

WHY ANYTHING LESS THAN MOTIVATING BEHAVIOR BACKFIRES

When we tell managerial colleagues we've made a great publicity placement, for instance, or had a tremendous turnout for the event, what we are describing is the process of public relations -- the things we are expected to be able to do. The outcome is whether anything changed because of our application of process (see last week's lead article). Consider this comparison. If a doctor were to brag "I performed the operation," as if that were the goal, who would have confidence in him? We assume he knows how to do the procedure. Our concern is with the effect -- did it solve the medical problem? Only those physicians whose procedures heal stay in business.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

Addressing publics in their terms remains a basic principle, tho often overlooked or abused. Chatham College (Pittsburgh), once Pennsylvania College for Women, demonstrates in its new recruiting magazine how applying the principle can also avoid the look-alike problem. Pre-college students are bombarded with such material -- and market studies show they ignore it. "SMART" is a fashion-style 4-pager, 11x17, full color. Its target, 15-18 yr old women, "would rather look at Elle, Glamour, Seventeen; or advertising catalogs by Benetton," says dpa Jane Beckwith. "SMART" has the same movement & verve because "Chatham knows that even serious college-bound girls 'just want to have fun' along with getting a good education." Besides touting recent grads who are making it (and hero alumnae like Rachel Carson, '29), magazine tackles potential barriers like: is Pittsburgh still Smoky City, what if I don't like my roommate, etc. (Free copy from Ofc of Admissions, Woodland Rd, Pittsburgh 15232)

Facing SARA Title III? A guide that can serve as a model is shared by David Vine Assoc (Trenton, NJ). "Standard Format for Emergency Response Reference Guides for Chemical Handling Facilities" was prepared by the NJ State Police HazMat unit. Lt. Tom Davies told a June seminar the form can serve as a model for fulfilling planning requirements that must be submitted to local emergency planning councils under the regs. It was a hot item at recent Nat'l Governors Conference. David Vine is using it for client Princeton Testing Laboratories. He foresees "considerable opportunities for counselors" as organizations struggle to comply with SARA III. (For copy, write prr)

NOTICE TO OUR READERS

As is our tradition, pr reporter will not be published next week to allow our printer and members of our staff a well-deserved vacation. Our office will be open for business, however.

PREACHING TO THE CHOIR MAY BE THE BEST WAY TO MOTIVATE CHANGE;  
TRYING TO PERSUADE RESISTERS DOESN'T CREATE A CRITICAL MASS

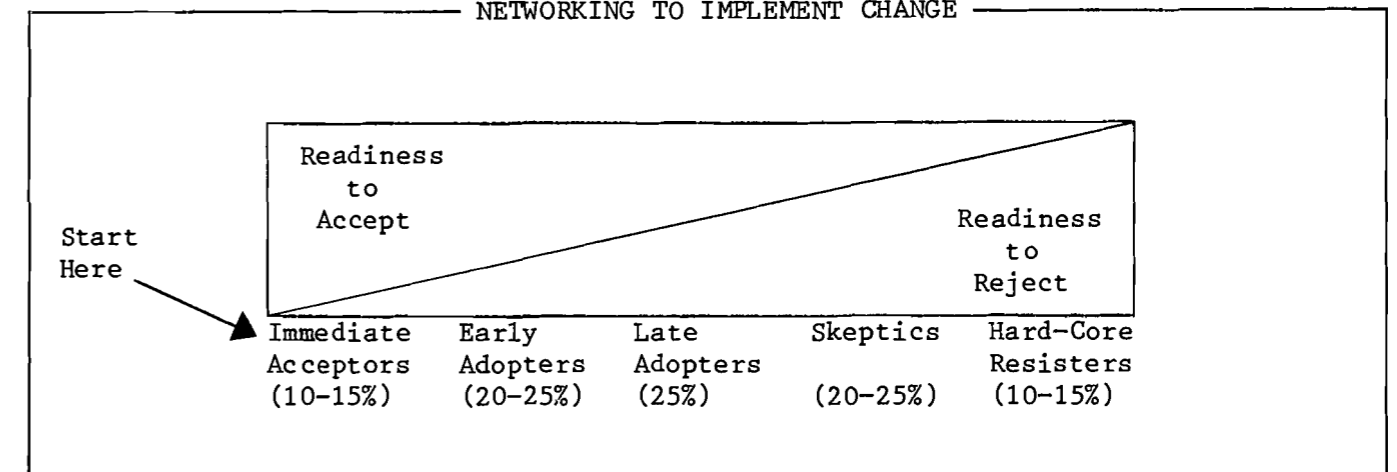
Far from the waste of time it's often assumed to be, focusing attention on those who are already believers is the first step in getting new ideas, programs or products adopted. Instead of going after the hard-core resisters & attempting to win them over -- very unlikely in any case -- OD consultant John Adams proposes creating a network of those already sold on the idea -- the "choir."

Getting them together for "choir practice" generates ideas for reaching others & making them new choir members. Meanwhile, just urge the resisters to stay tuned, trying to avoid confrontations that will stiffen resistance. Eventually this tactic will attract a critical mass of supporters -- often as small as 20% of the total public you're working with. The change then becomes self sustaining.

