

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

ERIC TRIST LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE & left his mark on the shape of OD. He is to QWL what Freud was to psychoanalysis. Trist helped found Tavistock Institute (England) -- a learning laboratory which uses social science knowledge on a wide spectrum of human problems to uncover new theories about what works. Inherent in its observations are feelings about authority -- to which work group conflicts, passivity, demoralization, withdrawal are traceable. Translating this to the workplace became the cornerstone of work design, based on Socio-Technical Systems -- helping workers achieve group goals -- to which he was mid-wife. Trist died June 5. His career parallels the inevitable changes in organizational life becoming so apparent today. (More info from Ass'n for Quality & Participation, 801-B W 8th St, Cincinnati 45203; 513/381-1959)

WHAT NEW PRSA COO RAY GAULKE SAID ABOUT NEW WAVE PR -- which was omitted in last week's issue: **Using opinion leaders to build relationships "is a terrific idea & very powerful.** It's like holding on-going focus groups. What you get back is real...words, not difficult-to-analyze statistical information." prr had queried him about his background, which appeared to be mainly in impersonal, 1-way communication.

SOME INVALUABLE ADVICE TO WOULD-BE SUPPORTERS is given by The Vegetarian Resource Group. Urging them to write requesting US Dept of Agriculture to produce & distribute info on vegetarian diets, the group's materials offer the usual data on where to address the letter -- then add this critical, often overlooked guidance: **"Please be positive about vegetarian diets, rather than critical of the USDA, when writing your letters."**

WHY HAS TRANQUIL OREGON BECOME THE ANTI-GAY HEADQUARTERS? 3 more towns & 4 counties have now passed initiatives prohibiting local gov'ts from enacting laws that protect homosexuals from discrimination. Organizers of last year's failed statewide referendum, Oregon Citizens Alliance, says local votes are part of its quest to try again. Does the fact Oregon allows almost unrestricted voting by mail draw out folks who wouldn't go to the polls -- and are possibly single-issue voters? Is the rural portion of the state rebelling against diversity? Does a bad economy engender lashing out at others who are "different"? These & many other postulations are being offered by pundits.

REVIEWS OF JACK WELCH'S BOOK SHOW IT CAN BE USEFUL COUNSELING TOOL for practitioners involved in Quality programs, culture change, restructuring. In addition to practical evidence, teams are an effective way to manage. "Control Your Destiny or Somebody Else Will" makes this pr point, as phrased by one reviewer: *"Few companies have yet recognized the value of their executives' interpersonal skills, and so have not made them a primary basis for promotion. The ability to relate effectively to other people has become a major factor in executives' performance reviews. Through such means, GE is breeding a new generation of leaders distinguished by the ability to elicit cooperation from others."* Public relationships at its best.

CAN COMMUNITY RELATIONS BE THE CORE OF PR PROGRAMMING?

Yes, because it sets the **true** tone of what an organization stands for. Not in words (rhetoric) but in actions (behavior). Today how organizations conduct themselves in the communities where they do business is driven by 2 factors that make it more than just "getting the house in order":

1. **Instant communication**, encompassing burgeoning info networks that go far beyond news media data gathering, has the capacity to capture & transmit home behavior far & wide;
2. **Global competition/The Global Village** have created interest in such info, at least by competitors, activist agencies & others who have reason to broadcast it.

ALL 3 STRATEGIC LEVELS THEREFORE NEED TO BE PLANNED:

- A. **Defensive:** guarding against **negative** acts, or acts of omission
- B. **Proactive:** being a leader in **positive** acts that appeal to key publics
- C. **Maintenance:** finding ways to **retain** relationships with publics not currently key -- but still able to influence your reputation by forthright expression of their perceptions of you.

This is far different from "doing some nice things for the community." Assigning CR to indifferent or inexperienced staffers because it's "easy" no longer suffices -- and of course misses the centrality of CR today.

