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TV NEWS ANALYSIS SHOWS MEDIA NOT COVERING PUBLIC'S NEED-TO-KNOW TOPICS  
BUT GLOBAL VILLAGE NOW MAKES EVERYTHING IMPORTANT TO ORGANIZATIONS;  
FAILURE TO PURSUE IMPLICATIONS OF WALL STREET SCANDALS DANGEROUS

If tv is where most people get their news (tho some studies challenge this) or an agenda-setter for other news media, compilations of tv news content ought to be strong indicators of current journalistic trends -- and how they affect practitioners. Possible lessons from DWJ Associates' (NYC) review of network evening news (see box):

Top 10 stories from 1986 network evening newscasts:

	ABC		CBS		NBC	
	Minutes	%	Minutes	%	Minutes	%
Iran Arms	386.7	6.7	308.0	5.4	292.0	5.1
So. Africa	173.5	3.0	199.0	3.5	138.0	2.4
Challenger	157.0	2.7	150.5	2.6	156.0	2.7
Chernobyl	137.6	2.4	121.0	2.1	125.0	2.2
Terrorism	140.0	2.4	107.0	1.9	104.0	1.8
Philippines	129.0	2.2	88.0	1.5	112.0	2.0
Drug Crisis	104.0	1.8	137.0	2.4	79.0	1.4
Tax Reform	68.0	1.2	69.0	1.2	62.0	1.0
AIDS	43.0	.7	80.0	1.4	58.0	1.0
Farm Crisis	25.0	.4	58.0	1.0	22.0	.4

1. The finger-pointing, ain't-it-awful syndrome is very much alive -- per the Iran-Contra media overkill.

2. Entertainment value rules, not affect on viewers' daily lives. Of the top ten stories, only 2 or 3 were need-to-know for most of us. For instance, Gloria Johnson of DWJ feels the most ignored story was the debate within the White

House over a plan to help Americans pay for catastrophic illness. "The networks spent all kinds of time tracing the labyrinth path of contra money and none on a situation which millions of Americans must face at some time in their lives."

3. Because of the globalization of issues, however, nearly every item bore watching by nearly every organization. A far off story like the Philippines governmental change affects not only companies doing business there, but social agencies dealing with Filipino clients or neighborhoods.

4. Most of the time the big tv placement opportunities are tie-ins to these big stories -- e.g., what is your organization doing in response? University & think tank publicity relies heavily today on tying in by offering comments or additional information. So hungry are journalists for such comment that we have the current fad of asking stock analysts to offer their thoughts on just about every news item, no matter how irrelevant.

EDITORIAL: PLAYBOY, OVER THE YEARS,

...has published timely investigative reporting. Exposés of the medical profession, military-industrial complex, CIA & others gave perspective to prevailing me-too journalism. Or so it seemed.

Reading the December article "exposing" public relations now raises doubts. Were they as far off the mark in the previous stories ...but fooled us because they were about fields with which we were less familiar? Is all Playboy's reportage merely text versions of their flesh pix, lewdly shouting at readers to attract attention (& sell on news stands)?

However we view it, the mag's hackery of pr proves again the central point about the profession today: it is important, on everyone's mind, in the parlieu. Public relations is Establishment, to be "taken on" by "daring" writers.

However, the journalists who wrote the piece need a history lesson.

One reason public relations became essential to organizations is because for decades media simply did not report accurately (or at all) on their affairs. Remember the Henry Luces, DeWitt Wallaces, Bill Loeb's, Pulitzers & Hearsts? Bias, subjectivity & manipulation were their unabashed fare.

Remember also Paul Garrett. He became the prototypical corporate public relations officer at GM after being hired to keep Luce's muckraking Fortune away from the automaker's doors. (Now, in changed times, Fortune has become a panderer to corporations -- illustrating the ever-high moral tone of some journalists.)

The affair illustrates another truth about "mass media" today. If pr hadn't mentioned it, most of you reading this never would have known about Playboy's foray.

Media power ain't what it used to be but media tactics too often are.

-- Pat Jackson

¶Every pr pro apt to face an AIDS situation might benefit from reading the 1987 Bate-man-PRSSA case study. Written by Chuck Newton of Cohn & Wolfe for the annual competition between student chapters, it is a cogent presentation of the several dilemmas AIDS raises for employer, service & membership org'ns. PR/PA staffs could use it to role play. It could be an O.D. tool for group work with management or employees. Adapted to your setting, it could provide a reader participation game for publications. (Write pr for copy.)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. Newly-chartered Florida PR Education Foundation names counselor Bill Fenton president, John Dillin vp, Bob Gernert sec'y-treas. All are former FPRA presidents -- Dillin in orgn's first year, 1938.

DIED. In Puerto Rico's Dupont Plaza fire tragedy, Beryl Spector, longtime hospital, library & public broadcasting pr exec. For 8 yrs she was consultant to Corp for Public Broadcasting.

HONORED. Andrea Eliscu, pres of Medical Marketing, by Downtown Orlando, Inc, as one of 8 top women leaders selected for "professionalism, energy & dedication to the community."

RETIRES. Alden Wood, the Typochondriac, takes early retirement as vp-adv'g & pr, American Mutual Ins. (Wakefield, Mass.) to freelance, teach & write his columns on effective use of language.



