, for the need to change tv reporting of terrorism -- but against using gov't regulation. While encouraging continued critical observation of the media by watchdog groups such as the American Bar Ass'n & independent observers, he suggests there ought to be a forum to give voice to public grievances. Proposes reviving the idea of the Nat'l News Council which was disbanded in '84. But wants changes so the revamped council would focus on professional improvement, not legalistic findings. Calls for "preventive journalism" -- dedication to exploring future issues. To do so, he admits, journalists will have to fight the corporate interests of their employers as well as "the natural resistance of readers & viewers who are more attuned to immediate visual action than invisible future threats." (Priority Press Publications, 41 East 70th St, NYC 10021; $7.50, 109 pgs)

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. Public Affairs Council '86-'87 ofcrs: chrm, Henry Lartigue Jr (mpa, Exxon, Houston); chrm-elect, W.D. (Don) Conley (vp-pa, Honeywell, Mpls); 3 vice-chrm, Ronald Budzik (vp-gov't afrs, Mead Corp, Dayton), Gerald Gendell (mpa, Procter & Gamble, Cincinnati) & George Gephart (mpa, Baltimore Gas & Electric Co, Baltimore); treas, Stevenson Walker (dir gov't rels, Reynolds Metals, Richmond).

**pr reporter**

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## TRULY RESPONDING TO A CONSUMER NEED BUILDS PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS BUT ALSO SALES & INCOME; MUST BE WILLING TO RISK TRYING NEW METHODS

Back in March, when interest rates began dropping, Bank of Delaware was deluged with requests for refinancing. "We have a limited number of loan officers in the mortgage department and had to schedule people 3 to 4 weeks in advance. But customers, afraid rates would go back up, were very unhappy," vp Bill Pfaff told prr.

THE IDEA. To resolve the problem, a loan officer suggested offering mass application sessions in the bank's cafeteria -- workshops where anyone, whether a present customer or not, could fill out an application independently. To make this possible, "we developed a very complete set of instructions."

WORD-OF-MOUTH. "We didn't advertise at all. It was strictly word-of-mouth. When people called asking for an appointment, we'd say we can't schedule one for 3-4 weeks, then invited them to come to a workshop." About 575 people attended 19 sessions held twice per evening or Saturday from March 15 thru June 4.

> Positive effects of the program reached beyond the community to employees. "Greatest thing was one of our loan officers came up with the idea and we made it work. It involved a lot of extra hours. But at no time did I have to ask anyone to work overtime. They just pitched in and did it."

HOW IT WORKED. Evening sessions were "handy for business people who came straight from work. Saturday sessions were much more casual. People brought their kids. We offered sodas & donuts." On arrival, people were met at the "greeting table," handed an instruction kit & application form. Several loan officers wandered around, answering questions. A separate table was available for filling out & signing verification forms, getting a good faith estimate of closing costs & answers to questions, and paying the application fee.

RESULTS. "Most everybody thought the workshops were great. Only 2 people said they would have preferred a one-on-one. The rest were glad we could accommodate them even in a setting like this. It created a lot of positive feeling as well as good potential cross selling for us." $35 million in mortgages originated thru the workshops.

MERGERS ARE 1) BREEDERS OF RUMORS & FEAR, 2) OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS Whether between giant corporations (e.g. R.J. Reynolds taking over Nabisco) or the present syndrome of pr firms gobbling each other up, mergers engender employee fears & anger, as well as rumors of mass layoffs, loss of benefits, plant closings. Customers, communities, shareholders, vendors & other publics suffer similarly.

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Last year, 3,284 companies were acquired, according to an article in Psychology Today. The "merger syndrome," say authors Mitchell Marks (organizational psychologist, Calif School of Prof Psych) & Philip Mirvis (organizational behaviorist, BostonU), is not limited to hostile or unexpected takeovers. Friendly mergers evoke as many horror stories.

Scenario Of The Problem

1. Top execs make decisions in a fragmented and chaotic way. They use a crisis mgmt approach, closeting themselves from the chaos. "Some see themselves as generals and the conference room as the 'war room.'" Problem is they limit communication with their own people. Process gives them the illusion of control, but....

2. Merger negotiations center on legal & financial matters with investment bankers & attorneys leading the way. Scant attention is given to needs of employees & other publics.