Application of this approach to internal change is obvious. Thru user groups, advisory panels or events, it can also be applied to external audiences -- for example, consumers. Some programatic guidelines:

1. Do all you can to enhance choir members' ownership of the change or new idea.
2. Be crystal clear about the outcomes from the change. State them in very specific terms. Articulate this thoroughly to the choir.
3. Does the choir represent a diversity of levels, locations, personalities & styles? If they're all from one group, critical mass is not attained.

NETWORKING TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE



4. Help those most affected by the change to feel sufficiently dissatisfied with the status quo that they will welcome the change.
5. With communication, including singing by the choir, anticipate & manage resistance that can arise from surprise, uncertainty, unfamiliarity with the new idea.
6. Devise some small steps that can be taken toward the goal. This helps people practice the new behavior or make trial use of the product.

(This & similar change agency tactics are regular features of OD Practitioner, a quarterly. Info from Box 69329, Portland, Ore. 97201; 503/246-0148)

DISCREPANCIES IN POLL OUTCOMES SUGGEST CAUTION IN INTERPRETING RESULTS

Getting to the real meaning behind what people say in polls is more of an art than a science, reports Psychology Today.

Response can vary widely depending upon a) context, b) wording, c) length of time each person is surveyed (20 minutes & they're itchy to get back to what they were doing). Even the d) polltaker's race can have an effect.

"The CBSNews/NYTimes 15-state poll conducted before this year's Super Tuesday contest, for instance, showed Jesse Jackson winning about half of all black votes, but exit polls showed that Jackson captured 91% of all black votes. Results of other statewide polls echoed this disparity. The reason for such striking discrepancies is still unclear, but some analysts speculate that black voters did not reveal their true plans to polling interviewers -- most of whom are white."

Because US gov't uses public surveys as info base for setting national policy, survey reliability is a critical concern. To refine & sharpen its surveys, National Ctr for Health Statistics (Hyattsville, Md.) set up the Nat'l Laboratory for Collaborative Research in Cognition & Survey Measurement. 2 1/2-yr-old prgm is divided into 2 parts:

- 1) Collaborative Research Prgm examines some of the underlying issues of how people process & retrieve info in answering questions;

While the statistical outcome of polls gives the illusion of precision, poll watchers need to be wary. Before accepting a poll finding as representative of the public's attitudes or behaviors, "look for the same trend in different polls. Never believe one question on one poll," advises William Schneider, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (DC).

- 2) Questionnaire Design Research Laboratory conducts tests, focus groups & interviews to see how people interpret specific questions.

Prgm is stirring interest of other governmental statistical agencies in applying cognitive psychology to the problems of survey research. Bureau of Labor Statistics is about to launch its own cognitive-research lab. Bureau of Census is also interested.

WHAT CHANGES ARE LIKELY IN 20-30 YEARS?  
FUTURISTS IDENTIFY 71 LONG-RANGE TRENDS

"Growth of future studies & forecasting" is one of the 71 long-term trends listed in The Futurist (July-Aug). Education is

the most important area affecting America's future, say list's authors, Marvin Cetron, Wanda Rocha, Rebecca Luckins. They also cite a) entrepreneurship, b) establishing right-to-work laws in every state, c) raising the mandatory retirement age, d) bringing women's wages to equity with men's, e) overcoming the "bottom line" syndrome that pervades society, "causing government & citizens to set their sights on short-term profits at the expense of the nation's future." Some of the trends listed include:

Societal 1. Ahead is a period of US economic prosperity -- affluence, low interest rates, low inflation rate. There may be a recession in 1990, but this will only be a perturbation. Long-range forecast for the US economy is good. Part of society's affluence rests on credit card use or overuse; extension of excessive credit could result in gov't-imposed limitations.

Labor Force & Work 2. Specialization -- the globalization of the economy will call forth more independent specialists; for hundreds of special tasks, corporations will turn to consultants & independent contractors who will become more & more highly specialized.

3. Decline of unionization. Estimates are that union members will make up less than 10% of US labor force by 2000. There will be a continual shift of jobs to no-union states or right-to-work states.

4. Decline of the work ethic. Tardiness is increasing, sick-leave abuse is common. In contrast, 2/3rds would like to see an increase in the number of hours they work, rather than working shorter hours -- if they were paid for those extra hours. 55% of top execs say erosion of the work ethic will have a major negative effect on corporate performance in the future.

Management 5. The typical large business in 2010 will have less than half the levels of management of the typical large business today & about 1/3rd the number of managers. Opportunities for advancement will be few because the opportunities will come within the narrow specialty. Process of finding top managers will be extremely difficult.

Institutional 6. A phenomenon of "bimodal" distribution of institutions is emerging as the big get bigger, the small survive and the middle-sized are squeezed out. 10 domestic airlines today control 80% of the market, leaving smaller domestic carriers with only 20%. By 2001, there will be only 3 major domestic carriers. This trend leads us to believe that AT&T may be reconsolidated in the mid-1990s. What we see across the board with institutions is also happening within organizations, as the traditional pyramid is flattened & middle management is squeezed out. (More info from World Future Society, 4916 St. Elmo Ave, Bethesda, MD 20814)