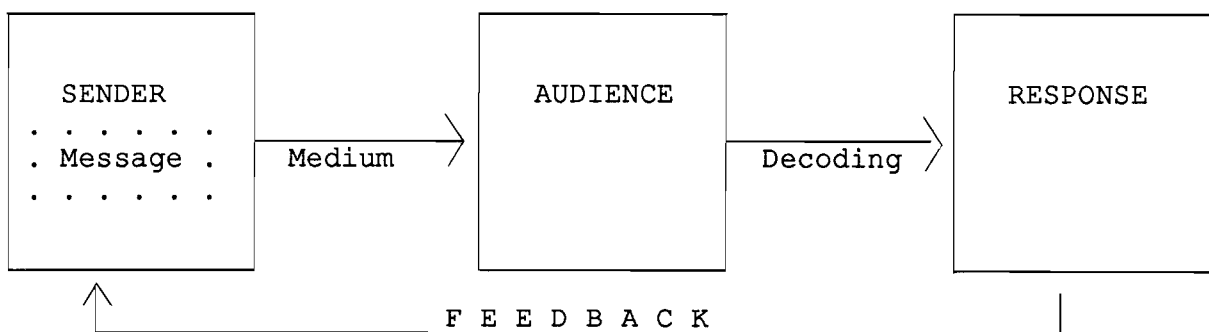


## BEHAVIORAL MODEL REPLACING COMMUNICATION MODEL AS BASIC THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF PR PRACTICE: KEY IS STIMULATING LATENT READINESS & CREATING TRIGGERING EVENTS

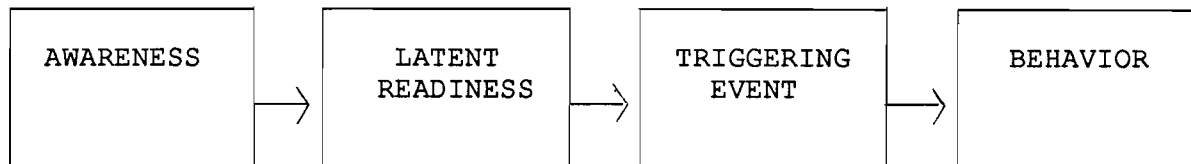
In public relations, "behavior is the only evaluation that counts," (pr 2/17/86). Larry Newman defines this as motivating people to 1) do something, 2) not do something, 3) let you do something. John Hill, now in the voice of his successor Bob Dilenschneider, says pr pros are problem solvers -- which usually means getting somebody to take action.

Yet many (most?) of us practitioners think of ourselves as "communicators." Our degrees are in journalism or mass com. A large part of our daily effort is 1-way information transfer or, at best, 2-way communication -- but for its own sake. Moving information, facts, data or feelings is the apparent objective. Clips, attendance, "reach" & similar measures evaluate success. To all of which knowledgeable employers or clients ask: So what? What has changed because of this? Never mind what our publics are thinking; the question is what are they doing?

### THE COMMUNICATIONS MODEL



### BEHAVIORAL PUBLIC RELATIONS MODEL



**THE OLD MODEL**      Publicity, publications, advertising & similar communications are essentially awareness devices. Or reminders, which is re-awareness. They move people to action only when they have a strong pre-disposition (positive latent readiness) to act. Put another way, when there is no resistance to acting.

Even then there are barriers, e.g. brand preference. Coke's communications may remind me I am thirsty, but if I'm a Pepsi drinker the competition benefits, not the sender of the communication. In transactions more sophisticated than merely buying a drink, reminder communications decline rapidly in power. Even at this simple level, communications must deal with brand or provider preference -- and tho we can try "positioning" & similar strategizing, factors like the product or service itself, price, availability & whether one's peer group considers the brand/provider acceptable weigh heavily.

Our forebears knew. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions," they said -- meaning thoughts, opinions, attitudes, even deeply held beliefs don't matter...unless carried thru into behavior. Every dieter facing the dessert tray understands the difference between attitude & behavior.

Therefore, what communications may be able to provide is building latent readiness. They must be tightly targeted at susceptible publics, and even at those members of the public who have a viable interest. And they must be carefully strategized to deal with feelings about product, price, etc. Which means they must be based on sophisticated research. Mass communication, to get or keep the name before the general public, with a one-size-fits-all message, in most cases is an inefficient & often wasteful effort.

**THE NEW MODEL**      Basically shifts the objective, and with it the focus of thinking, strategizing & planning. Practitioners ask what behaviors am I trying to motivate, rather than what information am I trying to communicate? "Messages" are thus replaced by "appeals" to act. This may seem minor -- but in fact is revolutionary. Interpreting the model:

1. **Awareness**      Here salience or relevance is key. There are 3 levels: 1) initial awareness, 2) awareness of changes in subjects already in one's consciousness, 3) reinforcement or renewing awareness. Communication is at its strongest here, at the start of the behavioral process. But getting more difficult all the time. Practitioners must apply all the nuances of the old model just to break thru the unbelievable clutter and make publics aware.

