

favorable reputation with the ethnic community might be trying to buy the community's goodwill.

- What **encourages contributions most** are: a) sense that the station needs the money; b) specific appeal heard at the time; c) sense that it sounds like an easy thing to do. **Less important** are: d) matching or challenge pledges; e) premiums offered; f) guilt.
- Most often, **members pledge** a) the amount they can afford (74%); b) the suggested annual membership amount (17%); c) amount tied to a premium (7%).
- The on-air solicitor **to whom listeners best respond** is: a typical listener whose lifestyle is similar to their own; a celebrity or famous person; or an announcer of the same ethnic background. Female announcers are slightly more favored. The station's manager is a last choice.
- **Top 3 names to describe contributors** when asking them for money: "supporter," "friend," & "family." "Subscriber" is associated with magazine subscriptions; "member" sounds elitist (particularly among lower socio-economic groups); "donor" reminds people too much of donating blood; "contributor" is also not a favorite.
- Weekend daytime is **listened to most regularly**, followed by morning drive time, weekends at night & afternoon drive.

(Focus groups conducted in Fresno & DC; 20 minute phone interviews with 1,200 respondents in 15 markets across the country. 64% are African-Americans; 36% Hispanics -- of whom 78% are bilingual, 14% English-primary, 8% Spanish-primary. More info from CPB, 901 E St NW, DC 20004-2006; 202/879-9677)

### NEW ATTENTION - GETTER SHOVS KEY WORDS OUT FRONT NEATLY

Along with logic boxes, quotations called out in large type & other graphic devices, another way to get reader attention is to box an important statement, but **leave key words outside the box**. To the right is an example from Co-op America's National Green Pages.

After the political campaigns are over, after the hoopla has faded, just remember you can make sure things really change

by voting with your dollars every day.

Under the device is the pitch, but in much *smaller* type: "Learn to put your money where your values are. Join Co-op America. 800/424-2667" The message in & out of the box looks & reads like modern poetry. This gives each word extra attention & meaning -- increasing impact & memorability. (See pr 4/19 for other techniques by this innovative organization)

## "LOYALTY" STRATEGY LETS PR SAVE DATABASE MARKETING

While advertising, coupons, discounts & other worn-out lures are declining, the combination of targeted tracking databases & either direct mail or telemarketing is being praised as the savior of sales. So-called DBM may in fact be the death knell of pursuing customers against their will.

The predictable result in marketers' hands will be to steal precious hours of busy people's time with yet more junk mail, more intrusive evening phone interruptions. Mail takes time simply to *handle*, even if you don't open it. These unwanted intrusions doom DBM to failure & the creation of bad relationships.

### PR THINKING TO THE RESCUE

The difference between marketing & pr is that marketing single-mindedly courts

"sales," while pr establishes a broadly hospitable environment in which sales are possible. Applying pr's relationship strategy, DBM can become a **dialogue between organizations & top customers or key opinion leaders**. It works like this:

1. **Mail is used primarily**, particularly to "open the conversation." Phone may be okay later for time-constrained contact -- e.g. during an issue debate -- after the relationship has jelled.
2. **Initial letter, personally signed by the CEO** or other important individual, sets the tone -- stating the organization's sincere interest in relating to the person (or family) by hearing their views, sharing information & policies, seeking participation in decisions.
3. **A combination of interactions** follows (& not too closely together):
 

a) questionnaires to get input	tough it is today to manage successfully, or any topic
b) new product data, helpful hints on how to use the service, etc.	e) position papers on issues, inviting constructive criticism or advice
c) info about community relations projects, seeking guidance or inviting involvement	f) coupons or special sales
d) perhaps a chatty, friendly letter from the CEO about management ideas or even how	g) invitations to events, perhaps very selective ones especially for targeted opinion leaders or key customers



In short, a variety -- as business friends or those who share concern about a community would interact when they see each other around town.

### PEOPLE TODAY WANT TO BE SERVED, NOT SOLD

To be effective, the dialogue's theme

cannot be "we want your dollars." A clothing manufacturer or retailer, for instance, might send a letter noting how hard it is to find good tailoring detail now -- enclosing a booklet "put together by our buyers" that shows what to look for. This would be a welcomed service...but would probably also lead to sales. Every organization has helpful service info to offer.

