35th Anniversary Issue & 29th Annual Survey of the Profession
PRACTITIONERS CLEAR ON NEW DIRECTIONS -- BEHAVIOR, RESEARCH, RELATIONSHIPS -- BUT MANY FINDING IT HARD TO GET THERE

In September of 1958, when prr founder Charles Prout laid out the first issue on his kitchen table in Evansville, Ind (where he was dpr of Mead Johnson & Co., the baby formula pioneers) -- public relations practice was much different than today. But how far has it *actually* moved from the 1-way information transfer then prevalent? Are we adding more value now than just publications & publicity?

This year's survey, Diffusion of Cutting-Edge Strategies Among PR Practitioners, attempts to provide some **benchmarks**.

BEHAVIORAL PUBLIC RELATIONS IS THOROUGHLY ACCEPTED

It has a notable lead over publicity as the "focus of the practice":

- 54% say "obtaining specific measurable behaviors" is their focus
- 34% opt for "building general awareness & interest only"
- 6% feel strongly enough it is "both" that they went outside the questionnaire's format to so indicate

But only 76% are able to "practice their view" in their jobs -- illustrating the pressures in both directions as re-engineering, restructuring & other basic changes occur in some organizations, are resisted in others.

Regarding the future, the great majority of respondents feel the profession is heading toward motivating behavior (72%) vs. building awareness (15%) as the *raison d'etre* of the field. 5% again state "both."

MEASURING BEHAVIOR IS WORKING

Of the 68% who are measuring behaviors in their work, 56% feel they are *somewhat effective;* 22% say they are *effective;* 5% *very effective* -- indicating 83% are finding some level of success. Only 17% feel they are *not very effective.* But there are a number of concerns, including:

- "Very difficult & expensive to measure."
- "Difficult to obtain client buy-in to measure behavior."
- "We are moving in the direction of affecting behavior but struggling with defining the best measurements."
- "Because we bring multiple disciplines to bear on issues/problems, it is increasingly difficult to measure pr's impact on outcome."
- "Clients fear specific accountability = failure."

RESEARCH CATCHING ON AT LAST -- BUT NOT THE NEW METHODS

In order to keep pace with behavioral practice, research know-how is necessary. As one respondent from a utility notes:

> *"CEO is beginning to quote from research & believes findings.*
> *5 yrs ago, research was dismissed as an inaccurate exercise in*
> *social science."*

But many practitioners, departments & organizations are just beginning to learn how to do it:

- "Not yet priority to leadership; I'm trying to educate them as I learn more."
- "Just starting!"
- "Need a base of experience & resources to do it well."
- "New CEO moving more in this direction."

A large majority of practitioners report using some basic research techniques: focus groups (73%); opinion surveys (71%); open-ended questions (65%). Findings suggest:

1. A big growth opportunity here for practitioners to increase their value to their organization/clients.
2. Need to discriminate between old-fashioned, often questionable techniques that do not provide actionable data & newer, better methodologies.

TABLE 1: RANKING OF RESEARCH TECHNIQUES BY MOST FREQUENTLY USED

Focus groups	73%	Pretesting	44%
Opinion surveys	71	Academic research	44
Open-ended questions		800 numbers	28
that provide verbatim		Environmental scans	27
responses	65	Delphi studies	15
Survey feedback	63	Cluster analysis	13
Market research	63	Force-field analysis	10
"Agree & disagree"		Rolling research	8
asked	48	Gyroscope (self-	
Evaluating media cov-		correcting)	4
erage & assigning		Rough sets	2
ad-cost numbers	48	Mendelsohn effect	2

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING PROGRAMS NOW WIDELY USED

Employees are the top target for current programs (see Table 2). For example, an industrial company uses a "lunch and learn" program. 51% say they have some type of face-to-face employee program; 17% of which are database tied.

Among most used programs, the one most frequently tied to the database (39%) -- & ranking 2nd in usage (42%) -- is constituency relations/ambassador programs. A hospital explains its network/key communicator program:

*"We provide information to key community leaders **prior**
to media releases to defuse issues, lessen negative impact
or promote desired outcome."*

A pr firm's med school client holds "brown bag lunches for newly appointed
execs & invites faculty & others." School is beginning an internal com-
munications program with a goal of fostering ambassadors.

