

FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGICAL DEVICES
RESTS ON PR'S ABILITY TO
PUT PUBLIC AT EASE IN USING THEM

And publicity won't do it. Because of technophobia, fear of robbery & desire for personal service, bank customers are bypassing them (pr 2/1 & 8/15). ATM networks & the banks which have invested in them are scratching heads about what to do. As reported by Christian Science Monitor, more & more ATM networks are attempting to lure customers with sweepstakes & other games.

Networks are looking into other possible solutions. In marketing ATMs, it's important to focus on their supplementary role: "ATMs will never replace the tellers," Bill Rice of Yankee 24 (Boston) told pr. "That one-to-one relationship is very important to banking. But ATMs allow ease, flexibility." So plan is to step up efforts to educate the public. Rice says it's in the works to station instructors at the bank to teach the computer-illiterate & user-unfriendly about ATMs. Already this is done at shopping centers & supermarkets.

Rice says the future looks good for ATMs: "In Boston, automated teller machines are just starting to take root. We're studying new directions." But banks, to recoup their investment, are slapping fees on card use -- a practice which may work in the short run but which could snafu the overall plan.

ITEM OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

Are the "deskside parties" Ketchum PR threw for tech editors to introduce a client's new product (pr 8/22). Reader Russ Donohue asks: "We know the people that did the promotion are going to brag about it, but what about the guys who got the cake?" Did they really get "all warm & fuzzy," or were they annoyed at being barged in on with this very elaborate press kit? pr asked 2 cake recipients 1) if they enjoyed the presentation & 2) if they published the info. Don Smith, ed, Rubberworld (Akron): "It was different. Obviously, it got more attention than the normal sending out of press releases. But that type of product is of interest to our readers, so I would have run the piece -- with or without the cake." Hugh McBride, ed, Electrical Business (Toronto): "I was surprised that someone would come all the way up from Philadelphia. As much as I enjoyed her & the cake, I didn't think it was necessary." But the presentation did win him over. "It was effective. I ran the press release. I probably wouldn't have run it if I hadn't met this person face to face."

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. John Budd (Emhart Corp, Hartford), wins PRSA's Gold Anvil Award for significant contributions to the public relations profession; William Ehling (Syracuse U), Outstanding

Educator Award for the advancement of pr education; Hank Moore (Read-Poland Assoc, Houston), Paul M. Lund Award for contributions made to the common good thru public service.

pr reporter

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COMPETITIVE PRESSURES HAVE ALTERED LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS;
UNION GAINS IN NEW SECTORS SUCH AS HOSPITALS & COLLEGES,
EVEN CORPORATE OFFICES, PARTLY DUE TO THEIR PR EFFORTS

Intense competition -- driven by foreign companies, deregulation, non-union firms -- has put pressure on union labor's wages, job & pension security. In some cases, disputes may have 1) threatened public safety (e.g. accusations by unions of maintenance shortcuts at Eastern Airlines; 2) crippled local economies (e.g. in one-employer towns); 3) forced plant closings & even some corporate bankruptcies.

Enormous public relations challenges exist both for management, which seeks to remain cost-effective, & for unions, whose chief concern is preservation of jobs and wages. The union movement as a whole is also worried about the continuing decline in membership & what that represents in terms of reduced influence.

Importance of Healthy Union Relationships to Management

1. Unions broaden attempts to organize employees. To counteract declines in membership among manufacturing workers, key organizing targets include

office & clerical workers. This trend will force many organizations with no prior direct experience with unions to an abrupt recognition of their need to deal with an organized labor constituency. At Harvard, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees recently won a vote in its 10-year effort to organize lab assistants, librarians & other support staff, following Columbia & Yale unionization.

2. Increase in secondary boycott activity. Even organizations which have no direct dispute with a union may face union opposition due to

"secondary boycotts." E.g., to attract more sympathy to their situation, striking paperworkers at International Paper called for union boycotts against Bank of Boston, Avon, Anheuser-Busch, PNC Bank. Basis for the boycotts was that these orgn's have board members also serving on IP's board. Tho Bank of Boston claims no major pull-out of funds has resulted, the incident did require a strategy to deal with the media & other constituencies to limit possible damage. Paperworkers union claims it has evidence that over \$1 billion in pension funds has been withdrawn from PNC Bank.

"Blue-collar" perception of union members is changing. Today they are teachers, nurses, librarians & increasingly office workers. Fact is fastest growing segment of union membership is service & white collar workers. New recruits represent groups previously not organized including women, minorities & part-time workers. Electrical, steel & auto workers unions now have special sections targeting these groups.



3. Maintain healthy community relations. Strikes, work slowdowns, plant closings can infect long-term damage into an organization's community relations. In one Maine town of about 5,000, approximately 3,000 people have been affected by a 15-month strike against the town's major employer. In addition to general bitterness, strikers are now electing themselves into important town positions and using town politics (i.e. new environmental ordinances) to put pressure on the company.

