

PRSA's SELF EXAMINATION;  
STRIVING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Society's quest for "demonstrating professionalism" over the past 2 years is leading to:

1. A career-track progression, based on accreditation & certification programs that must be maintained and eventually could lead to mandatory accreditation for all PRSA members.

2. Establishment of an accrediting body or org'n outside PRSA that will administer the credentialing for PRSA & the primary North American ass'ns.

3. A widely-accepted Body of Public Relations Knowledge. PRSA Research Committee concluded step one -- codifying the BOK -- and published it in Public Relations Review. Next, 800 abstracts will be written. Then, "we will have a landmark document -- an encyclopedia of public relations. Ultimately, our goal is to put the BOK into a computer program making it electronically accessible. Also, in '88 we expect to establish a PRSA organizational component that will keep the BOK current. We envision it as being the eventual guide for all professional development & academic curricula," explains PRSA pres. Dwayne Summar.

4. Shared language/common terminology enabling public relations pros & those who use their services to better understand one another.

5. Acceptance within public relations that the appropriate umbrella term for the profession is "public relations."

6. Public recognition that public relations is a discipline that serves the public good.

"Similar agendas are leading the futures of the primary public relations ass'n in Canada as well as the principal ones in the US. In fact, a formally shared agenda is now being developed by the North American Public Relations Council," says Summar.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. IABC announces its top award winners: Jerome Blackstone (mgr corp pr & employee comms, Allen-Bradley Co, Milwaukee) & Wilma Mathews (mpr, AT&T, Morristown, NJ) chosen to receive Fellow Award for outstanding contribution to the profession & to their org'ns; David Orman (mgr employee comn, ARCO, LA) named Chairman's Award winner for behind-the-scenes work at IABC at

internat'l level; John Young (CEO, Hewlett-Packard, Palo Alto) named EXCEL Award winner, given to a non-mbr whose org'n reflects support of public relations principles & practices.

APPOINTED. David Drobis (pres, Ketchum Public Relations, NYC) to board of directors of Center for Communication, a nonprofit educational org'n.

In an effort to unify the profession, PRSA has "shared concerns & interests among North American Public Relations Council's 12 member prof'l ass'ns that serve the field in the US & Canada. Formed in 1980, NAPRC has focused on having its member org'ns adopt a common code of ethics. 7 of the 12 ass'ns have accepted the code. PRSA leadership is encouraging, thru all the appropriate units of the Society, our joining our 7 sister ass'ns. The earliest our process can be completed is Nov '88." Goal is for all 12 to accept by Dec '88.

# pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations,  
Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.31 No.20  
May 16, 1988

WORKPLACE POLICIES, PART III -- WELLNESS PROGRAMS AT THE WORKSITE  
GROW BEYOND EXECUTIVE "PERKS" & HEALTHCARE COST CONTAINMENT;  
EMPLOYEE/COMMUNITY RELATIONS BOTH STAND TO BENEFIT

Recognition that employees are an organization's #1 public has practitioners open to ways to enhance & protect this #1 asset. Insurance industry was among first to recognize that promoting wellness can 1) reduce medical expenses, 2) increase morale & productivity, 3) lower absenteeism & turnover. Advantage of doing it at worksite is that it's best place to get an audience on a consistent basis. But trend has come a long way from exercise bikes & country club memberships for execs to include activities for blue collar workers, clerical staff -- even families & community at large.

Proof Wellness Pays "The collective evidence of 4 well-designed studies (Johnson & Johnson, AT&T, Control Data, Blue Cross/Blue Shield) all point in the same direction -- that there is a significant return on investment for comprehensive workplace health promotion programs," Rick Bellingham, pres, Possibilities, Inc. (Basking Ridge, NJ) told prr.

Johnson & Johnson demonstrated a 40% reduction in medical costs for 11,000 employees participating in their wellness program over 5 years & an 18% reduction in absenteeism. Based on actual reductions in risk from wellness programs, AT&T estimates a projected cost savings of over \$300 million over 10 years, claims Bellingham.

Surveys Indicate Wide Participation National survey carried out in '85 by U.S. Office of Disease Prevention & Health Promotion shows:

1. Nearly 2/3s of private worksites with 50 or more employees are supporting at least one health promotion activity.

2. Most prevalent activities are: smoking control (35.6%), health risk assessment (29.5%), back care (28.6%), stress management (26.6%). Others include exercise or fitness (22.1%), off-the-job accident prevention (19.8%), nutrition education (16.8%), high blood pressure control (16.5%), weight control (14.7%).

PR's interest is in impact on 1) morale, 2) employee/management relations, 3) community & other stakeholders. Building alliances with human resources, medical, personnel mgrs is a first step. PR can influence management in creation of supportive policies; provide technical expertise in production of materials, special events, articles for internal & external media. PR challenge is to convince CEOs of long-term advantages. If do, it's a bottom-line "value added" by pr.



3. Most influential in initiating health care activities: top management at worksite (49%), followed by employees (14.5%), head of personnel/employee relations (12.5%), top mgmt at a higher corporate level (11.4%).