TABLE 2: ONE-ON-ONE PERSONALIZED RELATIONSHIP PROGRAMS BEING USED

	Using Now %	Consid- ering %	% Tied to database?			Not Using %
			Y	N	NR	
Face-to-face employee programs	51	11	17	42	41	38
Constituency relations/ambassador prgms	42	9	39	35	26	49
Coalitions (beyond typical trade groups)	41	10	22	44	34	49
Opinion leader tracking	31	16	34	34	32	53
Customer satisfaction matrixes	31	13	42	28	30	56
Databased "loyalty" marketing programs	13	10	54	39	7	77

800 #s, TELECONFERENCING, VIDEOTAPES TOP NEW COM'N METHODS

The surprise -- a complete reversal -- is top rating for videotapes. Most
effectiveness research that has been made available finds them valuable for
captive audiences -- but few other recipients of tapes even bother to put
them in the player. Yet 63% report using them, more than any other single
method of the new-age communication techniques included in the survey (list
in Table 3). They are targeted at several publics; and 60% rate them as
very effective.

TABLE 3: USE OF "NEW" COMMUNICATION METHODS

%	Method	Target Publics	Effectiveness (1 not, 10 very)
63	Videotapes	Employees, Customers, General public, Prospective students, Community, Members, Donors	7-10 (60%)
48	800#	Customers, General public, Employees, Members	7-10 (73%)
47	On-line system (E-Mail)	Employees	5-8 (59%)
20	Audiotapes	Customers, Employees, General public, Media	5-8 (69%)
18	Regular tele- conferencing	Internal, Clients, Investors, Analysts	7-10 (68%)
17	VNRs	Gen'l public, Media, Customers	5-8 (63%)
14	Advertorials	Customers, General public, Opinion leaders	5-8 (70%)
13	Regular video conferencing	Internal, Customers, Media	5-8 (67%)
7	Infomercials	General public, Customers, Employees	5-8 (58%)

Beyond what is shown in Table 3, respondents offered the following comments:

- VNRs - "Yuk!"
- Rated "good for donors" (a 10) by one respondent are external pub'ns & video tapes.
- Practitioner in higher education rated regular teleconferencing "horrifically poor."
- "Fax to all employee locations" was given an 8 by an industrial practitioner.
- "Long letters" on company issues to all employees rated a 10.
- Seminars, personal contact thru mail/phone/face-to-face rated 10s by several respondents.
- Field trips targeted at analysts, employees & media ranked a 9.
- Advertorials -- "please don't confuse these with public relations."
- Op-ed/feature/expert-comment services rate a 9 with a practitioner in higher education.

DESPITE TREND, INTERNAL PUBLICATIONS GROWING SLIGHTLY

Reports from all sectors for the past few years say when re-engineering or downsizing occurs, or rigorous readership or behavioral research is applied, internal publications are the first thing to be consolidated -- and often reduced in scope. Among respondents, only 12% are not publishing them. About half publish 1 (29%) or 2 (20%) -- which would seem in line with this trend.

But 3 are put out by 13%; 4 by 7%; and 5 by 4% -- indicating some organizations still find them valuable (or haven't undergone re-engineering). Some organizations are pumping out quantities. Record goes to a practitioner in higher education whose institution is publishing 800/year! (Each dep't in the place must have one appearing frequently.) Second highest is an industrial publishing 200+ ... tho this number has decreased in the past year. (Is targeted, focused internal publications a new trend?)

TABLE 4: USE OF INTERNAL PUBLICATIONS NOW & IN FUTURE

		increased	stayed the same	decreased	NR
In the	● number has	19%	56%	10%	15%
past	● size has	14	60	9	17
year:	● frequency has	13	58	12	17
In the	● number will	15	61	8	16
coming	● size will	8	67	5	20
year:	● frequency will	11	64	4	21

Overall, publications haven't changed much in number, size or frequency over the past year -- & the majority will continue along the same path. Those that have changed, or will in the future, are more often on the *increased* side (see Table 4).

