

Rotary Club...for under \$4,000 including the laser printer. "Costs have really come down."

OTHER TRENDS THAT COULD HAVE MADE PRR'S 3/15 LIST

1. **TRAINING**, not just in media appearances, but presentation skills, interpersonal communication (especially for supervisors), conflict management, negotiating, counseling. Also how to build teams, write brief & effective memos & many others.

- **To be cutting-edge** is now to be described as *A Learning Organization*. Carving out a training niche makes you part of a permanent change in how organizations function.

2. **READER FRIENDLY PRINT COMMUNICATIONS** that gently lead busy readers thru the material, summarize for them, make it easy to understand & remember. Writing in paragraphs is diminishing; 1,2,3...A,B,C...bullet, bullet, bullet are taking over. Some editors limit stories to 3 or 4 graphs or bullets, enough info for the average reader. Then a reference contact is listed for those who need more.

- **Fallout:** failure & ultimate elimination of publications that don't switch to these new info-transfer modes. Even utility bills & mutual fund statements are striving for reader-friendliness.

3. **INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION**, or integrated marketing communication as some would have it, is controversial as a turf war -- but has core value. Why haven't organizations always coordinated public relations, advertising, direct mail & other communications so they speak with One Clear Voice?

- **One approach is Loyalty Programs**, which add pr messages to database marketing to create a real dialogue of service as well as selling with opinion leaders & top customers.

4. **QUALITY/EXCELLENCE MOVEMENT REACHES PR PRACTICE**. Motorola's Chuck Sengstock & others teach how cycle time reduction, zero defects & benchmarking work in pr dep'ts. IABC's Excellence Study identified what makes organizations & pr units excellent thru research of actual situations. Self-diagnostic tools are available to apply the findings.

- **4 top qualities of excellent pr dep'ts/practitioners:**

- Practice as *strategic managers* within the management group
- Employ 2-way communication
- Support the organization's "*dominant coalition*"
- Combine *research* with judgment

HOW GRASSROOTS GRIDLOCKED PHONES & FAX TO STATE CAPITOL

Oregon legislators underestimated the grassroots power of parents coalesced because of concern for their children's education. It's a bellwether case of the rapidly **emerging "citizens power" movement**.

BACKGROUND In 1990, tax limitation (Measure 5) passed, which is now creating a serious problem. Oregon legislators are dealing with a \$1.4 billion shortfall.

"The House & Senate leadership agreed to put out an appropriation bill for education. That bill was \$50 million less for education than the Governor's budget. And \$300 million less than the current services budget," Kathy Leslie, dir educ pr, Beaverton School District, told prr. It meant a shortfall of \$50 million for Portland schools, \$33 million for Beaverton schools -- a 20% reduction & "worse than our worse-case scenario."

ORGANIZING THE GROUNDSWELL

Organizing & educating. To get ready for this "catastrophic" situation,

"all year we've been educating parents & staff." Various parent groups have formed thruout the state. Each district has its own grassroots effort. In Beaverton, group is called "Citizens for School Support."

Groups meet monthly. Since last November, educational programs/meetings "that would bring out as many as 300 parents" taught them a) how a bill becomes a law; b) what had happened with school funding. c) Brought lobbyists in to teach how to lobby. d) Legislators were invited to explain their views. e) Began newsletter as an educational tool. f) Produced a commercial for cable tv using all volunteers. g) Made & distributed buttons that read "Kids Count."

Appeal of reducing taxes backfired: "Lots of people didn't understand that when they passed Measure 5 last November, they lost local control. They have to influence the legislature now. It is no longer in their hands."

JAMMING THE PHONE LINES

When it became clear the appropriation bill was "worse than their worst fears, parents activated their teams." Leaders began calling their phone trees telling people what was going to happen. Then parents began calling & faxing their legislators. "For 3 days & over the weekend callers jammed the lines into the state capitol. The Senate turned off its fax machine



because they couldn't keep up. One Senator reported getting 80 calls in one hour. Legislative aides couldn't do any other work but take calls."

Legislators found parents informed. "They knew what to say. Not just that they were unhappy." They made pointed comments; asked direct questions. Parents weren't successful in stopping the appropriation bill on the House floor, but a week later won a 25-5 vote in the Senate.