4. Most worksites use one or more external sources for program assistance including voluntary or nonprofit org's (57.1%), gov't agencies (21.8%), private, for-profit groups (49.9%), local hospitals (43.8%).

5. Types of activities include information (65%), group classes or workshops (59.1%), subsidized memberships (26.5%), special events/competitions (25.5%), individual counseling (24.9%), exercise equipment/facilities (21.5%).

Yet Problems Remain 1. Getting the CEO to buy in is biggest hurdle for most, Harold Kahler, president Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA), told prr. Even when they see the evidence, focus on short-term can predominate.

2. Make sure program mix meets needs of all workers. Aerobics & fitness programs popular with execs aren't answer for blue collar or mfg workers who tend to prefer recreational approach (e.g., Xerox has 78 softball teams). Working mothers can't exercise at work; lunchtime too short (if need to shower, wash hair) & after work must go home to start other job.

3. Small companies less involved; costs factor for some. Issue has largely focused on big companies who can spread out costs more easily. But with small businesses making up biggest part of economy, it's important to find ways to participate. Solution: Even simple programs help (e.g., brown bag series on nutrition, lunch hour blood pressure testings, informational bulletin boards).

4. Dropout rate for fitness facilities can be high. According to George Pfeiffer, vp, Center for Corporate Health Promotion (Reston, Va), only 20% to 30% of the working population are active in a health promotion program. Tho 80% may join, about half drop out 6 months later. Solution: Develop comprehensive program (see below). Incentives also work (cash prizes, contests, t-shirts). Ongoing mgmt endorsement is vital.

For Highest Compliance Comprehensive Program Needed

4-step "Taking Care" program developed by Travelers Insurance subsidiary Center for Corporate Health Promotion includes:

1. Communication blitz to raise awareness of employees & their families (who represent 60% of the corporate healthcare dollar) is the foundation. Focus is on a) medical self-care education, b) lifestyle changes (exercise, weight control, stress).

2. Organizational Interventions to develop a supportive environment include a) training mgmt to be "champions" of the process; b) policies; c) incentives; and d) lay leadership networks that train volunteers at many levels to be peer cheerleaders for the program.

3. Targeted Interventions, after needs assessment, allows org'n to address high risk or special interest groups (smokers, dieters, pre-natal) thru classes, self-help groups.

4. Facility Interventions, depending on resources, can be lavish in-house fitness centers or as simple as contract with local YMCA/YWCA for employee discounts.

Wellness Councils Share Resources

From '82 experiment in Omaha, WELCOA has expanded to 3 statewide & nearly 35 city or regional councils. 25 more are in start-up phase; 100 anticipated by '90. Membership reflects cross-section of business sizes & types.

Advantages & functions of council are: 1) serves as catalyst to get worksite programs started thruout community; 2) acts as counselor to those wanting to start or expand a program; 3) is clearinghouse of information, how-to's; 4) coordinates, bringing employers together with community healthcare providers & other wellness resources.

Initiation of a council seems especially appropriate for hospitals, other health-care providers, insurance co's or product manufacturers who want to network, demonstrate leadership in health promotion.

RESOURCES

1. "The Wellness Council Approach to Wellness at the Worksite," 18-min. video narrated by Dr. Art Ulene of NBC's Today Show, shows advantages of wellness programs. Also available is "Organizing a Wellness Council" manual; tells how to get started, develop corporate support, organize, hold orientation meeting; includes bibliography & sample forms. (Wellness Councils of America, 1823 Harney St, Omaha, Neb 68102; 402/444-1711)

2. "The Healthy Workplace: A Blueprint for Corporate Action" is how-to book for business, community leaders. Offers workable plan, explains day-to-day operations, shows how health promotion pays off. (By William M. Kizer, New York: Wiley, 1987)

3. National Employee Services & Recreation Association (NESRA) provides info, ideas, conferences, magazine on health, fitness & recreation in workplace; (2400 S. Downing, Westchester, Ill 60153; 312/562-8130)

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

Lack of Census Bureau name recognition shows influence of aural associations, importance of "sounding it out" before selecting a name. Among the misnomers received by the bureau's Boston regional office were: "Bureau of the Sensors," reports American Demographics May issue. Other errors include "Censors," "Concensus" (sic), "Defenses," and "Senses."

More CEOs are stepping into the spotlight in a proactive effort to renew eroded investor support following last year's stock market crash. Because of soaring debt/equity ratios, "no longer can the average company merely sit home & roll out the red carpet to visitors or rely on a stream of press releases or stockholder report mailings. To truly develop new active sponsorship in the retail & institutional communities, the CEO will have to get out of his chair & hit the road. More & more analysts are placing a high priority upon 'quality of management' and are demanding that they evaluate this first hand," says Ted Pincus, mng partner, The Financial Relations Board (Chi). He forecasts that the 10,000 actively traded US public companies will spend an all time high of \$5.7 billion on their investor relations efforts in '88, up from the estimated \$4.8 billion spent in '87.