**Remember the goal:** creating a *relationship* that builds *loyalty* to your products, services, ideas & issues positions, and your organization.

Too many discounts, special sales or other push-marketing can be fatal. Value added marketing is the guide (pr 2/8).

### CAN PR DAMAGE SOCIETY'S FUNCTIONING & PEOPLE'S DAILY LIVES?

During the licensing debate of the mid 80s, one proof demanded of the profession was to demonstrate that its activities are more than fluff, more than communicating often unwanted messages & transferring cerebral information. "Can pr really affect people's lives?" was the query, so that a practitioner acting unethically or following bad practice could do real harm.

Two recent events provide an answer:

1. In the Lucasville (Ohio) prison riot, a hostage was killed "after a **prison spokeswoman publicly dismissed early threats of violence as insincere,**" according to an expert writing in the Cincinnati Enquirer. In response to this disdainful statement, inmates apparently killed the hostage to prove they were serious. Without even reviewing whether the statement was wise pr strategy, the fact remains that this action of a practitioner resulted in death.
2. In a situation becoming common for practitioners, the vp-pr of San Diego Gas & Electric **unexpectedly revealed plans to lay off** his entire graphics dep't in a staff meeting where he discussed outsourcing their work. Without debating his strategy -- "I thought it was less painful that people had more notice than less" -- the announcement came before hr & management had severance & placement packages ready, reports San Diego Union Tribune. "Shock waves" about downsizing went across the company, with attendant anger, fear, loss of productivity, distrust of management.

### STRATEGY GUIDE: UNCERTAINTY CAUSES ANGST, NOT BAD NEWS

An unexpected finding from research on the major emerging pr issue in healthcare -- genetic testing -- proves to be useful to all practitioners.

Study sought to discover whether the first test developed to predict latency for a genetic disorder, Huntington's Disease, was valuable to those who opted to be tested. Each child of a parent with the disease has a 50-50 chance of actually getting it.

### A BREAKTHRU, YET FEARED

When developed, the test was a scientific breakthrough. Asked if they wanted to be tested, a majority answered yes. But in the first years of availability, few actually showed up to be tested. Because those who do inherit the Huntington's gene suffer a lingering death of unremitting degeneration, it was thought that on reflection those latent for the gene decided they didn't really want to know.

In "The Psychological Consequences of Predictive Testing for Huntington's Disease" (New England Journal of Medicine), a team of researchers later found that **"knowing whether one had inherited the gene was in fact beneficial -- even if the news was bad.** The psychological health of many -- and, by implication, the quality of life" -- was improved in most subjects.

Knowing reduces worry & allows time for planning, study finds. As one philosopher put it, **"Doubt is more cruel than the worst of news."** Apply this to 1) getting bad or good news out ASAP, 2) downsizing fears, 3) risk management, 4) quailing shareholders & other common pr situations. If those facing a lingering, horrible death feel better off having the truth...

### PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR PR STRATEGY & TACTICS:

- Both the increased-risk & decreased-risk groups "reported less depression & a greater sense of psychological well-being" than those for whom the test found no definite answer about their risk -- the no-change group. **Most people can handle truth better than being left in doubt.**
- As one person put it, "Knowing, whatever the outcome, would be better than waiting & wondering day after day." **Open communication shows respect for people by treating them like responsible adults.**
- Still, the study is clear that some, perhaps 10%, have trouble adjusting to the news, even if it's good. The authors believe there is risk for them in learning the truth. **As always, no rule fits everyone.**

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR MINORITY PUBLICS

Findings from a survey by public radio stations of minority audiences can be extrapolated to inform other organizations' relationship building plans. Found to be most important to minority listeners is the station's [read your organization's] ability to meet their needs with local info. Other findings:

- **Organizations that sponsor programs on the station** receive a more favorable rating by most listeners. 40% recall hearing the underwriting announcements. In focus groups, some suspect a company that has an un-