

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶ Column Prompts States To Expand Good Samaritan Laws for donors of perishable foods. Answering a 10/88 letter describing how prepared but unserved food is often thrown away, Ann Landers said hotels & restaurants "have a legitimate reason to fear lawsuits should they give away food that was tainted." Food bank volunteer responded that most states have laws to protect volunteers from liable suits. Tho 46 states have had such laws since early '80s, many are extending them to specifically protect donors & handlers of prepared foods from liability claims resulting from consumption. Giving USA Update says flurry of legislation, active since January, was sparked by AL's column.

¶ PRSA's Foundation, Now Called Institute, Breaks Away. Unanimous vote of trustees last week a) legally changes name from Foundation for PR Research & Education to The Institute for PR Res. & Educ., b) makes Institute board self-perpetuating by removing PRSA board's power to name trustees, c) enables trustees to be selected from non-practitioners or non-PRSA members by removing requirement they be accredited. Founded in '56 as a tax deductible vehicle for projects PRSA felt would aid the field, Institute has become increasingly independent, insisting it should not carry out projects PRSA wanted done -- but make its own selection. This effectively removed PRSA's ability to use it for raising untaxed revenue -- the purpose of such foundations. Pres Paul Alvarez says changes will 1) broaden support base by removing implication of exclusive affiliation with PRSA, 2) allow leaders not in pr (e.g. foundation heads, business execs, researchers) to serve on the board.

¶ Supreme Court: Rewrite your Contracts with Photographers, Artists, Computer Program Writers, Freelancers Generally. Paying them a fee now buys you only one specific use of their product unless contract specifically specifies more. If there's any chance of long term use, this is particularly vital because freelancers may reclaim their rights to material after 35 years. Further, they can prevent alteration to their work at any time -- e.g. colorization of movies (tho a pending case on that issue is still before the justices). Case decided this month derives from US agreement last year to the Bern Convention, international agreement on rights to creative work. Legal battle will continue, including question of whether creator may insist on identification when work is used. Meanwhile, play it safe, say copyright experts.

¶ Prejudice Reigns Supreme. Tho CPRS Conference pushed to put pr in perspective, message seemed to fall on barren soil in host-city Montreal, where the English language daily invoked the old myth of pr as press agency. Despite intensive round table discussions, workshops & seminars on crisis mgmt, plant closings, free trade, etc., Gazette Business calendar carried the heading, "Publicists Convening At Sheraton Centre."

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. 1989 Nat'l Award Winners of CPRS: Philip A. Novikoff Memorial Award, Lou Cahill, mng dir IPR Canada Nat'l PR Group (Toronto); Lamp Of Service Award, Don Hoskins, vp Canada News-Wire (Ottawa); Award

Of Attainment, Lily Corewyn, vp pa Fed Business Dev'l Bank (Montreal); Shield Of Public Service, Ronald O'Donovan, City of Winnipeg.

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IN CONFERENCE & SURVEY, CPRS ASKS: ARE WE DEVELOPING STRATEGIC, ETHICAL PRACTITIONERS TO MEET NEW DEMAND FOR SENIOR POSITIONS?

The world is crying out for pr leadership -- but is the field spawning solid professionals who can a) uphold values, b) demonstrate ethical conduct & c) effectively interpret the court of public opinion? This question concerns the Canadian PR Society. Conference in Montreal last week saw leading practitioners integrate results of recent CPRS survey with their assessments of the field's status:

Anand Akerkar, pres Intern'l PR Assn, Bombay ¶ "Torn apart by conflict & confrontation, the world is changing in size & complexity overnight. It's a race between man & events. In a matter of minutes, we can be at each other's doorsteps, but that hasn't increased our understanding of each other."

¶ Tech advances create convenience at the cost of compassion. "We're becoming pawns on a chessboard in a quantitative rather than qualitative society. The danger is that man will start to think like a computer, not vice versa. The more decentralized we become the more we must strive for values."

¶ Pool of qualified prof'ls is shrinking. "We're raising a crop of instant pros looking for a quick fix. Practitioners admit an inability to cope with change & this is admirable. Aristotle said, 'My authority lies in knowing how little I know.' PR is concentrating on self improvement, but we must not labor on the word 'image.' Instead project 'reality' -- like pregnancy, it cannot be hidden for long."

"Openness doesn't mean the end of confidentiality. While it's important to tell the truth & nothing but the truth, it's not always necessary to tell the whole truth." --
Claude Beauregard

Douglas Smith, pres-elect, British Inst PR: "The quest for new business among consultants has become obsessive. Every year, they must get better & better results. Lawyers don't sniff for new biz by carting around their depositions & doctors don't show prospective patients examples of their stitch work, but packs of pr people with prepared proposals are sweating their way across cities. It's



professionally degrading & it's done at the cost of existing clients. This feeding frenzy is a worldwide problem."

