

ONE SAMPLE: A SURVEY OF DONORS & NON-DONORS

Widespread negative publicity pertaining to possible abuses in the administrative practices of nonprofit, charitable groups led one to commission a survey of donors & non-donors to explore which of several different fundraising options would be most receptive to those who regularly contribute funds to social causes. For this particular project, the client had limited funds but needed info quickly. To collect the required data, 290 face-to-face intercept interviews were conducted on the sidewalks of a large city directly in front of major corporate offices. The client was able to effectively compare the views of donors to non-donors when it comes to key questions pertaining to charitable giving activities. (From Ketchum's Research & Measurement Department's 1993 annual report)

Lindenmann has updated a previously internal "Guide To Public Relations Research" and is making it available outside the firm. 70-page booklet includes a) checklist of factors to consider when doing research, b) comparison of different research approaches, c) sources of secondary data, d) glossary of research terms, e) bibliography. (\$10 from Ketchum, 1133 Ave of the Americas, NYC 10036; 212/536-8765; fax 212/382-3608)

ITEM OF IMPORTANCE FOR PRACTITIONERS

"WAS GM'S ACTION THE RIGHT THING TO DO?" asks Jerry Cooper of Amax (NYC) responding to last week's pr lead. "We've all been bullied by the press too long. We're afraid to challenge, to oppose, to fight back. GM's action would lead me to buy a GM product, if only to offer my token support to a company not afraid to act -- and willing to challenge the 'press' in the only arena where we have a chance of redress -- the courts." [If the public feels the same way about the press as pr professionals, GM is on target]

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. 1993 PRSA Section Chairs: Association, Helen Frank Bensimon (Amer Soc For Training & Development, Alexandria); Corporate, Susan Schweller (Double Tree Hotel Corp, Phoenix); Counselors Academy, Ron Watt (Watt, Roop & Co, Cleveland); Educational & Cultural Org's, Jock Bliss (Grand Valley State U, Allendale, Mich); Educators, Judy Van Slyke Turk (U of So Car, Columbia); Energy & Natural Resources, Richard Kolodziej (Amer Gas Ass'n, Arlington, Va); Environment, John Cagle (Texas Highways Magazine, Austin);

Financial, Richard Anderson (G.S. Schwartz & Co, NYC); Food & Beverage, Barbara Hunter (Hunter Mackenzie, NYC); Health Academy, Ken Trester (U of Mich Medical Ctr, Ann Arbor); Professional Svcs, Pat Polino (Arthur D. Little, Cambridge); Public Affairs & Gov't, Bill Duke (Fleishman-Hillard, LA); Social Services, Dave Therkelsen (Red Cross, St. Paul); Technology, Michael Rothenberg (Stackig/Swanston PR, McLean, Va); Travel & Tourism, Jeffrey Osborn (Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau).

THE UNFORGIVING DECADE: WHEN ACTIVISM BECOMES BLACKMAIL

Even socially responsible organizations with good reputations aren't safe from unfair treatment in issue debates. Look at what's happening to Celestial Seasonings. Because it is located in Colorado, where passage of Amendment 2 ruled out protective statutes for gays & lesbians (pr 11/30/92); because it produces the most popular tea in NY; & because New York Boycott Colorado (NYBC) feels it can threaten significant harm to the company, CS has been singled out to be boycotted.

VISIBILITY CREATES A TARGET -- UNFAIRLY

NYBC met with Celestial Seasonings representatives in NYC "with each side listening carefully to the others' case," explains CS's statement on the boycott. "Thru lots of discussion, we were told that **despite the fact that we are a progressive company with a long-standing policy of non-discrimination in the workplace**, unless we agreed to a set of specific demands, we would be singled out as the first nationally distributed Colorado-based product to be boycotted."

The company's mere prominence, in other words, made it a target.

NYBC wants CS to 1) lead & help finance the corporate fight against Amendment 2 locally & nationally, 2) have company chrm Mo Siegel commit his time & resources to rally businesses to the cause, 3) finance the political & educational activities to the tune of \$100,000.

CS's RESPONSE TO THE THREAT

"We will not be turned into politicians & we will not meet their specific demands for participatory & financial support.... We are tea merchants & artisans. Our job is to make the world a better place by creating fun & interesting packaging and making the world's best tasting tea."

CS's stand on Amendment 2: "Companies do not vote. Individuals vote. In the town of Boulder where we are located, 75% of the citizens voted against Amendment 2. Thruout our history we have thought about taking political stands on the environment, education & other social issues and consistently resisted because we are not a political organization.

"We have steadfastly dedicated ourselves to artistically, philosophically, and thru the best tasting tea in the world, [NB: note the repeated marketing message in an issue statement] be uplifting to our consumers. Our company has not and will not take political stances. Likewise, our company has not and will not be prejudiced against any group of people. Just as we believe that hate, anger, greed, jealousy and envy are spirit poisons, so is prejudice."