4. Good employee relations pay off. Compare acrimonious situation Eastern is battling with effort of Delta Airlines employees several years ago who chipped in to buy the company an airplane during troubled financial times. Key is to deal with employee concerns before they are problems. Biggest union issues now according to AFL-CIO spokesperson Lorrie McHugh: a) job security (against cheap foreign labor & automation); b) childcare ("by 1990 women will represent 50% of the workforce, putting childcare off the charts"); c) childbirth & medical leave; d) drug testing, lie detectors & other invasion of privacy issues.

Unions Now More Sophisticated in Use of Public Relations To combat a negative image of unions as corrupt or anti-business, labor movement in recent years has been forced to recognize value of pr in influencing public opinion (pr 11/24/86). Examples of efforts include:

1. Major communications campaigns. AFL-CIO launched \$13 million "UNION, YES!" campaign to a) raise the level of public understanding about unions; b) increase the predisposition of new generation of workers (20-40 year olds) to join; c) promote the benefits of belonging; d) help union members feel better about themselves. Major radio campaign in key markets attempted to persuade senators to override Reagan's anticipated veto of the trade bill.

"Communications training has been tremendously helpful. Our people are now getting the union side of the story heard. Now the media has someplace to go to get a counterpoint to the employer's view." -- Jim Conley, spokesperson, Intern'l Ass'n of Machinists

2. Use of pr in organizing campaigns & negotiations. "Increasingly, unions will have to mount their own pr efforts in order to counteract the money that management is pouring into anti-union pr campaigns," McHugh told pr. United Paperworkers International hired Ray Rogers (who aided unions in J.P. Stevens, Hormel situations). When union felt company wasn't being direct with stockholders about amount of money lost due to labor disputes, union sent its own report to 115 major stockholders, warning them of a possible multi-million dollar loss.

3. Media Training for Union Stewards. Bigger budgets & sophistication about the media used to give employers the upper hand in disputes, but unions have smartened up. Machinists union runs an annual weeklong communications training workshop featuring a) how to write letters to the editor, b) mock press conferences & talk shows, c) simulated picket lines, d) how to deal with hostile reporters. Role play exercises are videotaped & critiqued.

DOES THE PUBLIC TRUST MEDIA'S REPORTING OF POLLS? YOUNGER PEOPLE MORE TRUSTING

A large body of research from the 50s supports the contention that trustworthiness & expertise are the 2 underlying dimensions of credibility. While media are an erstwhile neutral source, & therefore may be trusted, they are not considered experts in polling -- both necessary for credibility. To examine public perceptions of both polling & news media reporting of polls, Michael Salwen & Bruce Garrison (UMiami School of Comn) polled 1,008 Dade County Fla. residents thru a computer-assisted phone interviewing machine. "As with all such machines," says the research, "the response rate was low" -- 12.9%. Some findings:

Trustworthiness & Expertise 20.6% believe polls reported in the media are trustworthy; 27.6% do not. 51.8% don't know. 31.7% believe the media has the expertise necessary to report the polls; 32.2% do not. Young people (29 & younger) more often than older people believe in the media's trustworthiness & expertise.

Media Use Heavy newspaper readers (5+ days/wk) believe media are more expert than do light readers (1 day/wk or less). Of heavy readers, a) 34.3% say media have the expertise to report on polls; b) 23.2% say they are trustworthy; c) 34.3% believe the media is not expert; d) 28.1% distrust. Similarly, heavy tv news viewers are more likely than light viewers to evaluate media as trustworthy & expert.

Voting Intent. Those who do not plan to vote in the '88 presidential election evaluate news media reporting of polls as more trustworthy (by a 5-to-1 margin) than do voters. Of voters, only 14.6% have trust; 26% believe media has expertise.

Polls As Reflectors Of Public Opinion 47% say polls accurately reflect public opinion. 31.7% say they do not. Younger respondents are more likely to believe polls reflect public opinion than are older respondents.

	Vote Change		
	Yes	No	Unsure
AGE			
29 & under	62.2%	24.9%	13.0%
30-39	56.2	34.9	8.8
40+	50.1	32.0	17.0
Total	56.0	30.2	13.9
RACE			
White	57.3	28.8	13.9
Hispanic	51.2	36.4	27.3
Black	56.8	27.3	15.9
Total	56.0	30.2	13.9

TECHNICAL NOTE: Researchers admitted low response was due to computer calls. AAPOR conference at which study was presented questioned value of results, due to low response & the method. Informal studies of those who have received computer calls finds mainly irritation or disdain. Many researchers worry use of this method may make it impossible to conduct phone research, the bastion of polling. This seems bad, but could it lead to more trustworthy findings by requiring improved interviewing techniques? Many practitioners find polls dubious because they merely ask how people "feel," not how they do or

might act. The box, for instance, reports how people think polls may affect them...but the question is whether in fact this is what occurs. Research can determine this, but not by phone polls.