5. **Enviro organizations & the government** are considered most trustworthy sources about enviro info. Advertisements are considered the least;

6. **Attitudes about "Corporate America" are in flux**. Only 16% feel companies act responsibly, but 3/4 feel they are more responsible today than 2 years ago. (More from Wells or Andrew Stoeckle, sr analyst, Abt Assocs, 55 Wheeler Street, Cambridge, Mass 02138-1168; 617/492-7100)

DEMOGRAPHERS PREDICT "EXURBS" WILL BE NEW BASTIONS OF POLITICAL CLOUT

Over the past 20 years, suburbs -- residential, bedroom communities of cities -- have become centers in their own right. "Places like Westchester, NY, Stamford, Ct, Burlington, Mass, & similar spots near LA, Chicago & nearly every major city, have become major employers," Peter Francese, publisher American Demographics (Ithaca), told prr. So people are moving to very rural areas and commuting laterally to suburbs rather than radially to metro areas. The ramifications will be significant on:

1. **Cultural Identity**. "As people leave the cities, they will cease to think of themselves as New Yorkers or Chicagoans." Also, will McCluhan's Global Village really happen or will people become cloistered as they grow self-sufficient in their communities?

2. **Politics**. "The locus is shifting outward, flattening into a form of diversified control." Big cities will have far less pull, the "big-city mayor" will not be as important.

Trend has immediate impact on elections as areas redistrict in line with the '90 Census. New patterns in state legislatures are materializing. But no predictable voting pattern emerges. "They don't tend to vote any particular way. It's a strange phenomenon, not discernible." And Brian Derdowski, upset winner for King County Council (Seattle), notes a blurring of distinctions between parties: "You will find people who are pro-guns & pro-environment. People have allegiances to issues and they cut across party lines."

ITEM OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **Granddaddy Of Personalizing Has To Be Farm Journal** (Phila). It was the first nat'l publication to send regional editions in '52. Ten years later, early computers & zip codes allowed FJ to print "demographically" according to subscriber data (hog farmers received different articles than beef farmers, even on the same rural route). "We batched by crops until '80, then we began electronic boundaries," publisher Lee Alexander told prr. "We have the most complete database on farmers in the US." FJ prints up to 9,000 different versions of a single issue. Many publications -- including those by pr departments -- still haven't begun personalizing.

CONFLICT AVOIDANCE, RESOLUTION OR MANAGEMENT? EMERGING NEGOTIATION TECHNIQUES OFFER CUES FOR PRACTITIONERS

What's the current thought among strategists about dealing with conflict? Ideas on the subject are varied, but these constants emerge: 1) relationship building is key; 2) making contacts early-on, before a dispute manifests, is ideal; 3) face-to-face is the only way.

BRING CONCERNED PARTIES TOGETHER "If there is a dispute in a community over an organization's effort to expand or build a facility, for example, it's quite possible to get abutters, residents, regulatory agencies & the organization itself to reach agreement," Larry Susskind, assoc dir, Harvard Law School's Program on Negotiation, told prr. He believes: "You need to bring representatives face to face with a neutral party as the mediator."

"I prefer to work with Conflict Avoidance," counselor Mary Ann Pires (Ardsley, NY) told prr. "If you have an ongoing relationship, you can largely avoid confrontation." She encourages corporations & trade associations to look beyond the natural network of contacts to those 3rd party groups which a) have no direct linkage with the organization; b) have no obvious stake in what the organization may want to do; c) with whom there has been no established, ongoing interaction. These groups -- enviro activists, women, disabled people, seniors, minorities, etc. -- have tremendous influence on public policy.

> "Conflict resolution" may be a fallacious concept, many pr & management consultants feel, because it implies: a) conflicts are or should be resolvable; b) resolution is a goal. Conflicts, whether external or within the organization, don't just go away without a whimper, no matter how well "resolved." Often they become internalized, manifesting a veneer of improvement only to erupt again in a different form or on another subject. And what of psychologists' admonition that ingenuity is spawned by friction? Creativity & new ideas are based on conflict. From 2 conflicting views comes another one better than both. The clash of ideas is the basis of democracy. Therefore, conflict management.

FIND COMMON INTERESTS "Reach out & open the lines of communication with groups where there may be commonalty of interest. If you're an insurance company, you may not have a lot in common with environmental groups, but there might be a lot to talk about with an AIDS organization or a consumer group."