PARTISAN POLITICS PLAYS ROLE

Embarrassed because for the first time they didn't vote in support of schools, Republicans (who control the House) are being criticized in their communities. "To save face, they threw a bombshell into the process & terminated House participation in the Joint Ways & Means process (which is where the appropriation bill would have returned after its defeat in the Senate). Instead, they formed their own House Appropriation Committee. We no longer have a Joint Ways & Means Committee. Historically, nothing like this has happened before. Who knows what will come next."

JOINING RANKS STATEWIDE

Realizing they could have even greater force collectively, parents have organized a statewide group & held its first rally. 1,500 attended. While rally was going on, Speaker of the House held a press conference to issue a new budget giving education \$79 million more than the previously defeated appropriation bill. "This proposal still means \$600 million in cuts for the biennium -- our legislature meets every 2 years. Originally they were taking bigger cuts out of the first year. Now they've balanced the cuts for the 2 yrs. But that's scary because in Beaverton we're facing a 20% reduction this year, and next year our projections show another \$14-20 million reduction and the following year another \$14 million reduction. So unless there is a tax reform package, we're headed for catastrophic problems."

"This is a clear indicator of the power of grassroots efforts when they're well organized and when members are well educated."

While the short term goal of an increased appropriation bill is nearing, **schools are strategizing to win a long-term goal -- a sales tax** to fund education. Oregon School Boards Ass'n has petitioned for an initiative to put the sales tax on the ballot. "Citizens believe they have a large scale war to wage. They've just won the first skirmish."

"REPUTATIONAL PUBLICITY" FROM INTERNATIONAL POSTAGE STAMPS

If your organization has international appeal, it's a candidate for international postage stamps. Since '79, Disney characters have appeared on stamps in 30 countries. "It's an excellent, high-quality & interesting way to gain additional exposure around the world," Chuck Champlin, dir comms, Disney Consumer Products (Burbank) told prr.

How It Works. The Inter-Governmental Philatelic Society (NYC) is one organization that makes these licensing arrangements. "We're agents for a number of foreign countries. We make suggestions to countries on possible

stamp issues that might be popular with collectors around the world. These countries then either accept or reject the proposal," an I-GPS spokesperson told prr.

Disney did not go to I-GPS seeking this arrangement. "In '79 we went to Disney. We arranged for a license with them so interested countries could come out with stamps using the Disney artwork & motifs to increase their appeal to collectors around the world." Other companies, seeing Disney's success, have come to I-GPS seeking a similar program -- but to make it financially worthwhile they have to have "significant appeal worldwide."

"In most cases, we go to the organizations we feel will work, for example, major league baseball, National Football League. We work with these groups to come up with a format, then make proposals to the postal administration. There has to be international appeal because there is cost involved in designing the stamp, printing them, promoting them. If the appeal is only regional, it's not going to be profitable."

One such company is Archie Comics. It satisfied the international appeal requirement because its comics are translated into foreign languages. To celebrate its 50th anniversary, it wanted an arrangement like Disney's. One country did come out with a set of stamps, but no follow up.

Aim Is To Appeal To Collectors.

US, Great Britain, Canada & UN Postal Service have begun gearing their stamp programs -- which are topical & thematic -- to reach this market. They can make from \$150-200 million in profits by selling to collectors. The US wouldn't issue Disney stamps because "they don't want to be accused of favoring one company over another. But the smaller countries we represent aren't tied in by these monopolistic concerns."

SOME STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING READERS' ATTENTION

If you write/edit a publication, you know the battle you're fighting to get a reader's attention. And then to keep it! **Publications need grab & hold qualities** or they wind up prematurely buried in those "waiting to be read" piles. Tim Colwell of Parker Drilling Company (Tulsa) stresses using graphic elements, wrapping copy around them.

- "Avoid gray. If a story is long, break it up. Use a callout and set it out with a border," he told prr.
- "Use clip art that's classy, not tacky. I use woodcuts even if they have nothing to do with the story. Sometimes they're humorous or antiquish -- like old ads from the 1890s.
- "When I use photos, I use **real big ones**. And bold graphics.
- "Headlines that aren't just straight helvetica and body copy that's not just times roman. Those are so standard, you see them so much. Use something that's contemporary, that stands out, that's bold & big."

He's helping set up a desktop publishing system (Pagemaker) for his