

BANK TRIES TO MAKE AR READER-FRIENDLY
BY EMPLOYING LESS COSTLY NEWSPAPER FORMAT;
GETS UNFRIENDLY RESPONSE FROM USA TODAY

Goldome Bank's AR uses a colorful newspaper format with sports, biz & living sections -- reminiscent of you-know-what. VP Marc Chodorow

says idea was driven by the need to communicate. "This was our 2nd report to our shareholders. They don't know us very well, and we had some complicated things to explain: a substantial loss last year; restructuring; what we were trying to correct; good things that were happening."

Economy was 2nd incentive. "Most ARs cost about 3 to 4 dollars a copy to produce. We saved over a dollar per copy by using newspaper presses & paper stock. The irony is, we got 50% more space," he told prr. "Most ARs are pretty dry. The average reader just reads the chrm's message, looks at the pictures, tosses it in the can or 'files' it. What a waste of time, money & effort! We wanted to do something that would really capture reader attention."

Report was blasted by USA Today, whose lawyers accused Goldome of stealing the newspaper's format, demanded a public apology to shareholders. Chodorow: "We in no way intended to infringe on their copyrights, nor did we. Clearly they inspired us, but our report is obviously different. We apologize if we caused any confusion. Anyway, the matter is resolved now." And Goldome got some extra publicity -- which a new institution can always use for name recognition.

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

Commitment To Serving Public at airport chapel demonstrates power of this basic pr principle. Fr. John Jamnicky, chaplain at O'Hare, runs what National Catholic Reporter calls a model for contemporary parishes: "Management guru Tom Peters predicts that successful institutions of the future will be marked by a commitment to service. At the O'Hare chapel, a harried employee or traveler can leave a package in the chapel office for UPS pickup. You can get complimentary diapers, a free cup of coffee and even free tax service." Jamnicky explains -- "It's called Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program," he told prr. "One of the pilots and some local accountants volunteered time to help people with their tax problems." Chapel also caters to homeless, several of whom camp at airport, is open 24 hours a day and has an emergency number -- 686-AMEN.

More Non-PR Consultants Enter PR -- Now in Canada, Too. CPRS Vice President Betsy Hirst has become dir comms & pr at MLH+A, inc (not capitalized) -- actuaries & consultants with offices across Canada. For 25 yrs firm has provided pension, compensation, human resources & insurance consulting. Now it will add organizational comms, community & media relations, crisis comms. Old idea that consultants stick to specialties fades as law firms, mgmt counsel, human resource outfits et al enter pr counseling. Anyone who doubts pr is where the action is in modern organizational life take note!

Public Interest Group Study Reignites Fairness Doctrine Renewal Effort. Less time is given to public issues since FCC repealed Fairness Doctrine -- putting the lie to its rationale that repeal would stimulate more coverage since stations wouldn't be required to offer rebuttal every time they aired a viewpoint. Essential Information (DC) compared '79 programming with '88, found 51% decrease in "issue-oriented public-affairs" material. House telecommunications subcommittee has begun marking up legislation to make Fairness Doctrine law. (For perceptive column by tv critic Tom Shales, write prr.)

pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations,
Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.32 No.17
April 24, 1989

ULTIMATE TEST OF PR: MOTIVATING PUBLIC TO PREPARE FOR DEVASTATION?
STATE-WIDE CAMPAIGN URGES CALIFORNIANS TO "BEAT THE QUAKE"
BUT TECHNIQUES USED ARE APPLICABLE TO EVERYONE'S DISASTER PLAN

When the threat of disaster is as real & omnipresent as a temperamental volcano or active fault line, it triggers an ego defense mechanism -- passivity, apathy, denial -- that is almost impenetrable. Many Californians will acknowledge, but not prepare for, the major tremor scientists predict will rock the state sometime within the next 30 years. Subject has become a joke, material for Johnny Carson. "There is a denial syndrome going on," Tom Mullins, dpa Governors Office Of Emergency Services (Sacramento), told prr. "When people are bombarded with evidence of calamities, they can't deal with it -- they put it out of their minds."

Governor's Office is attempting to prod the public into action by declaring April "Earthquake Preparedness" month. "Our basic strategy is to sell preparedness," says Mullins. "People have been subject to a continuous stream of information, and they already know about the risk. We want to get them past awareness into preparedness."

Strategy "The idea is that preparedness is a positive thing. We don't want to scare people. It's a situation where the risk is high, but the probability is low. So we're using marketing tools rather than fear tactics. People are already scared, and fear is no motivator. We're showing a positive way to deal with the issue. And we want people to take action now."

Campaign Divided into 4 modules, each week targeting a different arena: 1) gov't & emergency svcs; 2) business & industry -- "United Airlines, Arco, First Interstate Bank have extensive programs for employees"; 3) schools; 4) family & community. Program components mix info devices & involvement events:

Logo: "A 'dancing California' figure, complete with hightops, sunglasses & headset depicts the state shaking in a way that inspires acceptance of the threat instead of fear of it. Objective is to help people think of preparedness in a positive, upbeat way, creating an atmosphere for action."



