

to have accountability, & institutionalize a process for immediately spotting & correcting communication breakdowns. You have to have an empowered mechanism that is cross divisional." -- Joe Rutledge, vp corp comms, NBC

- "Trying to convince a CEO that a communications strategy is as critical as a financial strategy is a hard sell. Not everyone has to have a major piece in a financial strategy, some have bigger pieces than others. But everyone has a role in the communications strategy. And if just one or two links break down, it's enough to collapse the whole strategy. It's a challenge to solve it without creating major bureaucracy in the process." -- Susan Opengart, dir hr, Philip Morris USA

(Next roundtable will be Wed, Nov 17 in NYC. In '94: Feb 9, May 11. Info from Cognitive Communication, PO Box 43, Rowayton, Ct. 06853; 203/838-9091)

## ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

THE TYPICAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROFESSIONAL EARNS \$59,150...with a big discrepancy between male & female earnings. Average salary for women is \$53,546; for men, \$68,713. This is attributed to length of time with a company & in the field. Men exceed women on both. Typically, practitioners are titled mgr (37.3%) or dir (20.2%); have a BA or BS (52.7%); are 42.4 yrs old; are located in the pr/pa dep't (34.9%) or corp comms (18.8%); been in the field 6.9 yrs; receive an annual bonus of \$7,910 (men receive \$11,035; women, \$6,119). (More from Ctr for Corp Comty Rels at Boston College, 36 College rd, Chestnut Hill, Mass 02167; 617/552-4545)

STUDENTS HELP STUDENTS UNDERSTAND PR BY CREATING A VIDEO. David Pincus (Calif State U, Fullerton) got his Communications Dep't & a group of professionals to sponsor an educational video. Broadcast students made up the production team. A number of professionals appeared on screen in mini cases to illustrate different facets of public relations. Result is an 18 minute video ("Mission Impossible: The Pursuit of Public Relations") that uses 2 FBI-like characters to uncover what pr is & does. It's available to high school teachers, community college professors, career counselors & pr professors. "Many young people either don't know about public relations or think it's merely publicity," explains Pincus, "but it's a field that has changed substantially over the last 30 years." Available to purchase at \$25 each. Efforts are underway to make it available at a nominal charge to the educational sector. (More info from Pincus at 714/773-3517)

Few practitioners planned pr careers, finds a survey by Heyman Assocs (an exec search firm). 74% reported no early plans to enter the field. Instead, they considered print journalism (48%) teaching/academia (12%), broadcast journalism (10%), adv'g (8%), gov't (8%), among other choices. Nearly half came to public relations as a 2nd career. Video could help change this trend, provide a more academic base to future pr careerists.

## MASS MEDIA, GO - DIRECT MIX KEY TO REENGINEERING PR

Customer satisfaction. Niche & "pull" marketing. 1-on-1 relationship programs. Employee empowerment & culture change. These are among the areas reflecting today's need to reach people **personally** -- which means deflated prominence for **mass** media. (See pr 9/27) But the concept isn't mainstream yet, whether it's practitioners or their organizations/clients who are dubious. Through interviews, pr gathered these two views:

- "The subject is often presented as an either/or situation, & it's not. I believe in research, strategic planning, influence groups, niche marketing, all those things. But I don't think it's a question of one or the other. President Clinton learned the hard way. You can't tell the press to go to hell and expect to get press support. He found out that he needed it. Mr. Gergen was brought in as a result and the whole treatment of Clinton by the press changed within a matter of weeks.

"Ignore the media at your own risk. I say use the press & supplement it. Since I began in pr (over 50 yrs ago) I've used research, strategic planning, influence groups...there's nothing new about it. The social scientists & academics are promoting this -- it's in their interest. But why does it have to be promoted to the exclusion of other practices? Public relations has built up layer on layer through the years. Sophisticated research is one of the newer layers, but that doesn't mean you don't do the other things. Media are still an important part of the pr plan. Personally, I don't see how it could be otherwise." James F. Fox, Fox Public Relations (Fort Lauderdale)

The topic has become central to reengineering pr practice & demands debate, leadership, shared experience. We invite readers to send your thoughts & experiences to pr.

- "We like to keep out of the media if we can & go directly to the people because media overplay the influence of small opposition groups. With the campaigns we run, generally there's a fairly small, active population & a very small group of actual decisionmakers. So we communicate directly through a number of tools -- newsletters, meetings, dog-&-pony shows, letters from 3rd parties. We have a project now where there's a tax issue coming up for vote in December. My client isn't trusted as a good source of information because he's the developer of the area the tax is on. People would say 'what's in it for him?'



