tify subscribers vs non-subscribers with 83% accuracy. Using this model, the company could readily see which prospects best matched their subscriber profile & target them in successful campaigns.

- For a phone company, DMW was able to predict which customers would decide to switch to another service provider (*churns*) -- with 92% accuracy from a set of 15,000 customers. The company then offered incentives to these churns to keep them loyal.

(Info from Scott Christie, 800/462-3977, x207)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

¶**PR FIRM'S PAID SABBATICAL POLICY PROMOTES PERSONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT** for long-term employees. After 5 yrs of service to Wang Assocs Health Communications (NYC), each employee is entitled to a paid sabbatical of either 6 weeks at full pay or 12 weeks at half pay. Either option may be combined with regular vacation time. After the sabbatical, employees return to the same position, receive the same salary. No restrictions are placed on leave activities -- unless they pose a conflict-of-interest, such as performing work for a competitor. Program is an opportunity for employees to renew their enthusiasm & refresh their spirit by keeping creative talent in top form. "By offering this unstructured time to recharge, the agency expects to benefit both from enhanced employee productivity & staff retention," explains Julie Wang, CEO.

¶**SEND 1,000 FAXES OVERNIGHT TO OPINION LEADERS, LEGISLATORS** & other key contacts with new Pitney Bowes equipment. A problem in Constituency Relations & similar opinion leader or ambassador programs is ability to get info to them *first*, before general announcement. Nothing turns 'em off quicker than learning important info from news media or other sources. If you're an insider, you expect to know before others, perhaps be consulted. Model 9550 with a hard disk permits speed dialing up to 1,000 numbers overnight. Purchase price: $4690, or $189/mo to rent.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. Harold Burson (Burson-Marsteller, NYC) receives John W. Hill Award from NY/PRSA for leadership & ethical standards within the profession, service to PRSA & the public.

RE-ENTERS. Al Walker, who built a nationally recognized program at

N.Ill.U before retiring, is visiting prof, Texas Tech U (Lubbock) -- "in the classroom where I belong."

RE-RETIRES. Former PRSA pres Jerry Dalton (Vought Aircraft, ex-chief Air Force pa) to consult, for now from his home (Dallas).

Happy Holidays from all of us at pr reporter. This is the last issue for 1993, giving staff & printer a much needed break. You can still call us; we'll be monitoring our messages. Look for the trend-setting First-Of-The-Year Issue on January 3, 1994.

THE TECHNICAL QUESTION FOR PR: HOW REAL IS "VIRTUAL" WORLD?

Tho most hi tech communications has the danger of luring practitioners into the lazy belief old 1-way methods will work *if* they're electronic -- for which there is no evidence whatsoever -- one development deserves considerable research:

> **Is virtual face-to-face real, in the sense of letting people share enough of body language & "essence of self" that full-blown relationships can develop?**

Q: Does being with someone via teleconferencing (the visual kind: note that we use the same word for phone & video meetings) allow the same intimacy as being in the same room? If so, why? If not, why not -- is it the sense of smell that's missing, a full 3-dimensional view, or what?

Q: If such interactive tv dialogue constitutes a "personal" meeting, why doesn't just seeing someone on film, video or tv? Will acceptance of *interactive* video get-togethers lead us to perceive *1-way* video as "real" interchange?

Q: If we have *enough* phone chats, do we really know one another -- or is visual knowledge of the other person essential?

The issue is critical. Behavior can be motivated only from people & publics with whom organizations have earned trust. Trust can be earned only thru building relationships. So -- are "virtual" relationships "real"? Please, scholars & researchers, help us find out.

RETIRING SCHOLAR: SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC CONTEXTS KEY

After 28 years of research & teaching, Hugh Culbertson (Ohio U) is choosing a phased retirement. "I'll continue teaching one quarter a year until I'm 70something...health permitting, you know," he told prr. He recently contracted a virus causing Guillain-Barre syndrome.

"I've always believed the good public relations practitioner needs to understand the social, political & economic contexts of public relations. I've tried to figure out how to teach that -- it's very nebulous." He was accused by a student a few years ago of "turning students loose in the library with a pep talk & not much guidance." This led him, along with 3 former students, to write *Social, Political and Economic Contexts in Public Relations: Theory and Cases* (Lawrence Erlbaum Assocs). It looks at

a wide range of social science theories, then applies them in cases. "There has been a tendency to assume that as an academician you need to *build* theory & test it. I believe it's important to *use what we have*, albeit some of that theory is imperfect." Published in June, book "presents my message to the field."

