

life dilemmas using families & friends as spokespersons. Messages portraying everyday situations that prompt people to question & think thru their behavior receive most favorable response. NYC's condom commercials take this situational route.

¶US Senate passed a bill, 59-31, to block efforts by the FCC to dismantle the Fairness Doctrine. Broadcast coverage of controversial issues & opposing views could become law if bill also passes the House. It has been a regulatory matter. Asked Sen. Danforth (R-Mo), as if to reprove 3rd Party Syndrome (see lead): "Do we want a relative handful of people to have that kind of power, that kind of control, to be the gatekeepers of the political discussion of this country, to be able to say one side of an issue can be covered but not the other?"

¶Would you name a serious newsletter "Gobbles"? You would if you were the Minnesota Turkey Growers Association, publishers of the only monthly magazine about the big, nutritious bird. Despite the humorous name, content is the latest in university research & industry trends.

¶Targeting Hispanic audiences in the US will be easier with a new 225-pg directory detailing Spanish-language or Hispanic-focused print & electronic media. Features indepth profiles of key outlets, listing over 250 nationwide. Includes data on advertising & editorial policies, formats, how news is gathered, regular features, advice on best way to send info, contact names. Burson-Marsteller assisted with data, Chevron & Coors with funding. (\$75 from The Media Institute, 3017 M St, NW, Wash DC 20007)

¶TV isn't all that valuable for product advertising, either, reports New York Magazine. Video Storyboard Tests, a research firm, finds that despite being overrun by about 3,000 commercials per month, at a cost of \$21.6B/yr, viewers' recall is terrible. In its phone polls, 85% can't recall any; when probed, 65% can recall one. Intercept interviews by another researcher find 7 of 8 can't remember any commercials top of head. Those that are remembered are fun to watch & entertaining -- which may not be the best way to sell many products.

¶Good reputations are so hard to build they can be leased. One of the latest entries in the bottled water business is called PennState, sold by AcquaPenn Spring Water Co. After firm was sure it had high quality product, in \$1.5B market, PennState (the university) was approached. Leasing agreement allows use of school's name -- chosen because people associate name with "excellence," especially in Pennsylvania area company serves. Instant recognition is achieved to shorten market penetration time.

#### WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**AWARDS.** Ed Block (former vp-pr & employee comms, AT&T) receives Nat'l PR Professional Award at 6th Annual Arthur W. Page Lecture & Awards program sponsored by U. Texas College of Comms, AT&T and Austin/PRSA.

**ELECTED.** Nat'l PR Network ofc's: chm, Ken Scott (Craig, Lamm, Hensley & Alderman, Houston); vice chm, Vicki Collins (Hillbert, Roberts & Lutzker, Phoenix); treas, Suzanne Dutilly (Gillham Adv'g, Salt Lake City); sec'y, Carl "Bear" Kay (Schenkein & Assocs, Denver).

# pr reporter

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## AS OPINION LEADERS, CONSTITUENCY RELATIONS GAIN IMPORT HOUSE MEETING TECHNIQUE IS GRASSROOTS CENTERPIECE

House meetings can deliver understandable info to non-technical people, make them feel involved, build new relationships (pr 2/2/81). Now two organizations report these face-to-face meetings help stimulate favorable decisionmaking:

**Grassroots Effort Assists Schools** On one day, May 7, California Movement for Educational Reform (CMER) held thousands of house meetings across the state. Objectives: 1) "to inform opinion leaders & grassroots people, & 2) to orchestrate a media event," Bob Grossman, dir comms, LA County Office of Education, told pr.

CMER wants to get a network going that extends beyond the usual professional ass'ns to parents & supportive opinion leaders. Goals are to 1) increase state's education budget, 2) adjust the Gann Limit (spending cap) which schools believe uses a "faulty calculation method," 3) work toward voter initiative to provide a permanent funding structure for schools.

Centerpiece was the house meetings -- 3,500 across the state. They took different forms. "We set up guidelines, but encouraged people to use their imaginations. Everyone had their own variations and that was fine." Recommended method was to ask a community member -- preferably an opinion leader, not a school person -- to host a party at his or her home for between 30-60 people. Serve refreshments of choice, talk about the issues, offer literature, show videotape made especially for the meetings, have them write letters to legislators & the governor demanding more money for schools. "Thousands of letters were generated."

"Key is continuing communication among the network, having something real to focus on -- an event or goals -- rather than just being there."

Fundraising was done during the meetings. Thousands of dollars were raised. "A ton of money is needed to keep a statewide organization like this going." Since this is the public sector, great care is taken that nothing is done by volunteers during work hours. Meetings had to be outside school time. Even mimeographs & envelopes can't be used unless they're paid for. It's the law "and we've been very careful everyone knows the rules."

New twist shows state has \$2 billion more in revenues than anticipated, but governor wants to give it back as tax rebate -- "political ploy," says Grossman. Struggle is between state supt of schools & governor. Challenge is "to be politically active but not get into the battle between the 2 heavyweights." Thus, house meetings to take the issue to grassroots.