California Earthquake Preparedness Month

Theme: "Beat The Quake" prompts people to take action before disaster strikes.



¶PSAs: "The Children's Television Workshop developed a song 'Beatin' The Quake.' We use it, with our voice over, for a radio spot giving basic safety information."

¶Drills: "More than 11,000 employees at First Interstate Bank are participating in an earthquake drill dubbed 'Shake '89.' Southwestern College (Chula Vista) is holding an unannounced drill for 550 faculty members & 14,000 students, during which drama students will play the part of earthquake victims to be located by search & rescue teams, given initial medical treatment & transported to area hospitals." Scores of elementary schools are holding similar activities.

¶Fairs & Expos: at malls, hotels, etc. "More than 2,000 people are expected at UCLA's Earthquake Expo, where they'll learn about first aid, geology, safety products. In LA there will be an Education & Vendor Fair at ARCO plaza, with display booths, demonstrations, handouts on home & business preparedness."

¶Hazard Hunts: to find potential dangers in schools, businesses, etc..

¶Workshops: on first aid, shelter management, damage assessment, other topics relating to business & school staff.

¶Seminars: conducted by experts to instruct public on how to prevent injury and property damage.

¶Referral service lists earthquake information resources.

¶Print material: brochures, camera-ready fact sheets (e.g. mobile home planner, instructions on how to bolt down furniture, shut down water heaters, respond if in a car or a crowd, lists of emergency supplies, etc.) sent to local agencies, businesses, schools."

Apathy is reinforced by economics. Who wants to rebuild the 80,000 or so structures that went up before 1953, when earthquake architectural requirements became mandatory? Even highrises built in the early 70s may not be safe. According to Christian Science Monitor, a statewide inventory of such buildings is yet to incite any action. Campaign's mix of communication & participatory activities aims at motivating behavior, not just imparting info.

¶Poster Contests: conducted at schools.

¶Special Events: for non-English-speaking persons and for those with disabilities.

Does It Work? "We've had an overwhelming response to the theme, materials & events. I think it will translate into increased action. This has been, without a doubt, a very successful campaign so far." Mullins says next year's program will include tv spots, fundraising events, specialities (buttons, hats, etc.) a larger network of experts & scientists. (For further info, contact Mullins at Governor's Office Of Emergency Services, 2800 Meadowview Road, Sacramento, Calif 95832; 916/445-2841)

TRENDS: '88 ANNUAL REPORTS TRY TO EXPLAIN CHANGE; BROAD THEMES USED TO HOLD ATTENTION, BOND WITH READER

With reorganization the trend (pr 10/3/88), this year's AR theme is

communication. Telling shareholders, employees, the public what is going on has become priority #1. "Restructuring is the dominant concern of American businesses today," AR specialist Richard Lewis told prr. "When a company reorganizes, the slate is wiped clean. It has to redefine its entire image."

General Motors takes 10 pages to explain the \$70 billion reindustrialization it has carried out over the last decade -- what decisions were made, why they were made, where the company is going. AMAX explains itself to 2 million people -- its summary AR was a supplement to the Wall Street Journal. "Explaining yourself in an AR makes you less vulnerable to takeover," says Lewis. "If companies report their past problems, their reorganization and continuing improvement plans, their stock prices may increase and thwart takeover attempts."

As annual reports continue to pile in, major trends emerge. Note big picture tactics and broad themes:

Wrapperless Perhaps the most obvious & effective clutter cutter is ARs arriving, as critic/sage Sid Cato puts it, "sans envelope." He hails the move: "Not only does it save corporations the cost of envelopes, as well as postage, it also means the report's attention-getting aspects will be on display for recipients." Paper & postage led cost increases in prr's annual Budgeteer Issue (8/29/88).

According to Corporate Annual Reports (NYC), "As companies complete cost reduction programs, they are realizing that their next round of productivity gains will depend on employees. Thus, the '88 ARs feature employee heroes more than ever."

Panorama Business Week comments on GTE's AR showing a manager "straddling mossy rocks whipped by a raging surf." Others follow suit -- Asarco's cover shows a sweeping canyon scape; Allstate's Perspective (employee AR) sports a wide vista of a highway at sunrise. Despite a plain cover, Peoples Energy Corp (Chi) features big, colored glossies of constituents against epic backdrops -- stockholder at the ocean, securities analyst in cornfield, etc.

People Factor '88 ARs strive to establish a relationship with the reader. "The individual is at the center of everything we do," says Apple Computer's cover, which features silhouette of a pensive-looking woman. Report says theme is in keeping with Apple attitude -- "to create the world's friendliest, most understandable computers that empower the individual."

Theme is heavily employed by nonprofits. Every page of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's AR features photos of sick babies & children -- each with a story attached; Red Cross includes dramatic pix of fires, accidents, rescues, as well as sepia-toned historical images.

Employee As Hero Kimberly Clark AR cover features colored sketch of employees in a group -- "They did it...their way!" Capital Holding displays 3 cheerful employees on cover, holding a sign "Listening." Others, like New Jersey Bell, run photos of employees interacting with customers. Goldome Bank (Buffalo) profiles employees after hours on its "personalities" page.