

## ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

**FURTHER PROOF 1-WAY MESSAGES DON'T CHANGE BEHAVIOR.** Talk about counterproductive strategies. Op-ed piece by Elizabeth Whelan, pres of American Council on Science & Health, asked for the removal of the Surgeon General's warning on packs of cigarettes -- "thus stripping the tobacco industry of the litigation shield it has so long enjoyed." The article explains that the label, while *doing little to discourage smoking*, serves to protect cigarette companies from liability & allows them to continue marketing their product.

**1-WAY MESSAGES DO BUILD AWARENESS.** But ACSH wants to place more op-eds & is introducing its new Editorial Fellowship Program. Because newspapers want varied authorship, ACSH is presently seeking funding to engage 10 scientific experts in the areas of medicine, pharmaceutical issues, environmental science, AIDS, nutrition & food technology, cigarette smoking, etc. to each write 10 op-eds annually. It wants to "educate more consumers & policy makers by expanding its media coverage."

**SHORT & PERSONAL IS THE WAY TO REACH THE MEDIA WHEN YOU WANT TO.** Speaking to pr students at Florida International U, David Satterfield, sr biz writer for The Miami Herald, offered this advice -- so basic, yet ignored continually in the behavior of practitioners: 1) keep the release as *simple* as possible; 2) call, make a *personal* contact; 3) avoid computer written address labels. Releases with computer generated labels "I just toss because I know 10,000 other reporters were on the same mailing list & received the same piece."

**WITH NONPROFITS NOW DEPENDENT ON BUILDING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**, whether for fundraising or attracting clientele, it's misleading for 3rd edition of Management and Leadership Resources for Nonprofits to (a) stick pr under the marketing section -- even tho it dominates there, (b) offer almost entirely materials on how to get stories into news media. Descriptions & order info are noted for 1100 books, manuals, videos, guides, etc. in 12 other subject areas also: gen'l mgmt, leadership, fin'l mgmt, resource development, ethics, legal issues, evaluation, governance, info systems, planning, human resources, operations mgmt. Hopefully these others aren't so far off the mark. (\$6.95 from ARDI, 1805 S. Bellaire st, Denver 80222; 303/691-6076)

**IMPLICATIONS OF LAST WEEK'S T&T FAR-REACHING.** Work of New Foundations Group at Harvard finds building personal relationships the primary way to invoke a strategy -- even in the volatile shareholder/investor area. Wherever it uses "investors," re-read this t&t substituting "the public" (for schools, gov't, healthcare entities) or "customers" (for product & service marketers) -- and it seems to be equally relevant. If this is what a group of policy scholars & researchers propose for this **most hard-headed of publics**, it bears study by practitioners.

**WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS.** Elected: IPRA's 1994 pres, Pierre Andre Hervo (director, Analyses et Interaction, Paris)

## EVEN MEDIA PROS NOW QUESTION VALIDITY OF CURRENT "NEWS"; ANOTHER REASON TO GO UNDER-THE-RADAR DIRECTLY TO PUBLICS

"Over the past few years, so much of the American news industry (sic) has invested so much effort to **spotlight sensational superficialities and celebrity inanities**, that by the time we wanted to throw light on something truly & tragically serious (genocide in Bosnia), **our audience no longer took us seriously.**"

Scott Simon's essay on PBS' Weekend Edition makes 2 strategic considerations dramatically clear:

1. Media is an industry, not the needed Fourth Estate or a group of dedicated professionals giving citizens the info needed to make decisions;
2. Entertainment, not substance, is the industry's business.

### THE MAKING OF NEWS JUNKIES

In this they have had a damaging success by making many people news junkies. But **like junkies on stronger stuff, it's escapism** -- not real life. The Weather Channel says a storm is coming so be prepared. But the "storm" they warn against is 99% of the time one that a few years ago -- before all this instant communication -- everyone would have taken in stride as a normal part of weather patterns.

What made it a "big storm" was media hype. Media have **created** the news out of whole cloth. So listeners stop believing.

### OBVIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR PR STRATEGY

- A. It is not possible to work positively & honestly with parties for whom honesty & context are not values. And by whom the objective of serving society's true information needs has been discarded. **Good faith is missing.**
- B. This requires a defensive strategy, since any little item, taken out of context, fed to reporters perhaps by vindictive persons or competitors, will be used if it fits **the media's purpose.**
- C. Every organization has issues daily that can be misconstrued to look bad. So **operating under-the-radar of media attention** is a sensible strategy -- especially since research shows their ability to help is minimal, but to divert attention from business objectives is stronger.
- D. To get a balanced hearing from the publics that matter, going directly to them -- **around the media gatekeepers** -- is the pragmatic strategy.