Tho verbatims were not solicited, a few respondents indicated they are "adding face-to-face communication thru supervisors" & that they "prefer E-Mail, seminars, 1-on-1 communication with feedback." Internal publications not only aren't dead, they're thriving!

CULTURE CHANGE PROGRAMS BOOM, BUT PR ROLE NOT CLEAR

64% of respondents are or have recently been involved in some kind of organized culture change program (e.g. TQM, Quality Circles, CQI, etc). Their role in these vital efforts:

- 49% play a support role (materials, channels of communication, etc)
- 30% are active in design, implementation, training
- 5% say they do both
- 16% have no role

Only 30% are involved in a similar program for their own department's operations -- surprisingly.

For many, programs are longterm & have only just begun -- "we don't expect full results for 3-6 years." **Frequent complaint is that mgmt isn't "walking the talk."** In evaluating the program's effectiveness so far, 21% say it is *very effective*; 67% *somewhat effective*; 12% *not effective*.

Some comments from respondents regarding their experience:

- "Have made major strides in pushing decisionmaking downward."
- "It's keeping us on the leading edge & enables us to react promptly to needed systems changes as they are identified."
- "Shifted from top-down mgmt to decentralized. Involved a major attitude shift on the part of central office to become service oriented. Instead of dictating what is done at schools, schools tell central office what they need to accomplish objectives.
- "Changes are becoming evident 2 yrs after proposal was started."
- "Different organizations have different results based on depth of management commitment."
- "It's a slow process to change culture -- most want instant cures."
- "Brought together 5,000 employees in 2 sessions; kickoff very successful. Difficult to maintain momentum."
- "Execs are using strategies of the 'old culture' to try to implement 'new culture' -- not addressing real problems."

TRAINING RISING AS VITAL RESPONSIBILITY OF PRACTITIONERS

60% play a role; 23% don't, but would like to. The rest don't want to get involved. Media training appears to be major area. Others are:

Mentoring	Teaching supervisors	Training-the-trainers
Writing skills	how to communicate	Community relations
Public speaking	with employees	Sales
Crisis response	Survey research	Com'n workshops for
Customer service	Value of pr	employee groups
Ambassador programs	How to manage employee	Public participation
International rels	feedback	techniques

Says one respondent: *"In addition to an active media training program (250 mgrs/45 sessions/last 3 yrs) we have now launched a course on building effective public relationships for front line managers & supervisors."*

ABOUT THE SURVEY: PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

PR practice is driven by senior professionals -- based on a combination of their approach to the field & needs of their organization. Who's Who in Public Relations is the only *adjudicated* source of leading practitioners based on career & contributions to the field -- not just position or visibility. It provided the primary sample for this year's Survey -- 543 of 725 respondents. To add balance, 182 prr subscribers not listed in Who's Who complete the sample.

TABLE 5: ORGANIZATIONAL POSITION OF RESPONDENTS

Titles	Overall	M	F	Reporting to
CEO/pres/head of org'n	19%	69%	31%	33%
sr/exec vp	6	71	29	14
vp	12	57	43	14
dir/head dept	39	58	42	9
supvr/mgr of unit	11	53	47	2
self-employed	5	59	41	--
other	8	57	43	2

Respondents come from 27 organizational categories including corporate, not-for-profit & gov't -- plus 3 consulting categories. 31% of respondents are consultants; since they provide guidance to clients, and are able to report on a variety of client experiences, this has enlarged the information reported.

TABLE 6: AGE & GENDER

Age	Overall	M	F	NR
30 & under	4%	32%	68%	--
31-45	39	45	51	4
46-59	43	61	30	9
60 or older	14	76	20	4

MALE/FEMALE DEMOGRAPHICS   In the upper echelons of the profession, men still dominate (see table 5). Since we surveyed upper level practitioners, it's not surprising 56% of respondents are male, 38% female. Men hold the lead in the upper titles & ages; women vastly outnumber men among those 30 & under, and hold a lesser lead among 31-45 yr olds (see Table 6).

In prr's '81 survey, even then women (62%) outnumbered men (38%) until age 35. That this isn't a new pattern is curious. What's happening, then, to those higher numbers of women as they advance in their careers? The Velvet Ghetto -- stuck in technical jobs, not rising with the men?