3. Negotiations are generally held in secret. SEC guidelines limit what can be told -- even to employees.

4. Media reports focus mainly on the risks & problems. This fuels everyone's fears.

> Lack of communication & isolation of execs in the "war room" is described by one employee as the "mushroom treatment" in Isadore Barmash's book, Welcome To Our Conglomerate, You're Fired: "Right after the acquisition we were kept in the dark. Then they covered us with manure. Then they cultivated us. After that, they let us stew awhile. And, finally, they canned us."

5. Nobody has accurate answers to questions. Formal memos that mgmt has the situation well in hand only arouse suspicion and start rumors.

Public Relations' Opportunity

6. Think thru the human implications. Identify the people & groups that will be affected. ¶Action: Select & prepare people to work on transition teams.

7. Emotional preparation is essential. Useful analogy is research on surgery patients. When forewarned of the pain of an operation and given a realistic portrayal of their recovery, patients healed more quickly and had fewer complications. So, Niagara Institute (Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont) runs premerger workshops to prepare execs. Benjamin Schneider, UMd psychologist, has developed a "realistic acquisition preview" to ready execs for merger stress. ¶Action: Someone needs to do this for employees & other publics.

8. Take steps to minimize culture clashes. "The most important contributor to discord is a clash in corporate cultures. After a series of losses, whether in substance (such as a company's benefit & compensation package) or in symbols (such as the company's name or logo), people start to lose their identity with the organization. ¶Action: Study similarities & differences in cultures ASAP, share findings with mgmt so a unification program can be launched.

9. Clarify each organization's values, philosophy & ways of managing. Use these insights to guide how the merger is handled. Where cultures are compatible, integrate immediately. Where they collide, move slowly, respecting differences. ¶Action: Develop a merger task force using execs from both organizations. Involve lower-level personnel. These teams work to counteract the natural "we versus they" feelings and to broaden the planning of merger decisions by including people who aren't part of mgmt.



10. Communicate as never before, throughout both organizations -- internal newsletters, news releases, formal & informal meetings. ¶Action: Several months after the merger, survey employees about their views & feelings. Let them know their thinking matters. It'll give planners data for further integration and identify "hot spots."

> Sociology's "rule of abuse" is demonstrated in merger settings: "Any change in a relationship is the result of abuse -- actual, perceived or feared." Until such abuses are settled, or at least recognized & discussed, the abused party cannot even hear messages from the other.

50% to 80% of all mergers are financial disappointments, according to studies. Authors suggest merger syndrome plays a major role in turning potentially good alliances into disasters. There's a strong need for public relations -- with its concern for the human element -- to take a leading role.

THERE'S A COST-CUTTING TREND IN MEETINGS BUT CEOs NOT WILD ABOUT TELECONFERENCING

Mel Hosansky of Meetings & Conventions mag told prr what's getting cut are the enhancements -- special speakers, themes -- that help convey the message. Attendance is going down. "Where an organization might have sent 10-15 people a year ago, they're sending 8. If they sent 40 last year, they're sending 25 or 30 this year." And meetings are shorter -- another budget-cutting measure.

Teleconferencing -- "used occasionally by about 15% of meeting planners" -- hasn't cut into the need for, or the amount of money spent on, meetings. Sampling of CEOs shows they are "not enthusiastic" about meeting electronically. They prefer face-to-face interaction and feel what happens in the corridors is too important to give up.

10 Principles For Successful Meetings

> "Keep in mind that, one way or the other, you're likely to be the meeting planner they'll always remember."

1. Get in touch with all presenters early, even if they're in-house. Make sure they're organized, have necessary support material.

2. Get all supplier agreements in writing. The meeting business is complex & hotel turnover can be high.

3. Things change -- constantly. Keep on top of your conference status.

4. Delegate. Make sure someone from each area has responsibility.

5. VIPs expect VIP treatment. Pay attention to the little touches.

6. Plan indoor backups when the weather might spoil an event.

7. Megastar speakers can catch the flu. Make sure the contract stipulates a stellar backup waiting in the wings.

8. Don't listen to suppliers who tell you not to worry. Better to be considered a world-class pain by the hotelier or tour operator than the organizer of a failed meeting.

9. Do your own dress rehearsal. Walk thru every phase of the meeting yourself.

10. Take personal responsibility for every attendee until the last one leaves for home.