HOW TO HURT YOUR CAUSE

Research has established that the quality most valued by N.Americans is fairness. Violating this principle is counterproductive. In this case, it could turn off corporate Colorado & the elected officials & civic leaders there trying to correct the Amendment 2 situation. 2 wrongs still don't make a right.

But gays & lesbians are a potent buying force (pr 8/10/92). Will this boycott, like all others, increase sales at least for a time by keeping awareness of the brand high, and by stimulating sympathizers? Or is this different since "sympathizers" could include homophobes as well as those concerned about the unfairness -- an unstable coalition of customers? Key question: how will gays & lesbians elsewhere react, especially in Colorado? Is that the company's target pressure point -- to get them to ask the NYers to back off?

ANTI-RELATIONSHIP SYMBOLS ARE ALSO PR'S RIGHTFUL CONCERN

The dismantling -- at least the opening & demystifying -- of the fabled 14th floor executive sanctorum at the General Motors building in Detroit is a symbol what slow learners American managers are. Or of their risk aversion -- unwilling to try new ideas until thoroly proven by someone else.

Your editor remembers visiting the 14th floor on a number of occasions while working on a project with GM's #2. After you finally got through the super security doors, your greeting inevitably was one of the secretaries saying "shhhhhh!" Silence was maintained there as in a library. Senior management was completely cut off. Special elevators took them straight to their cars in the parking garage. No one could come there except by invitation. On the floor, the rule was to get along consensually, and avoid disagreeing. The brass didn't even leave for meals. They were catered in a special executive diningroom on the floor -- king-like.

Now it is gone. As is the last batch of execs who allowed the system to continue. The legal department reportedly took the lead. They have moved to another building across the street, where there are no titles but every lawyer is simply an "associate."

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The impact of such hierarchical systems on teamwork, therefore morale, therefore productivity, are obvious. Communication could only be up & down, not lateral. This is the antithesis of sound corporate culture (pr 9/28/92).

Tough as it is, attacking such systems, with their huge symbolic impact to make a mockery of whatever management says, is pr's job. To let anti-

No one knows the damage done by that awful question -- "Who else is doing it?" -- better than pr practitioners. How often have we come up with solutions well fitted to the situation at hand, literally handcrafted & customized... only to have managers want to treat the problem or opportunity as if it were the exact replica of one some other organization faces!

relationship philosophies go unchallenged is unethical. Public relations is not about sending messages back & forth but building relationships that lead to trust & mutually supportive behavior. Doesn't this mean guiding the symbolic communications as well as the spoken ones?

ULTIMATE PROOF: Even the US gov't is now closing cabinet secretaries' private dining suites. Even the paneled White House mess is no longer reserved for top officials.

PLEDGE-A-PICKETER CAMPAIGN TURNS ADVERSITY INTO OPPORTUNITY

For 6 years the Feminist Health Center (Greenland, NH) has been asking supporters to pledge money for each picketer who comes to harass women entering the Center, which among other services performs abortions. Each fall, a pledge-a-picketer letter is sent to its mailing list & left in the waiting room for clients.

"People can pledge any amount they want for each picketer. At the end of the month we send them a sort of bill/reminder of how many picketers there were that month. The money goes toward helping defray the cost of abortions for women who can't afford them," Catherine Barden, outreach coordinator, told pr.

CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN "PRETTY SUCCESSFUL"

In '91 it raised \$4,000, \$6,000+ in '92 -- not bad for a small NPO. "Even tho picketers are aware of the campaign, they come anyway. This past October we saw 100 picketers. Normally, we don't see that many but they've been bringing a van load of school children so that upped the totals. The woman who previously held my position would go out and let them know how many dollars they raised! I haven't felt the need to do that yet."

Positive strategy. "It's a way supporters can take a stand toward the verbal abuse these picketers dish out to our clients. We stress the importance of not engaging in conversation with any of the picketers because that just fires up confrontation. So we ask people to refrain from interacting. As a result, clients & supporters will come thru the door and be very angry & frustrated. This campaign gives them something positive they can do to assuage their frustration & anger."

EVALUATION RESEARCH ON THE RISE, STUDY FINDS

Use of public relations research to measure the effectiveness of pr activities is on the rise, reports Walt Lindenmann, Ketchum's dir of research, based on studies his firm did in '92. 48% sought to systematically & scientifically assess the impact pr programs have on awareness levels, opinions & attitudes and behavior patterns. Between '87-'91, only 30% sought these results.

"Clearly, the heat is on in the pr field; more & more pr practitioners are being asked to be accountable for what they do, and that is being reflected in the types of pr research assignments that organizations like ours are being asked to carry out."