

2) Formulate story possibilities. Editorial policy is broad to cover areas that have either direct or indirect impact on business climate. Some examples: "Escaping the Plateauing Trap," "People: The Ultimate Bottom Line," "Facing Up to the Reality of Drug Abuse," and "Employer Legislative Committees: Catalysts for Change." Some story ideas come from readers.

3) Select appropriate writers based on familiarity with who's writing in depth on these issues in reg'l or nat'l publications. Authors are paid -- tho sometimes only nominally if article contains commercial interest.

Format, unchanged in 10 years, is 5x7 with academic appearance. Tho color of cover is changed periodically, inside is straightforward, all type (no photos, illustrations), averages 50 pages. NJB hasn't evaluated shelf life or pass-along readership, but feels formal format best for the highly-educated audience it wants to reach. All costs come out of profits, not from rate-payers.

Reader & Management Response
Is Overwhelmingly Favorable

Attitude tracking survey was done after first year comparing reader & non-reader responses with those of a benchmark study done prior to the first issue.

Study measured perceptions of NJB: 1) its business & managerial expertise & abilities as a telecommunications supplier; 2) attitudes regarding the need for NJB's financial health; and 3) whether NJB was perceived as interested in NJ. Effectiveness of Journal was proven by tracking survey showing readers had a better appreciation for issues faced by NJB than non-readers.

"Our management is solidly behind the Journal; it definitely underpins the company's efforts to reach business leaders," Stakun adds. NJB's parent company, Bell Atlantic, liked NJB's Journal so much, it borrowed the idea, creating its own issues-oriented publication.

WALL STREET FOLLIES RAISE QUERY
FOR EMERGENCY PLANS: WHAT DO YOU
TELL EMPLOYEE STOCKHOLDERS?

Irrational climb, equally irrational fall of stock market last week surely showed -- once again -- that it's not economics but public relations (perceptions, psychology, expectations etc.) that rules Wall Street & investors. But that's poor solace for practitioners who have to deal with the fallout. One previously little-talked-about item:

If you have an ESOP or urge employees or neighbors to buy your stock, what did you communicate to them when the market "crashed"? Did you do anything? This may be a timely addition to crisis plans -- since fluctuation is a common prediction in financial markets for the foreseeable future. Financial counseling, workplace discussion groups, newsletters to the homes of worker shareholders -- the possibilities are many & obvious.

Situation may be an opportunity for public relations in other ways. If it impacts consumer confidence -- in a year already noted for weak spending -- plenty of persuading & cheerleading will be called for. If managerial morale is down, either due to personal losses or effect on budgets, etc., teambuilding will be required. And maybe it will even help boards & CEOs to realize "the folly of following the fund managers" -- making longer-term results acceptable again.

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TREND TOWARD TIGHTEST POSSIBLE TARGETING, I.E. ON KEY INDIVIDUALS,
MAKES OPINION LEADERS/BEHAVIOR LEADERS NEW FOCUS; 2 CASE STUDIES

McLuhan's successor, Derrick de Kirckhove, says the mass audience is dead -- so pr no longer means "public" relations but "personal" relations (pr 6/29). Personalizing relationships begins with recognition that an organization is its employees -- not management or shareholders. When many or all workers, at all levels, are actively involved in building relationships -- on their jobs and with outreach assignments -- a powerful, credible force is unleashed. E.g., Delmarva Power puts every manager on an interdepartmental team. Schools set up community relations teams. The Air Force writes pr responsibilities into everyone's job description. Manville gave employees 3x5 cards with critical messages to beacon during the doldrums of Chapter 11.

A second step advances the concept to all stakeholders. Mountain Bell's Arizona unit won a Silver Anvil for its stakeholder public affairs project. NCR contacts key stakeholders for all aspects of the human climate. Larry MacFarlane of USWest has a computerized key contact system that adds research, marketing & grapevine-seeding.

The 2 case studies that follow are additional examples of the transformation to personalized relationships.

CONSUMERS POWER RELIES ON EMPLOYEE 1-ON-1s IN COMMUNITY TO BUILD GRASSROOTS
SUPPORT FOR A CONTROVERSIAL OPTION THAT WOULD BAIL IT OUT OF BANKRUPTCY

When it ran short of funds to finish its 85%-completed nuclear plant, CPC (Jackson, Mi) was on brink of bankruptcy. Two decades of cost overruns, charges of fiscal mismanagement & widespread opposition to nuclear power meant few allies for the beleaguered utility. To explore alternatives, CPC commissioned an options study & developed alternative plan for Midland plant that won wide public support. The effort won the Arthur W. Page Mid-America Award for excellence in business communications.

"The most effective aspect of the program was our 'hat in hand' approach. Over the course of 20 years, we had reached a defensive 'circle-the-wagons attitude' which had managed to antagonize virtually everyone. The turning point in public opinion came when they realized we had changed -- had become more open & really tried to build a partnership."

Employee Support Key to
Winning Public Support

CPC set up new communications dept. combining gov't & public affairs, then developed company's first-ever strategic plan. Goals of 2-phased plan were: 1) make the public receptive to listen to whatever option was proposed; and 2) build support for the recommended plan.



