

But practitioners in many sectors, & surely contributions & community relations specialists, may find the data useful. Nine benchmarks measure national, state & community levels of: 1) percent of low birth-weight babies, 2) infant mortality rate, 3) child death rate, 4) teenage violent death rate, 5) percent of births to single teens, 6) juvenile custody rate, 7) percent graduating from high school, 8) percent of children in poverty, 9) percent of children in single-parent families.

"We need to forge a new partnership between community institutions & family, and between work & family. A partnership that can enable & encourage families to succeed in their most irreplaceable function: raising healthy, secure & productive citizens for the future," says Douglas Nelson of The Annie E. Casey Fdn. Study is a joint project with Center for the Study of Social Policy. ("Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Well-Being" \$12.50 from the Center, Suite 503, 1250 Eye St, NW, Wash DC 20005)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

✓ **"ON BUYING PHOTOGRAPHY"** is a succinct, informative guide on selecting & working with photographers. To find the right one, define your communication goals. Then as you review portfolios, ask questions as they apply to your assignment, e.g., how long have you been in the business? what studio facilities do you have? are you equipped for a location shoot? what travel experience do you have? Discusses a) pricing the assignment, b) estimates or bids, c) usage (under federal copyright law, the photographer is the owner of the photograph unless there is a written transfer of copyright ownership), d) what to do when your needs outweigh your budget. (Single copy free by sending SASE (#10 envelope) to American Society of Media Photographers, 419 Park Ave South, NYC 10016)

✓ **WANTED: HEALTHCARE SERIES FOR PRIME-TIME.** Experts say healthcare costs will claim 17% of US GNP by 2000. Key to lower costs is said to be prevention, but that requires massive changes in public attitudes & personal behavior (sounds like a public relations job), & sustained education prgms -- public tv is equipped to help here. CPB's Television Program Fund has set aside \$1.5 million for new, prime-time documentaries designed to explore solutions to the crisis. The Fund is calling for projects that are compelling, imaginative, of more than regional or local interest, & adhere to accepted technical, ethical & artistic or journalistic standards. (More info: Joshua Darsa 202/879-9736, John O'Connor 202/879-9742)

✓ **"WHERE SHALL I GO TO STUDY ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS?"**, 29th annual edition, includes pr for the first time -- more evidence adv'g wants in on pr. LSU's Manship School of Mass Comn is guide's originator. Lists, state by state, the schools that offer either adv'g, pr or a combined sequence, and useful info: degrees offered, accreditation, number of students/grads & faculty, number of scholarships available, fin'l assistance, entrance requirements (university's & department's), costs, student org'ns, person to write for more info. Of interest: 1) Of the 172 prgms, 158 are located in journalism/mass comns, 10 within business/mktg, 1 in speech, 1 in English, 2 with a joint journalism/mass comns & business/mktg program. 2) Ill. State awarded the largest number of bachelor's degrees in pr (175) followed by Cal State-Fullerton (151). Boston U graduated 32 with master's degrees, Northwestern 22. (\$3 from Adv'g Education Pub'ns, 623 Meadow Bend Dr, Baton Rouge 70820; 504/767-0988)

DATABASE PR: OPINION LEADER LIST OVERPOWERS MEDIA LIST

"I thought we were database communicators," responds Tom Brennan of Brennan & Brennan (Anchorage) to prr's Jan. 18 look at what database marketers are thinking. Like them, public relations practitioners who are leading the way **are** database users -- targeting messages directly to opinion leaders & key publics, bypassing mass media.

MORE ACCURATE & COMPLETE MESSAGES "For years I've been using mass media only as supplementary communication channels. The important stuff goes direct to targeted audiences. The most valuable tool my firm has is a 9,000 name database of Alaska business & civic leaders." (State's population is 500,000, with half in Anchorage.) "When we issue a press release we think thru which people we would most like to have read the story if a newspaper used it in its original form. Then we send the press release to them. It's also a way of insuring the media doesn't garble the message," he told prr.

The release doesn't intentionally vary for opinion leaders or media. Thinking in terms of the larger audience does have a "subtle effect" on the writing, however. "I find I'll include some things I know the media will leave out, but they're intended for the larger audience. At the same time, you have to be careful you don't lose the interest of the news media."

PUTTING THE DATABASE TO WORK

1. A hotel was closing its well-known restaurant, turning it into a private dining room. "We were concerned the local newspaper would see this as the hotel being in financial difficulty, which it wasn't. So at the same time we issued the press release, we sent 5,000 'dear friends of the restaurant' letters. We coordinated this with notifying employees" -- restaurant staff on Saturday, others on Monday morning. "On that same Monday, we a) reserved an ad in the paper to appear the next day; and b) dropped the 5,000 letters in the mail. The newspaper dragged its feet, as newspapers generally do on business stories. We had the opportunity to tell our story to a significant portion of the audience before the media ever got its pants on. They weighed in about a week later. By that time the story was well distributed & correctly perceived by the audience."

2. A medical clinic's sub-specialty is doing pilots' physicals. "Alaska has many private pilots since it has so few roads." An available list of pilots also included the date of each pilot's last physical -- which they're required to have every 2 years. "We took a bunch of our brochures and stamped on them "time for your FAA physical" and sent them out 2 months before they were due for their physicals."