Culbertson hopes the book interests practitioners in *front end research* that makes use of social science theory. It hasn't been a highly regarded activity, he feels. "People tend to do research after the program is underway, but not beforehand to try to understand where to go with it. That's an area I've tried to promote in my teaching & writing."

OTHER REFLECTIONS   ● **"Public relations needs to build relationships, needs to promote dialogue within society.** The field is making progress in that direction. There are some pressures against that progress, however -- particularly intense commercial demands that put selling above everything else."

● "Well trained, dedicated practitioners with a **strong desire to serve society as well as the client** are the key to the future. And, generally speaking, I'm very heartened by what I see."

● **"Have the courage to sometimes turn down a job** that doesn't permit public service, even tho you might wind up with a somewhat lower paying job that does. There are times when you need to dust off the resume."

● "There needs to be a continuation of the development of **strong graduate programs** with an emphasis in public relations. That coupled with **PRSA's Body of Knowledge project**. We have a long way to go but I hope that process continues."

● "I'm not a separatist. **I think journalism schools are the best place for public relations**. Communications, writing, editing, graphic arts skills remain central to the practice of public relations & those are handled much more fully within schools & dep'ts of journalism than elsewhere on campus. Accredited schools of journalism are required to offer considerable flexibility & to emphasize a liberal arts education. To me, schools of journalism provide a point for synthesis & application of the social sciences & humanities that public relations education requires. I have yet to see any evidence that colleges of education & colleges/schools of business are particularly interested in offering public relations curricula. I also question whether they are very well equipped to deal with many of the core skills & concepts in public relations."

As he phases in his retirement, Culbertson wants to "remain somewhat active doing research related to public relations." He will be 1) co-editing a book of readings on public relations as it's practiced in various countries around the world; 2) lecturing in Thailand in a couple of years; 3) doing a brief lecture tour in Mainland China this summer -- once the many details are worked out. [For pr pros, retirement often means merely a change of venue.]

DEBATE CONTINUES: INTERACTIVE TV INTERESTS 6 OF 10 ADULTS

Chilton poll claims they "definitely" or "probably" would:

a) use a service to access movies for watching later at their leisure (86%);
b) use educational or "do-it-yourself" programs (68%);
c) use a custom news channel to pick the topic they want to watch (68%);
d) access a video library of children's programs & movies (57%),
e) interactive banking services (51%);
f) take advantage of push-button shopping (47%),
g) financial info service (45%),
h) library of statistics on sports heroes/teams,
i) interactive video games where players compete against others across the country (34%).

Men more than women are "significantly more likely" to access sports statistics (47% vs 24%), educational programs (77% vs 60%), interactive banking (58% vs 44%). Women are more apt to choose shopping services (51% vs 41%). Beware: this is self-speculating attitudinal research, not behavioral -- & may be comparable to studies on seat belt use (where high majorities claim to always buckle up, while eyeball observational studies at stop lights finds 15-20% actually do. (More info from Chilton Research Services, 1 Chilton Way, Radnor, Pa 19089-0193)

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH OFFICE ROMANCE?

PR firms' & depts' long hours & close contact necessitates policies to avoid hazards. A no-dating policy does more harm than good, sending romances underground, writes Phillip Perry in Law Practice Management. Instead, he recommends:

1. Require supervisors to report romantic involvement with subordinates.
2. Make sure the romantic activity is welcome.
3. Reassign work-reporting lines to remove a conflict of interest or co-worker resentment.
4. Monitor performance evaluations.
5. Require notification when the relationship begins to sour.
6. Address the problem with sensitivity.

Perry cites many pitfalls, noting that office romance can color performance reviews, cause resentment of co-workers, trigger sexual discrimination charges if the paramour is promoted over others & prompt charges of sexual harassment if the relationship breaks up.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CAN PREDICT BEHAVIOR OF TARGET GROUP

DataBase Mining Workstation (DMW) takes the data you plug into it, then 1) determines the critical variables, 2) weights the factors, 3) develops a model & 4) tests itself. Thru its artificial intelligence techniques, it **can uncover hidden patterns & nonlinear relationships**. Some examples, from its marketing literature:

● For a newspaper publishing company, DMW built a model that could iden-