Key factors guiding strategy were a) surveys showed CPC had a 2-pronged image: the organization as a whole was viewed negatively, employees were highly regarded; b) work force spread thruout state offered tremendous resource to reach public at all levels.

Grassroots Contact on All Levels Plan utilized 2 groups: 1) Employees were encouraged to make 1-on-1 contact with friends, neighbors, local government & business leaders. To kick off program, CPC prepared a 20-minute videotape, presented to all 10,000 employees at 7 regional meetings, unveiling tools & objectives. Presentation's goal was to say: a) here's our problem & what we're trying to do about it; b) here are the messages we think are important to convey; c) here are the tools we've developed to do the job; and d) here's how you can help.

2) Team of 12 upper level execs targeted leaders at state level...governor, business, creditors, vendors, civic & gov't leaders, large customers, editorial boards.

"Powering Michigan's Progress" is Theme for CPC's Comeback Using strength of economic argument, tools were developed to sell recommended option to public: a) Chairman's Briefing Book for top execs focused on CPC's contribution & importance to state economy & on potential problems based on forecasted shortage of generating power;

b) "Slim Jim" condensed version of briefing book was distributed to all 10,000 employees. Contained same arguments in simpler terms, provided tips on helping employees structure their own presentations;

"We could not have implemented this campaign without all the willing arms, legs and voices of our employees...When you have 10,000 employees spreading the good word, it is an extremely powerful force. Any political candidate would give his right arm for just half of that support."

c) employee communications vehicles were reduced to 2 new formats, each with on-going updates on program: Progress, a monthly magazine that goes to homes, thus reaching the extended family, and CP Weekly, a newspaper distributed at work;

d) slogan as constant reminder of CPC's purpose in state was permanently added to logo, placed on stationery, trucks, buildings;

e) Aggressive approach with media through editorial board meetings & constant updates kept issue in forefront of state news.

Results of Effort Go Far Beyond Financial Recovery Public approval was eventually won, aided in part by over 500 resolutions of support from key groups thruout state & by 250 editorials urging public not to prejudge options study. An improved employee communications program was another benefit.

"We showed employees you can be successful in dealing with controversial subjects even with a skeptical customer base. The challenge now is to maintain the momentum. We have created high expectations. They now expect to hear regularly from management and to be meaningfully involved in the company's efforts to stay ahead of the game. We are finding that we have to scramble a bit to meet this need, but it's a nice problem to have."

FRONT LINE IN ANY ORGANIZATION IS PEOPLE WHO HAVE CONTACT WITH PUBLIC

To Portland (Ore) Public Schools' Public Relations Academy, Bruce G. Willison, CEO of First Interstate Bank of Oregon, likened the bank's up-front staff with those of school district. Both of these line people must satisfy their "customer" every day, day in and day out. "It is far more important what our 4500 line and line support people do and say than what those few of us on the 20th floor of the marble tower do or say...managerial superstructure can be prone to hinder more than help the public-contact people."

INFORMING OPINION LEADERS: NEW JERSEY BELL'S QUARTERLY JOURNAL FOR MOVERS IN BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT, EDUCATION HELPS COMPANY STIMULATE THOUGHT & DISCUSSION ON KEY ISSUES AFFECTING STATE BUSINESS CLIMATE

The importance of opinion leaders in public relations efforts (pr 5/19/86) is claiming an increasing portion of program dollars. Efforts range from one-shot projects to on-going programs such as New Jersey Bell's Quarterly Journal. Publication was introduced to help NJ business leaders keep up with key social, political, economic & technological issues affecting both general social welfare & business climate. About to celebrate its 10th year, Journal is sent free to 15,000 opinion leaders.

"In these days, a business leader has to be more than a profit & loss manager; he or she has to be an issues manager & an opinion leader. Though we have other programs, the Journal is our in-depth effort to bring important issues before the business & opinion leaders of New Jersey." Thus, in an era of supposedly declining reading time & diminished influence of uppercrust opinion leaders, there's a role for a vehicle that looks beyond both suppositions.

"The way we define opinion leader includes top executives of NJ businesses, people in government & education -- anyone in the state who plays a part in shaping public policy that affects business in general," David Stakun, editor of New Jersey Bell Journal, told pr.

"What's Good for New Jersey Is Good for New Jersey Bell" ... is general philosophy underlying journal. Business customers are biggest percentage of phone volume, hence state's overall economic health strongly impacts NJB. With no other vehicle existing to provide an issues forum for state's business leaders, NJB initiated journal to fill the void. It's now seen both within & outside company as helping to build & maintain a state identity -- important as NJ is increasingly viewed as defined area of opportunity, rather than suburb of NYC or Philadelphia as in past.

Editorial Board Meets Monthly to Plan Issue Consists of editor, editorial director, vp who heads NJB's public relations efforts. They:

1) Read heavily to determine state & national issues that affect NJB's constituencies. Generally, topics are sufficiently important that they impact all of state's businesses, tho occasionally NJB uses the medium to address its own concerns. (The articles don't necessarily reflect opinion of NJB, each issue contains at least one editorial by a top NJB exec.)