**OTHER JOURNALISTS SPEAK OUT**

1. Mike Royko skewered Sec'y of Defense nominee Bobby Ray Inman for withdrawing because one columnist, Bill Safire, in one newspaper, NYTimes, "was mean to him." "Americans don't know or don't care what he says. If there is any message in the Inman-Safire story, it is this: We shouldn't take it too seriously. Inman (read your organization & whatever its current flap may be) isn't as important as he thinks he is, and Safire isn't as important as Inman or Safire believe."
2. "The walls (between "Hard Copy" and the nightly news) are definitely coming down" notes Erik Sorensen, exec producer of CBS "Evening News."
3. "Whoever would have thought 10 years ago that evening broadcasts would have put (the Michael Jackson accusation) on the air?" asks Peter Jennings. This tabloid approach now infects media from NYTimes to evening news. In Jackson's case, several news iterations were based on his employees who were *selling* their stories, yet this bias was not questioned. As Sorensen points out, "They wouldn't get anything to say Jackson was innocent."
4. Dan Rather calls it "the Hollywoodization of the news."
5. LATimes tv critic Howard Rosenberg writes about the "incestuous media process" whereby a sleeze paper or program carries some scandalous item, then "the so-called respectable media fall in behind them -- squandering themselves on relative minutiae but also **diverting the public's eye from the truly significant issues of the day.**"

**WHY GOING DIRECT FACE-TO-FACE WORKS: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**

Behavioral science research supports the effectiveness of face-to-face communication. The paradox is most professional communicators place little emphasis on it, notes Jack Pyle in his newly published guidebook, *Building Community Support For Schools*. Altho written for schools, book can be used by any organization that wants to build constituency support.

*"Organizations seem focused on putting words on paper & sending them out, believing they have communicated. This is not communicating. It is sending messages -- quite a different matter. Communication includes feedback from the person who receives the message."*

Using behavioral science research -- thru step-by-step instructions, work sheets & checklists -- book outlines another way to communicate to gain community support. "It's amazing to me that these relationship building techniques have been around for years, yet I'm not finding enough examples or case histories showing people are actually doing it," Pyle told pr.

**FROM DIFFUSION RESEARCH EMERGE 5 KEY IDEAS FOR GAINING COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

1. **Word of mouth is best.** Innovators may learn new ideas from the media, especially technical journals. But for the great majority in a group, what causes them to adopt new ideas or products comes by word-of-mouth from people they believe & trust (opinion leaders).

2. **Convince opinion leaders to support schools.** Build relationships & communicate with the Early Adopters. This small group of key influencers convinces the 2 majority groups, which represent 70%+ of the community.
3. **Don't expect impersonal communication or mass media to change people's behavior.** Newsletters, brochures, letters & school annual reports do not cause people to make decisions to support school activities. News releases & stories in mass media also are too impersonal to cause behavioral change.
4. **The best way to convince opinion leaders is by building relationships with them.** Add word-of-mouth as a key communication strategy. Create a program to identify opinion leaders and begin to communicate with them one at a time. Communicate regularly to build long-term relationships.
5. **Utilize employees to build relationships.** School boards & administrators can't do all the word-of-mouth communicating & relationship building alone. Enlist the help of employees. They already are talking about schools with family, friends & people in power in the community. Harness this powerful communication source and train employees to help gain ongoing support for schools.

(\$49.95 from Kendall/Hunt Publishing at 800/228-0810)

**ELEMENTS IN MAKING YOUR ORGANIZATION CUSTOMER - FRIENDLY**

Question of research project was: How can banks become more attractive to their customers as investment centers? Quick-step focus groups asked investors with mutual fund holdings & those with CDs, stocks, bonds & other liquid assets. What they suggested seem to be criteria that are generally applicable:

- **ONE-STOP SHOPPING.** Investors like the concept of one-stop shopping. This is important since it has long been felt that while most people like it in other contexts, they fear it for personal finance.
- **ADVICE AS A SERVICE.** Local investment pros who are readily available for "walk-in" conversations as well as scheduled appointments.
- **EASY ACCESS TO ACCOUNT INFO.** Consolidated statements for all checking, savings & investment holdings. Voice response & 24-hour help lines are the companion components of info access.
- **ACCESSIBILITY.** Bank hours need to accommodate the schedules of working people. Investors want extended & more flexible hours for consultation with investment reps.
- **PRIVACY.** "Investors don't want to talk about their investment matters where everyone can hear the details. They prefer a separate room or area for investment consultations. Customers want privacy, not an open forum with an officer on the platform," explains Marcia Selz, pres of Marketing Matrix & moderator of the focus groups.