So we've found a group of residents (with financial backgrounds) who like the tax change. They're going to review it & write a letter saying it's a good idea. That letter will be mailed to everybody in the affected district. If we went to the media, they'd give equal play to the small minority (less than 10%) who are against the tax and are very vocal & quotable.

**"If you have a broad-based issue with even consensus (50-50 split) the media could be an effective tool.** But when you have a very vocal minority, the media overplays them. So we look for ways to circumvent the media. We've done it again & again & again. And the ultimate decisionmaker (the city councilperson, for example) has been burned so many times in the media -- misquoted, editorialized by writers who don't understand the full complexity of the issue -- that if there's a negative story in the press it's not as influential as the media would like to think it is.

"We're not as concerned as we used to be. Now we call our client & just say it's not a big deal. The client generally agrees with us because they've been through it enough times. In most of our proposals now, media relations is 3rd or 4th priority. We don't ignore it. We still background the beat reporters, hound the editorial board if they're making mistakes, all the stuff we've always done. But it's a lower priority." -- Laer Pearce, Laer Pearce & Assocs (Irvine, Calif)

## STUDY SHOWS MARKETING PR FAVORED OVER ADS BY MANY

Consumers are deserting name brands in favor of store brands or generics, & the trend will continue, believe 7 of 10 mktg dirs & brand mgrs. Survey by Golin/Harris Communications shows this is occurring due to factors marketers cannot control -- economic uncertainty, tighter family budgets, more sophisticated consumers. Only 20% believe the switch is motivated by factors such as product promotion or competition. Other findings:

- 95% of marketers surveyed believe marketing communications (including pr & adv'g) builds name brands, compared with 64% for price-based promotion (coupons, discounting), & 61% for trade promotion (buying allowances, cooperative adv'g).
- 63% believe marketing pr is as or more important than adv'g in building brand awareness.
- 83% believe marketing pr is as or more important than adv'g in building brand credibility.

"The increasing fragmentation of traditional mass media, the rising cost of advertising & growing consumer sophistication have made **public relations a key part of the marketing mix,**" explains Rich Jernstedt, CEO of Golin/Harris. "To be successful, brand marketers must position their products not as just another SKU on the shelf, but **as a relevant part of consumers' lives.** Public relations can establish brand identity & personality and support a positioning -- even if it's with a premium price -- which helps overcome store brands' price advantage."

(Copy of Brand Equity Survey from Forrest Anderson, 312/836-7378; or write to G/H, 500 North Michigan av, Chi 60611)

## INTERNAL RELATIONS BLOSSOMING -- BUT STILL NEEDS SELLING

At a recent executive roundtable, organizational communicators discussed their roles & how the function can be a strategic tool for competitiveness:

1. **Its role.** Organizational communications must transcend its traditional role as an information delivery mechanism. Its new responsibilities must include facilitating change, empowering, motivating & listening, supporting the macro function of communicating an organization's basic values so all employees can actively support those values.
  - "It's as critical a part of communication to listen as it is to talk or to send a message out. The organizations that are most successful in communication have a symmetrical model upward & downward. The role of the communicator is to be that conduit & enabler -- the one who's listening to employees, customers, shareholders -- making certain that what people think, their concerns, the emerging issues, are being heard at the senior-most levels of the organization." -- Ron Martin, vp employee comms, American Express
2. **Who should "drive" it?** It should reside wherever it is functionally appropriate & effective -- in an inter-departmental communications forum or a company-wide review group for communications issues. Wherever it is it should be an integral & ubiquitous part of an organization -- a function without boundaries, speaking a consistent message.
  - "You can't house communication all in one place -- it doesn't make sense to do this because it is unique to many departments. But you have to have the thread that runs through all of these different communications to make sure the right messages are being communicated & that the signals aren't getting mixed." -- Pat Peck, vp hr, Woolworth Corp
  - "It would be wonderful if people would think about communication, & the impact of communication, as if it were as important a consideration as budget. If that were to happen, we wouldn't have to worry about 'now we have a strategy, now we have our business plans, now let's talk about our communications.' Communications doesn't exist in a separate place." -- Lavera Johnson, vp hr, Children's Television Workshop
3. **How to initiate this change.** a) Create an economic incentive which shows that poor communications translates directly into increased costs to the organization; b) create a cross-departmental communications review forum that is responsible for enforcing good communication practices; c) get grad schools to broaden their focus on communication.
  - "It takes a lot of guts from the people who have this insight to go & rattle those cages, because usually it challenges some fundamental sacred cows & lines of authority & alters their expectations. We're grappling with a fundamental problem. To truly allow corporations to change is going to require a major shift in thinking. You have