Pires underscores the pr model: Build relationships by a) exchanging information, e.g. literature, speakers, and b) working on cooperative projects together. When a dispute arises, an organization will benefit from these unlikely allies. "They will be going on the threshold of an existing relationship. It is definitely against the laws of human behavior for a third party group to just open their arms and accept overtures from a company or industry that it hasn't dealt with before."

Susskind says organizations can resolve community disputes when parties come to the table with 2 common goals (both are usable in any dispute):

1. **Consensus, not argument.** "This has been the characteristic approach: a) decide, b) announce, c) defend. If you say, we basically have decided already, but what are your comments, they know you are not open to considering a decision that would be better for all sides."

2. **Community betterment.** "Try to provide enough benefits -- neighborhood improvements, tax reductions, service priorities or cost reductions -- so nearby residents feel they are better off."

> **Susskind casts erroneous aspersions on pr,** which he calls 1-way information flow. "They claim to resolve disputes, but they seek to manage them. They're trained in info management, to put a spin on the conflict so that the client comes out looking good." Conflict management as a concept, he says, is wrong & destructive. "Conflicts must be resolved or they will keep going."

ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD HONE THESE STRATEGIES

1. **Mediation Training.** "A lot of companies are not organized to mediate disputes," says Susskind -- they're not participative. "Their attitude is, 'Why should we discuss what we're going to do until we know what it is?'" So they wait until they decide -- then announce & defend. They must a) build the capacity to deal with conflict before it causes disfunctional relationships, or b) be ready to hire mediators.

2. **Redefine Leadership** as possessing the ability to resolve conflicts & disputes and build consensus. "For too long a manager was the person who 'had to make the tough decision' during a conflict. That just pushed the conflict back into the organization," says Susskind.

3. **Build Relationships Early.** "Everyday organizations spend $$$$ on direct mail," notes Pires. "They hire lobbyists by the legion to try to make fast friends. If they spent a fraction of that on relationship building, they would have natural allies." Relationship building, she says, is the premier emerging issue system.

"The regional Bells' effort to woo groups by suddenly fanning out over the landscape (not building relationships first) has fallen short by their admission. McDonald's got the Environmental Defense Fund to come to the table because they worked a relationship over time. Certain enviro groups spared Exxon the worst of it on the basis of years of outreach on Exxon's part. Dow has had a lot of success by using the slow and steady approach that has an integrity of its own."

4. **Develop Vision.** Relationship building doesn't fit the quarterly report mentality. Realize that long-term isn't as long as it sounds, "it may mean within 2 years."

Remember, says Pires: a) people don't like being used. If you suddenly reach out to them when you want to get an ordinance passed, you'll be perceived as manipulative; b) they like to deal with people they know, so start pre-conflict; c) they expect reciprocity -- follow thru.

DO ENVIRO CONCERNS REALLY DICTATE PURCHASE CHOICES? STUDY REVEALS BEHAVIORAL GAP The enviro crisis does influence product purchases, but not to the degree consumers claim it does, says study by Abt Assocs (Cambridge, Mass). "As we have found in political polling, what people say they would do is not actually what they do," vp & study dir Richard Wells told prr.

Telephone survey of 800 adults nationwide, rather than pose hypothetical questions, asked about actual purchase choices. Nearly 90% of respondents say they would pay more for enviro-sound products, but only 51% could think of times when they made such a purchase.

ANOTHER KEY FINDING: MISINFORMATION Tho over half say they have made an environmentally motivated purchase, decisions were often based on misinformation. "The bad news is that consumers are frequently misinformed. It seems people are anxious to do the right thing, but we have not done a particularly good job of telling them what the right thing is." Wells cites examples: "biodegradable" plastic bags which never see daylight at the bottom of a landfill or "CFC-free" aerosols. "Basically, all aerosols are CFC-free and have been since 1979."

> Wells feels the proliferation of misinformed decisions reveals the need for standardized definitions, verified claims & better communication with consumers. "Findings underline the need for sound research as the basis for statements concerning corporate & product environmental performance."

OTHER FINDINGS:

1. **Purchases are not a sacrifice.** Consumers don't necessarily pay more for them. 63% of those who buy enviro-sound products say they cost the same or less than alternatives and they consider them superior in quality & convenience;

2. Consumers name **post-consumer solid waste** the #1 pollution problem to which consumer product companies should tend;

3. Consumers heed **package information.** 52% of those who made an enviro-sound purchase read packaging, a habit conducive to misinformation;

4. **Only 1% of those making an enviro purchases list energy efficiency** as the reason. Consumers apparently don't link it with reductions in carbon dioxide releases that contribute to global warming;