Overall, Brennan's database communications have proved to be "dynamite." He considers his database "a more valuable subscriber base" than most newspapers in Alaska have. "I briefly flirted with the idea of swapping lists with the local journal of commerce but quickly realized ours is 3 times as large & 10 times as valuable as theirs, an assessment they generally conceded."

SAVVY MEDIA STRATEGY

"I find that as communications channels proliferate, the mass media shout louder for attention, focus more closely on the bad-to-outrageous news and will wade thru a ton of good business news to find an ounce of bad. The best use of press releases with most media people is

1. "Steer them away from a story by trying to sell it to them. We call this the 'Uncle Remus Ploy' -- please, please don't throw me in that briar patch, Brer' Bear.
2. "Get them to drag their feet while you communicate directly with your primary audiences. If you want it in the paper, their job is to keep it out, therefore any press release is suspect."

"ALL CRISES ARE MEDIA CRISES," BUT...

Because the media report the crises, organizations assume what they say is what audiences believe. The fact is, it can take considerable time for audience opinion to catch up with the media's viewpoint," explains Al Geduldig of Geduldig Communications Mgmt.

His firm & Yankelovich Partners have formed The Control Program. It provides rapid & accurate info about audience impact and focuses communications to bring about desired results. Venture is aimed at boycotts, layoffs, strikes, product recalls, environmental disasters, shareholder suits, bankruptcies, charges of mismanagement, EEO violations, etc.

- **The gap between what media report & what the public believes "is where communications opportunities lie.** Left unchallenged, the media's opinions will eventually prevail," says John Gilfeather who head YP's corporate reputation & public policy division. Research will uncover

New book advocates going directly to the audiences that need to be reached, bypassing the media. Written by Jim Lukaszewski, "Influencing Public Attitudes" advocates separating, stratifying & prioritizing relevant publics into 2 groups -- 1) **base audiences**, who have a continuous interest in your product, issue or situation & 2) **special publics**, with only an intermittent or occasional interest. Book offers a plan for communicating with these publics, while reducing reliance on the news media. "The practical result of this technique is less coverage, better coverage, spin-less coverage. The greatest benefit, of course, is that the more you engage in direct communications, the less what the media says or does really matters. If you talk to the people who count, if you've had contact with those groups who are most directly affected, media coverage simply becomes less & less relevant. You have reduced the media's power, yet built your own credibility." (\$14.95 + \$3.00 postage; 64 pgs. From Issue Action Publications, 207 Loudoun St. S.E., Leesburg, Va 22075; 703/777-8450)

audience opinion "quickly, before it jells, and focus communications on actual audience beliefs."

- **Crisis plans "define structure & procedure, not message."** Program works with existing crisis plans, but focuses on message content.
- **The best time to influence opinion is usually during the first few days of a crisis.** This is also the most difficult & confusing time because organizations may be caught in a media storm & lack perspective on how the audience thinks & feels about the issues. Organizations don't know what to say or do, or even how to effectively *bypass the media to get their messages to those audiences.* Often they get whipsawed by each new media story. By the time things settle down, opinions have set & the organization has lost its best chance -- sometimes the only chance -- to influence the argument.
- **Then there's the litigation problem.** "Once a crisis has run its course in the media, it's likely to re-emerge in court, often years later. Experience shows that statements made & actions taken during the early stages of the crisis come back to haunt the organization years later," explains Don Ferguson, a GCM partner who led Manville Corp thru its asbestos & bankruptcy siege (pr 6/25/90).

FOR PRACTITIONERS WHO WANT TO AFFECT THE EDUCATION ISSUE

Two new resources are available:

1. **"The Concise Directory on Education Reform"** lists 100+ national, regional & state organizations involved in the reform movement -- an opinion leader list. By the publishers of Education Reform Digest, the first national monthly dedicated to school reform. It's offered so "practitioners will have the opportunity to network with each other, share ideas & work together for true systemic change in our schools," explains publisher Paul Snodgrass. (Free from P.O. Box 210, Ellenton, Fla. 43222-0210, include a #10 self-addressed stamped (52 cents return postage) envelope; 813/776-2535)
2. **A tv news series focusing on innovations in education** is being launched by Ivanhoe Communications. Will include print guidelines on how to initiate each idea in local communities. "Local community support will be a critical part of the success of this series" by putting ideas into practice and so results can be covered by local news teams, explains Marjorie Bekaert Thomas, CEO. There will also be vignettes with the news series that can be offered to local businesses & community org'ns. (More info, P.O. Box 865, Orlando 32802; 407/423-8045, fax 407/425-2413)

MOVE TO AID WELL-BEING OF U.S. KIDS USES DUBIOUS STRATEGY

Study documenting status of children is strategy's keystone, premised on belief that the more the public & policymakers know about their needs, the more likely nation is to address those needs. Sponsors should look at long, dismal history of this strategy, including campaigns on drunk driving, seatbelt use, AIDS, better diet et al. Getting the facts out is only a first step. Facts & messages alone don't motivate behavior.