

resurrecting Jim Grunig's 4 models of pr (pr 1/11/88): those who shun research conduct 1-way asymmetric & symmetric communication -- press agency, publicity, public info. Those who use it regularly engage in 2-way asymmetric & symmetric communication to persuade scientifically, evaluate attitudes, advocate, achieve mutual understanding & mediate the environment.

While 2-way practitioners feel they are best able to serve clients, 1-way practitioners decry the importance of research. Ryan & Martinson suppose:

1. they simply have not accepted its value;
2. it's too expensive & time-consuming -- especially for smaller firms;
3. it's considered superfluous. They think, "It's enough to talk to the local police reporter to tap the media, or to talk to a highschool algebra teacher to find out what educators are thinking."

"Unfortunately, it's apparent that practitioners engage in considerably more talk than action when it comes to using social science research techniques. Few use quantitative methods consistently." These include probability sampling, statistical analysis, survey research design, experimental design, hypothesis testing, data interpretation.

Ryan & Martinson are puzzled that many practitioners find social science & research of little value. They feel that until research is adopted as a basic component of practice, pr will be fragmented.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ PR Stingy Toward Pregnant Employees, at least in NYC, where PR Office Managers Ass'n surveyed 45 larger pr firms. Results show more than half do not supplement NY state disability coverage for maternity. "One of the surprising findings was the general disregard of supplemental benefits," dir Bonnie Ott told pr. "Women dominate the field, and their numbers are increasing all the time." She says salary is no longer the only criteria. Today's job applicant considers benefits as well. PR firms may be wise to respond to womens' needs in this heavily competitive market.

¶ Churches Provide Greatest Bastion For Volunteerism, Philanthropy. Tying in with them on programs makes sense. According to Nonprofit Times, people downplay charity to religious institutions as if it doesn't count in the tallying up of American do-gooding. But 3 recent reports show a large part of the nonprofit sector's service to society is performed by religious congregations. Religious conviction is a primary motivator for volunteering & philanthropy. Half of all funds contributed yearly to all causes go to churches, synagogues, mosques & other religious organizations. According to Gallup survey, religions share of giving & volunteering is at 52.5%. Half of all funds contributed to a religion are used to serve others. Also, religious congregations are the primary voluntary service providers for neighborhoods. Religious ass'ns seem to pervade American volunteerism & civic participation.

EXPERT: BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS ARE HAMPERED BY INTIMIDATION & FEAR OF RETRIBUTION -- BUT BIG IDEAS START OUT AS PREPOSTEROUS

Revolutionary ideas are rarely expressed, much less implemented. But when they do surface & are adopted, they can bring great success to an organization. Venetia Hands, sr vp Ogilvy & Mather, conducts workshops on how to generate really big ideas while brainstorming. "There are 3 essential elements to an effective session -- people, info, & process." While not discounting the first 2 elements, process is her focus.

When participants are asked what they dislike most about meetings, responses are predictable. "Domineering people"; "length"; "ramblers"; "no agenda." Invariably, dislikes have to do with the process, while "likes" -- ideas, solutions, consensus -- deal with content. And studies show what inhibits people most while brainstorming is fear of criticism, retribution, i.e. -- looking stupid. So, 2 stumbling blocks to idea production are 1) faulty process, 2) fear.

"It's very difficult to really listen to someone who has a different point of view," Hands told pr. "But other people need to be listened to, need to share their ideas. When a meeting is conducted by an intimidating person whose ideas are simply rubber-stamped, creativity is stymied. Better for a manager to surround him/herself with various points of view."

Hands offers suggestions to generate truly big ideas:

1. Never facilitate your own session. Participate, but don't call the shots. If you're at all an intimidating figure, 75% will fear ridicule. Rather than volunteering fresh insights, they'll offer tried & true ideas that are risk-free.
2. Hold your criticism. Eliminating ideas along the way, e.g. "That's not in the budget," or "Our opponent tried that last year & failed" puts boxes around the problem. Participants will hesitate to offer thoughts, wonder "Is it in the budget? Has it been tried already?"
3. Listen actively. Listening is not a passive activity -- it requires tremendous effort. Boredom, antipathy, poor visual aids, fatigue & preoccupation can all hamper this important element.