Media Still Not Offering Real Insight

Journalistic leaders have for a long time been calling for the media to tell not just what's happening but also what it means to their audiences. They are failing badly.

For instance, one story not making DWJ's charts is the Boesky/insider trading/stock market crime mess. By the measure of potential impact on everyone's lives, even tax reform takes a back seat to the Wall Street scandal. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith thinks the "huge profits at all costs" rush among investment bankers & speculators is so strong it parallels the 1929 crash -- of which he is the best-known student. Writing in this month's Atlantic, he lists indicators which are ignored at high cost:

1. Fortune & prestige to a well-publicized group of stock market operators. Says Galbraith, "The oldest rule of Wall Street: financial genius is before the fall."

2. "Speculative dynamic" -- people & institutions drawn by the market rise, believing it will continue to rise and they can get out in time. But "speculative episodes never come gently to an end."

3. "Seemingly imaginative, currently lucrative, and eventually disastrous innovation in financial structures." Strong parallel with '29 is the rediscovery of leverage -- corporate takeovers, mergers & acquisitions, leveraged buy-outs -- and the resulting creation of huge debt.

4. In the Coolidge years, taxes were reduced on the affluent to stimulate the economy. Instead of increasing economic growth, money went into stock market. "So again now. Real capital spending is currently flat, even declining -- a depressing fact."

Groupthink Guides Business Press & Financial Analysts

"Justifying causes" for the Dow's rise over 2000 & the other occurrences Galbraith finds disquieting "will, needless to say, be cited by the sadly vulnerable financial analysts & commentators and, alas, the often vulnerable business press."

Today's lackluster understanding of such issues is reflected in DWJ's tracking. In '86, biz/econ topics averaged between 6%-10% of the week's news for each network. However, that was a gain over 85's 1%-4% per week, Gloria Johnson told prr. And coverage is continuing to rise. From Jan 5-9 ABC had 15%, CBS 13%, NBC 10%.

But the Ivan Boesky story was merely "a week's wonder. That was the week CBS ran around 35%. 15% of that was on Boesky. The other nets ran around 20% each -- with 15% on Boesky. There has been very little followup since -- 1 or 2 related SEC stories."

"Anyone who speaks or writes on current tendencies in financial markets should feel duly warned" by all of this, writes Galbraith.

"From the mergers, acquisitions, and buy-backs, it is now reasonably well agreed, comes no increase at all in industrial competence. The young men who serve in the great investment houses render no service to investment decisions, product innovation, production, automation, or labor relations in the companies whose securities they shuffle. They have no real concern with such matters. Mostly their operations absorb savings into an inherently sterile activity."

TV Graphics One Solution?

"Business hasn't been a popular topic because it's more difficult to get good video but the networks, particularly CBS, are learning how to tell the story with people, jobs & industry footage. Still missing are good, clean graphics which help translate more complex ideas so the viewer can grasp them quickly.

"If election night graphics are any guide, the networks are more interested in glitz than clarity. Generating electronic graphics -- translating printed graphics into something that works on the tv screen -- is evolving into quite a field as a way of communicating information."

Television News Index & Abstracts is a monthly pub'n containing descriptive abstracts of ABC, CBS & NBC evening newscasts. Gives time story aired, identifies reporter & on-air speaker, summarizes what was said. "It's a guide to the newscasts," spokesperson for Vanderbilt Television News Archive, part of Vanderbilt University, told prr. Subscription is \$500/yr; \$300 for NPOs. Also available are tapes of the newscasts plus 3,000 hrs of special programming -- Presidential speeches, press conferences, election coverage, convention coverage every 4 yrs. (More info from Vanderbilt Television News Archive, Heard Library, 419 21st Ave So, Nashville, Tenn. 37240; 615/233-2927)

MESSAGE STRATEGY TEST CASE: SPIKING THE OTHER GUY'S SLOGAN

Peace groups have borrowed the US Army's recruiting phrase, "Be All You Can Be -- Join The Army." Their bumper stickers read: "Be All You Can Be -- Work For Peace." Where products (or services or candidates) are in direct competition, this tactic often rebounds -- calling attention to the other product which may be sitting side by side on the shelf.

For an attitudinal subject like this, however, it seems to work. If peace groups can usurp the slogan sufficiently, when people see the Army version they will -- perhaps for the first time -- be apt to think of an alternative.

The only viable response for the Army is to drop the phrase. The worst thing it could do would be to publicize the situation. And a law suit by the ad agency or the government would be an absolute gift to the peace groups.

Should the Army drop the phrase, one strategy for the peace groups might be to counter whatever new phrases the Army uses. That is, to immediately usurp the current recruiting message, whatever it is, by tacking on a peace message. Unless they are persistent in this way, it will be a small one-time success and have little effect on attitudes. The challenge for the Army is to create a persuasive yet tamperproof slogan.

LAMM GOES OUT A PHRASEMAKER  
Few elected officials have attracted more attention in recent years than Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm. His "duty to die" speech is only the most publicized example. In one of his final speeches as gov before heading off to teach at Dartmouth, Lamm noted that the greatest causes of early death are smoking too much, drinking too much, eating the wrong things & not wearing seatbelts: "Three of the four are what we do with our mouths. The mouth is the most dangerous organ in the body."