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY RELATIONS IS PLANNED, ORGANIZED & SYSTEMATIZED

Again & again in programs seen by prr, 5 considerations appear:

1. **Targeting:** a) which *groups* in the community should we focus on...b) in order to motivate the *behaviors* that we need (getting inside the decisionmaking network, beaconing messages, reporting rumors & comments etc); c) what specific activities will achieve this; d) what *information* do we need to gather & assess before starting?
2. **Participate or own:** if your reputation needs improving, working on projects with accepted partners can usurp their reputation to pull yours up; if yours is good, projects you can own offer more benefits & visibility.
3. **Here vs. there:** bring folks in to see our place, or go out to them?



4. "Official" vs. employee volunteer activities: if the latter, how will the organization get credit?
5. Reaching opinion leaders: what design assures this critical goal is met?

2 TYPES OR LEVELS OF PROGRAMMING EMERGE

Standard Community Relations

Basic, arm's length, "good corporate citizen activities" that reach out, invite in, create awareness, let facilities be used:

1. **Membership network**, assigning "official" representatives to all important groups
2. **Speakers bureau**, but placing talks to key groups on topics vital to the organization
3. **Make facilities available**
4. **Open houses**, visitations, tours
5. **Programs around holidays**
6. **Service on boards** of directors
7. **Take part** in public events & back "must-support" causes

Community Relations²

Becoming part of fabric of the community by placing people thruout its planning & decisionmaking networks:

1. **Ambassador or constituency relations** programs (see prr 1/25)
2. Hold regular **opinion leader briefings** or idea exchanges
3. Set up local **community relations advisory boards**
4. **Employee volunteer programs** a la Hyatt Hotels F.O.R.C.E. (Family of Responsible & Caring Employees)
5. **Community research**, jointly with a college perhaps
6. **Social projects** that tackle the real community needs as seen by your key publics
7. **Make expertise available**

Neither list is exhaustive but intended to suggest the differences in the types. In most cases some of both make sense.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Employee volunteerism has so many serendipitous benefits (prr 5/10) that it raises the issue of **spouse, family & retiree** participation. Those organizations that do involve them generally report expanded impact & a widening network.

Feedback databanks may be the biggest opportunity -- capturing what is heard & observed from opinion leaders & community members in a formal way. This is really listening to the community, for invaluable information -- which is instantly actionable thru CR programs.

As one major public interest group puts it: "We know that, sooner or later, grassroots success translates to national strength & influence." It all starts at home. Which is why CR is a candidate to be the heart of pr.

ADD THIS TO YOUR LIBRARY & SUMMER READING/REREADING LIST

"One of the factors that changes what you can & can't communicate is **relationships**," wrote Saul Alinsky in his classic "Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals" (Vintage Books, '71). Key points:

1. "There are sensitive areas that one does not touch until there is a strong personal relationship based on common involvements. **Otherwise the other party turns off & literally does not hear....** Conversely, if you have a good relationship, he is very receptive, and your 'message' comes through in a positive context."
2. **Alinsky wrote for those who "want to change the world,"** particularly the Have Nots who want to take power away from the Haves. Caught in the middle -- & from whom the Have Nots must gain support -- are the Have-a-Little, Want Mores. Book details the mechanics of mass movements & the various stages of the cycle of action & reaction. Invaluable info for public relations practitioners to use -- & to know activist opponents will be using.
3. In his discussion of creating policy after gaining power, Alinsky identifies a problem: **often people don't know what they want.** And if they feel they have no power to change a bad situation, they won't think about how to change it. Not until they're organized so they have power to make changes will people begin to think & ask questions about how to make the changes.
4. This incorporates the 3 elements of Grunig's study on communicating for behavior change -- 1) problem recognition, 2) perceived involvement, 3) constraint recognition (prr 1/31/83) -- but changes the order. Writes Alinsky: "Here you see that the first requirement for communication & education is for people to have a reason for knowing.... A powerless people will not be purposefully curious about life, and they then cease being alive."

✓ Book is apparently enjoying a revival. Jim Lukaszewski's Executive Action (White Plains, NY) devoted its recent issue to Alinsky's oft-quoted 13 rules of power -- one of the tactical guides in his book:

1. Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have
2. Never go outside the experience of your people.
3. Wherever possible go outside of the experience of the enemy.
4. Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules.
5. Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.
6. A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.
7. A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.
8. Keep the pressure on.
9. The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.
10. The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.
11. If you push a negative hard & deep enough it will break thru into its counterside.
12. The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.
13. Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, & polarize it.