Claude Beauregard, asst vp pa, Bell Canada "It's a paradox -- the future looks bright for the profession, but practitioners feel threatened. The problem is universal. French practitioner Phillipe Boiry says, 'The future of pr is not limited by its potential market, which is immense, but by the capacity of prof'ls to occupy this market competently & thus give the profession an image that will promote development.'" Solutions:

Training -- The foundation of the profession is more art than science, not likely to be taught in pr training programs. Universities teach writing skills, comn techniques, biz mgmt & a specialty, e.g. economics, sociology, law. But they don't teach judgment, knowledge of the outside environment (creation of personal networks, pressure groups, media) & inside environment (insurance, transportation, telecommunications). "PR is art applied to science -- art cannot be taught, but science can."

Prof'l Status -- a) "Gov't intervention would be inappropriate, ineffective because it's impossible to regulate an act as 'natural' as comn. I want to be free to obtain comn from APRs or elsewhere, free to choose between conventional medicine & alternative medicine. b) Prof'l org'ns should ensure self-regulation, encourage openness & integrity. APR should set high standards & be recognized as a good trademark, but under no circumstances should it restrict the practice of the profession."

Approach -- "Practitioners are often viewed as superficial, indulging in verbal diarrhea. Ground rule: remember Chet Burger's formula re ethical obligations: 'PR can't cover up & shouldn't even try to cover up wrongdoing, whether it's corruption, racism, sexism, or anything else.'"

CPRS SURVEY REVEALS CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE BUT HOPE FOR THE FIELD Surveyed members ac-knowledge in-creasing op-portunity for pr but doubt their ability to meet the challenges. Respondents want 1) higher prof'l standards, 2) better training -- especially in mgmt, 3) stricter self-regulation. 74% say that if they could improve their training, they would strengthen their mgmt expertise.

76% agree with Hunt & Grunig in Managing Public Relations: "Not enough practitioners hold prof'l values. Ass'ns are strong, but the majority of practitioners have not affiliated with them. Codes of ethics are present, but practitioners can easily avoid them and too seldom want or know how to be ethical. A body of knowledge exists, but few scholars are working to integrate it into a cohesive conceptual framework for the practice of pr. Public educ is growing, but the majority of programs stress comn techniques rather than mgmt. More teachers teach by anecdote than from systematic theory & research."

Trends Environment & aging population are 2 most important trends. Of some importance: tech developments; globalization; tax burdens. AIDS, spiritual values, crime & media influence got only a few responses. Issues related to language & "feminization" were not considered crucial.

Fields Major role will be played by: a) crisis & issue mgmt; b) internal comn, c) community rels, d) marketing pr. Least mentioned were audits & multi-media campaigns.

PR Tools Of The Future 1) Comn policy & plan; 2) qualitative & quantitative research; 3) corporate advertising/social marketing. Of less consideration: group animation sessions, promotion, spokesperson training.

HAROLD BURSON DETAILS HOW PR HAS COME OF AGE "The 1st pr conference I attended was in 1948 in NYC," he told CPRS attendees. "The principals were bemoaning the lack of appreciation from sr mgmt. The undercurrent was getting the boss to recognize what it was we did. We yearned to be appreciated, to receive confirmation that we are of value. Even then there were those managers who recognized the value of pr & people like Edward Bernays, Carl Byior were counseling at the highest level. But they were exceptions -- pr was peripheral to mainstream decisionmaking."

3 Phases Of Maturation 1. '40s-'60s, mgmt would ask, "How do I say it": After an organization would decide to do something, it would ask pr to translate it into a press release for them.

2. Mid-late '60s, "What do I say?": There was social unrest, Viet Nam, the public's need to know came into play. Corporations became the object of scorn, the purveyors of discrimination, mislabelers, polluters. The only title remotely connected to dealing with social problems was "pr." because executives all had business, accounting or engineering degrees.

3. '70s-'80s "What do I do?": A quantum step. The problems of the '60s became institutionalized -- consumerism, environmentalism etc. acquired legislation, formed powerful org'ns. Increasingly, sr pr counsel became involved in decisionmaking.

Post Maturation "Now we're accepted, what do we do? We're past the fluff image & have taken on substance. No longer evaluated on our news releases, we are seen as problem solvers. But not enough of us are equipped to fulfill that role. In the Fortune 500, lawyers, accountants, engineers & marketeers are still taking sr pr jobs. CEOs feel good about pr counsel & need services, but say their pr needs deal with heavy issues, e.g. crisis mgmt, budgets, politics -- & require more than a candidate "with a pr degree." We must re-evaluate our educational programs & stress pr as a business discipline."