2. **Latent Readiness**      Either positive or negative readiness to behave in a certain way starts to form -- often largely sub-consciously, if the topic isn't top-of-head at the moment -- as soon as people become aware. Indeed, it begins immediately by referring the new topic to existing perceptions, attitudes, etc. We get ready to act by accumulating: experience, information, attitudes, word-of-mouth, values, beliefs, opinion, moods, emotion, intuition -- the whole realm of psyche &

human nature. The practical influence of the communications model is here, helping publics form positive/negative latent readiness (depending on whether we want them to do something or not do it).

**3. Triggering Event** An opportunity, or an appeal, to act triggers our latent readiness -- or at least offers us a chance to act if we're so inclined. For instance, voting day is the TE in election campaigns. A sale may be it for retailers. Quarterly reports may trigger stockholders to buy or sell. An attack on an organization or its services/products may be a TE to unite critics or to start legislative/regulatory action.

Some TEs are accidental, they just happen (tho issue anticipation efforts can guard against many of them). Others are launched by competitors, opponents, critics, disgruntled publics, unsatisfied customers or stakeholders. By using this new model, practitioners can build the launching of their own TEs into pr plans. This moves pr practice beyond communication into behavior motivation.

**4. Behavior** The main point here is to remember that people rarely go from ground zero to the final behavior. Therefore, we often have to lead them thru several intermediate behaviors before they can give the ultimately desired behavior. For instance, purchasing your product may be what you want people to do. To get there, you may first need to motivate such behavior as a) requesting literature or a demonstration, b) visiting a showroom, c) trying the product and similar.

The key is that each of these behaviors is finite & measurable. You know precisely what you are asking people to do. The vagueness, the softness is out of the equation. PR efforts can target definite publics or individuals, appealing to them to provide specific behaviors. This immediately shapes pr activities including events, 1-on-1s, communications, whatever.

**AS INTEREST IN REACHING HISPANICS GROWS,  
SO DO SERVICES AVAILABLE TO HELP DO IT**

"Hispanics now account for 8.2% of US population & are growing

nearly five times faster than the non-Hispanic population," says Russell Boyd, dir, Message Factors, a national market research firm which has developed a Hispanic research program. "En Total" provides info that will enable organizations to more efficiently reach this growing sector. It combines national mail panel, in-store scanner program, bilingual telephone interviews, door-to-door interviews, mall intercepts. (Info from Boyd at 404/256-9405, or Mark Hand at 813/871-6546)

Public relations for Hispanic markets -- now spending more than \$173 billion/yr -- will be the topic of seven seminars at SE HABLA ESPANOL, the National Hispanic Market Trade Show & Media Expo, Sept 25-27 in Chicago. Three-day show is sponsored by Hispanic Business. (360 S. Hope Ave, Santa Barbara, Calif 93105; 805/682-5843)

Puerto Rico has a wealth of public relations talent -- and 2 universities teaching the subject up to graduate level. Surprisingly, their skills have been little tapped to help counselors & pr dep'ts understand & plan programming for Hispanics. They can: a) translate the real meaning in documents & materials (not just the cliches), b) interpret the difference between Puerto Rican, Cubano, Chicano, Central American publics (tho all are "Hispanic," each has a different cultural bent -- and even language can be different), c) counsel on strategies & tactics truly aimed at Hispanics, not just reworked ideas that were successful somewhere else.

With Puerto Rico's statehood/commonwealth/independence plebiscite coming up, and Mexico a possible free trade partner, this is the time to build alliances with colleagues who understand these situations.

### ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ New Ultra-fast Speechwriting Service begun by veteran speechwriter Nate Shapiro. Speech Express serves executives with an urgent need for speeches. Former broadcast newswriter & corp comm exec at Illinois Bell provides a turnaround of 4 working days, faster if needed. Cost is \$1,500 upfront for a 20-minute speech. (Headquartered in Northbrook, Ill, 1-800-255-5507)

¶ Does Business Have A Special Obligation To Protect The Environment? How should business & government work together to address the ecological crisis? These topics were covered at last fall's 8th National Conference on Business Ethics, held at Bentley College, and summaries of the presentations are now available in the Business Ethics Report. (Contact Bob Frederick of the Center for Business Ethics, Bentley College, Waltham, Mass 02154)

¶ Some Economists Claim Environment Issue Will Fade as economy falls. But if retailers' exploitation of public concern is a guide -- and it often is -- the economists are wrong. Target stores, leading trend merchandisers, is pushing a special price for buying 2 trash bins: one labeled regular, the other recycled. To capitalize on youth interest, Target promotes itself as "The Kids for Saving Earth" information station. Albertsons supermarkets, a fast rising Western chain, offers an 8-point program: 1) urging customers to return plastic bags after use for recycling, 2) baling all waste cardboard for recycling, 3) reclaiming energy from refrigeration compressors to heat stores in winter & cool them in summer, 4) 5-cent per bag refund for returning paper grocery bags & 4 other actions. They're doing it because "We think like you do."

### WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. Presidents Award, Nat'l School PR Assn's highest honor, to Bonnie Ellison (pub info dir, Northside Independent School Dist, San Antonio) for numerous contribu-

tions to educational pr, e.g., spearheading the Flag of Learning & Liberty project during her presidency amid assn's Golden Anniversary & move to new hq.