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Utility Takes To  
The Neighborhoods

House meetings is one component of Arizona Public Service's Energy Watch Program. Other component is employees. "In order to show concern & caring for our customers, we must begin with our employees. So we started a lunch-hour energy information program," Pat Tillery, consumer affairs mgr, told prr. Info session is led by an energy expert -- "one of our employees." After the program, employees are invited to host similar programs in their homes inviting friends & neighbors.

Incentives are used: 1) door prizes at the employee luncheon sessions, 2) employees volunteering to host house meetings receive \$10 for every APS customer present up to \$100, to be used toward purchase of any energy-efficient appliance, 3) door prizes & give-aways for attenders.

Pilot program last year included pre- & post-surveys. "We found employees & customers, after attending one session, felt they were more in control of their electric bill -- one of our objectives -- and more likely to take advantage of our energy savings programs. We also found they were more favorable to APS in general." Since launching in March, 18 employee sessions (317 employees) & 3 house meetings (52 customers) have been held. Year's goal is to reach 1,000 employees & conduct 50 house meetings.

The majority of customers who attended the sessions were surprised at the helpful information and felt the session would be extremely valuable in controlling their electric bills. One comment received over and over was "No one has explained it like that before."

-- from evaluation summary

Only post-surveys are conducted now -- because of time constraints -- asking how attenders feel about the sessions, what was most useful, would they attend another one, what other topics would they suggest. So far, 87% say they would like to attend others.

TV NOT THE POWER IT'S THOUGHT TO BE,  
FINDS RESEARCH REVIEW BY TV GUIDE;  
WILL EXEC'S & PRACTITIONERS LISTEN NOW?

Researchers have been saying it, prr has been reporting it for years -- and it must be true, cuz TVGuide for May 30 says so, too. "Exposing media myths"

is subtitled, "TV doesn't affect you as much as you think." 4 defrocked myths:

1. TV is not "the most effective medium for communicating news" because...
  - a) it is often confusing, mainly because verbal & visual send conflicting messages. Dan Drew of Indiana U. notes you may hear that peace talks are underway while you see scenes of battle. Stories are overillustrated, finds Mark Levy of U. Maryland. Unexplained jargon is used.
  - b) Viewers understand only 1/3 of tv stories, finds longtime tv scholar John Robinson, also U. Maryland. Worse, they actually watch only 55% of what's shown -- while broadcasters flash pictures by as if all eyes were glued to the set.
  - c) "People don't remember much from tv news," says Doris Graber, U. Illinois.

2. Two-thirds of the public do not "receive most of their news from tv."

- a) Robinson finds 67% read a newspaper on a typical day, while only 52% see a local or national tv newscast.
- b) Robert Stevenson of U. No. Carolina finds only 18% of viewers watch network news, only 13% pay full attention to it. He concludes, "In no way is it our number one source of news."

3. TV doesn't even set the public agenda, except on items we can't possibly experience, such as the Ethiopian famine. Reason: tv is so far behind other media in covering most topics. Adds Max McCombs of U. Texas, whose work established the agenda-setting role of media, "TV has no page 36, so tv journalists have to wait until an issue has achieved substantial public interest."

4. TV did not alter opinion about Vietnam. Lawrence Lichty of Northwestern U. found just the opposite. A majority opposed the war before Walter Cronkite's noted special or other anti-Vietnam coverage. John Mueller of U. Rochester compared the public opinion curve on Vietnam with Korea and found them similar. Korea was barely covered by tv, yet opposition rose at a similar rate -- primarily, in both wars, because so many casualties were occurring. And casualties are communicated by experience of the loss, word-of-mouth & newspaper obits, not tv.

"An entire body of political (& organizational) strategy has been built upon false premises," concludes TVGuide. Examples cited show again that it is the 3rd Party Syndrome that gives media power -- i.e. the belief of execs & practitioners that media has immense power, even tho years of research are unable to demonstrate it. The Reagan administration refused reporters access to Granada based on this belief, as did the Thatcher gov't to the Falklands. (Both boomeranged.) LBJ thought the Viet war effort was lost because of tv reporting, his administration conducted itself accordingly (with disastrous results). Candidates pander to media coverage. "While it may provide theater for a handful, research shows increasingly it's lost on the public," says TV Guide.

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PRACTITIONERS

- ¶ "Most powerful" US lobby may be losing clout -- as factions out-hardline one another. Despite evidence violent crime escalates as the number of available guns rises, Nat'l Rifle Ass'n pushes even beyond freedom to have guns. It supports 1) personal use of machine guns (weapon chosen by recent mass killers), 2) so-called cop-killer bullets that penetrate bulletproof vests, 3) plastic pistols that escape detection devices. One observer's summary of NRA philosophy: "To be anti-gun is to be anti-manhood." This case study in organizational behavior shows how moderates are driven out (250,000+ so far) when tough guy posturing takes the stage.
- ¶ Featuring teen celebrities in antidrug ads doesn't work, according to study by Harvard B-School students. Tho logic says youth would be influenced by stern messages from their heroes, young people find them hypocritical, unrealistic. Talking heads, simplistic slogans ("Just say no") don't help. Teens react better to real-