- 4. Write all ideas down, then list on a scale of 0 to 100. The 0 end of the scale is comprised of those which are intriguing but have more wrong with them than right. The 100 end of the scale hosts the best bets, sure things. Truly big ideas come from the 0 end of the scale!
- 5. List merits & concerns of the ridiculous but intriguing ideas. They're workable after all.
- 6. After listing all ideas, evaluate constructively.
- 7. Have fun. If stuck, take a break or play a game. Complete the sentence, "I wish..." pretending there are no laws of reality, economics, legality, etc. Along with nonsense, real ideas can be generated. Or open the dictionary & find a new word, use it as a starting point for ideas.

"Remember, creativity is the joining together of two novel ideas. For this reason, you can waffle over something again & again in your brain. It's often later, when you're involved in a completely unrelated activity, that you find the solution."

ALAR CRISIS BRINGS ISSUE TO FOREFRONT: THOSE WORRIED ABOUT MINUTAE ARE OVERLOOKING REAL THREATS; PUBLIC MUST BE EDUCATED ON "TOXIC"

The public perspective on chemicals & carcinogens seems

skewed. Chemophobia is epidemic: organic food stores are cropping up everywhere; supermarkets are opening pesticide-free produce departments.

The real, life-shortening health threats are: alcohol; tobacco; excess saturated fat, according to the New York Times. Yet people continue to panic over ultra trace amounts of carcinogens in their food. The one cancer that should be diet-related -- stomach -- has plummeted since pesticides came into wide-spread use. And, it says, 99.9% of carcinogens in the diet come from natural sources. Synthetic chemicals account for .01% of the carcinogens Americans consume.

The American Council on Science & Health has been trying for 5 years to convince people that Mother Nature is as carcinogenic as any chemical or pesticide. "We've been working on this before the Alar panic," Agnes Heinz, dir of nutrition & biochemistry, told prr. "For a long time, there has been a double standard in relation to natural vs. chemical carcinogens. A lot of what you hear is not accurate info, but public opinion. We try to balance the facts." Typical efforts, conducted by science & medical professionals, include:

Ex-Surgeon General Koop:
 "Facts don't seem to help much. People just have an inappropriate sense of what is dangerous. If you translate the weight & time it takes a lab rat to develop bladder cancer to a 200 lb man drinking Fresca, it comes out to 2 bathtubs full each day. People dropped Fresca in a minute, but they continue to smoke."

¶Booklets, e.g. "Is Mother Nature Benign?" & others on pesticides, babyfood, related subjects.

¶Quarterly magazine, Priorities, examines issues;

¶Press conferences, PSAs, lectures

¶What caught prr's attention was a "Holiday Dinner Menu" that lists Thanksgiving foods with a complete list of the natural carcinogens, mutagens & toxins each contains. Cream of mushroom soup, for example, only contains hydrazines -- known to interfere with chromosomal material, while a baked potato plays host to arsenic, nitrates & several other carcinogens, menu reports.

"When one understands that toxins, carcinogens & mutagens are everywhere in Mother Nature's own food supply, one can see the absurdity of panicking over minute levels of man-made chemicals such as the traces of pesticide residue," says pres Elizabeth Whelan.

ACSH stresses that its aim isn't to scare people, but to put issues in perspective. Natural toxins, too, cause tumors in lab mice. But like their chemical counterparts, their presence in food is in ultra-trace amounts.

DETROIT PRACTITIONERS ENGAGE IN THE UNUSUAL

If these practitioners exemplify others in the city, it appears that Detroit pr just won't "stick to its knitting":

- 1. Counselor Tina Bassett was just elected to the board of directors of the DC-based American Institute of Architects. She is the only non-architect on the board. "Several of our clients are architectural firms," Bassett told prr. "The AIA is focusing on communication in the next few years and they wanted someone who knew about both architecture & communication."
- 2. Practitioner Bill McMaster is relentlessly trying to buy Knight Ridder-owned Detroit Free Press. Analysts & newspaper experts say he hasn't the expertise or financial wherewithal to acquire it. But he's threatening to "take another approach" if KR turns him down again.

APPLICATION OF RESEARCH & SOCIAL SCIENCE IS AT CORE OF SCHISM IN THE FIELD

Marrying pr & research seems key to upgrading the field & weeding out old idea

of pr as press agency. Profs David Martinson, Florida Int'l U & Michael Ryan, U of Houston, say that tho for 40 years pr leaders have encouraged the application of social science theories to pr campaigns, many practitioners still forego research.

Of 111 practitioners from 200 randomly chosen from PRSA, over a third seldom or never use research. Only 13.2% use social science techniques consistently. But degree of research seemed to reflect type of practitioner,