

- **Even accounting firms are moving in.** "Particularly doing research -- the public opinion research pr does -- & giving management advice to their clients." -- Joe Epley

"Will lawyers take over the pr business? No. Will they continue to invade the pr field & take advantage of situations? Yes, particularly when pr practitioners are not meeting the needs in the marketplace," believes Epley. Largest area of overlap is in public affairs. Many lobbyists are lawyers.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE HOME INCREASINGLY ACCEPTED, STUDY FINDS

More than twice as many people like (65%) rather than dislike (30%) computers & technology. But a generation gap exists:

- a) 28% of children use a computer at home for school work or games; among teens, 46% have a home computer, 36% use one at least occasionally.
- b) Significant misgivings are expressed by people 65 & older -- 39% dislike or have mixed feelings about computers, 93% don't use them.

These are from a survey, "Technology in the American Household," by Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press. Other findings:

- Nearly 1 in 3 households has a personal computer; 23 million adults use them daily.
- 47% of adults have an ATM card; 13 million pay at least some of their bills electronically.
- Hi-tech users are more informed. 63% of on-line users scored high on a current events quiz compared to 50% from comparable backgrounds who do not use a modem from their home & 28% of those who do not use computers.
- Technology is facilitating the work-at-home trend. 45% of all employed respondents work at home "often," "sometimes," or have a home-based business.
- But -- get this -- only 35% of tv viewers usually watch commercials.

Hi tech has not supplanted the low-tech medium of reading. Users of computers (38%) & modems (36%) "read a book yesterday" compared with 31% of demographic equivalent non-users. Compared with all non-users, frequent users of home PCs spend nearly 15 more minutes/day reading.

Users of advanced information technologies in the home are simply more engaged in & attentive to the outside world than are non-users, reports survey. (More info from Times Mirror, 1875 Eye St NW, Suite 1110, DC 20006; 202/293-3126)

IDEA TO COPY: BOEING'S ULTIMATE CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT

The ultimate in customer relations programs shaped Boeing's new B-777. At the very beginning, when it was decided to build a new airplane, "we got 8 customer airlines involved & asked them to tell us what they wanted," Gregg Hunter, comms mgr, told pr.

Customers worked internally on design/build teams which allowed them to express needs, offer changes. For all practical purposes they became part of the organization.

GOING ALL THE WAY

Four customers have been on site for the duration "& work in our buildings every day following the process thru. We've taken getting customer input to another step because it's so valuable to us. We want them here with us to tell us how we can make their airplane meet their needs."

For example: Original design had the fueling point too high for United's trucks to reach. If plan had gone as designed, United would have had to purchase all new trucks. Instead, United recommended it be lowered. "We said fair enough, however we can help you. That makes our airplanes that much more attractive to our customers. By involving them they know the quality of the product & they can improve it to meet the needs of their operations."

DISADVANTAGE, OR...?

Fact of process taking more time & more negotiation is offset by the customer ultimately getting what he or she wants. The eight customers involved early on are now among the first airlines to place orders.

1. The applicability of this approach in a huge, complicated project like designing an airliner proves its value. **How easy by comparison** for, say, an NPO offering local services or a manufacturer of simpler goods -- or gov't agencies!
2. Most customer "involvement" consists of survey research -- asking present/potential buyers to fill out a questionnaire. The **immense relationship-building opportunity** of having them actually inside your organization is lost. And, people are tired of being surveyed. Chance for pr to be the instigator of a relationship builder -- and play a key role in hosting, monitoring, protocol & more.



ARTS FUNDING DOWN, NEW CREATIVE WAYS TO HELP CHRONICLED

Arts, culture & humanities suffered a net decline in contributions last year, reports the Trust for Philanthropy. PR research increasingly finds them viewed as executives' pet causes but not always strategic giving for corporations. Yet corporate donations are their last bastion, many feel. Business Committee for the Arts has put together a collection of 15 examples of creative & unusual business-arts alliances. Examples:

- **Chubb LifeAmerica** organizes special museum previews, tours & receptions for employees, their families & mbrs of the community. Also organizes lunch-time concerts, poetry readings & visual art demonstrations for employees. Benefit: loyalty among employees, increases productivity.
- **Consolidated Edison** distributes a culture card to all employees which allows them free admission to arts org'ns listed on back of card, plus gift shop discounts. Builds awareness among employees of company's arts support program.
- **Tandy Corp** sells books of vouchers for \$2.50 (\$10 value) to employees to be used like cash to purchase tickets & admissions. When a voucher is used the arts org'n is reimbursed thru a billing procedure. Creates goodwill within the community, provides Tandy with measurable results of its arts support.
- **CPA firm Davis & Clark** supports arts thru pro bono consulting, grants, educational courses. "Creative problem solving is our market niche & arts involvement showcases these skills. An unexpected benefit enjoyed thru our long association with the Dallas arts groups was greater name recognition by art patrons & board of director members," explains John Davis.

(\$4 from BCA, 1775 Broadway, Suite 510, NYC 10019-1942; 212/664-0600)

ONE MEETING TOO MANY? 3M OFFERS HELP WHILE SELLING

Typical of 3M's media rels, its media kit is more than just product publicity. Introducing new Post-it brand easel pads (they stick to most wall surfaces & the pages don't bleed thru), kit also includes case histories of people who participated in the test market phase & 4 pgs of **meeting info & resources:**

- Lost productivity due to meetings costs Corporate America \$37B/yr.
- People are spending more time in meetings, especially cross-functional team meetings (average 20-40 hrs/month).
- Average time spent in meetings is 1.7 hrs/day per professional employee.

- Execs spend at least 50% of their time in them.
- The most productive meetings last under an hour, but the average meeting length is about 2 hrs.
- Success of a meeting is dependent largely on the effectiveness of its leader. Many organizations are using training to teach good meeting leadership. With supervisors becoming basically 3-way communications channels, this is a basic tool (see last week's lead).

ATTORNEYS ARE TRAINED IN THE POWER OF PERSUASION, BUT...

Are they today's "ultimate" communicators (pr 5/30)? "Yes and no," say pr pros who counsel them. Overall, lawyers' growing expertise behooves pr pros to broaden their abilities & value to their organizations. Some observations:

- **PR focus.** "Enlightened attorneys no longer see their job solely & narrowly as solving the legal crisis at hand, but working to ensure the client's reputation & business emerge intact." -- Bruce Rubin, Rubin Assocs (Miami)
- **Not a turf battle.** "I have not found lawyers proactively trying to act as company spokespersons. In the vast majority of cases, they like public relations counselors to be the spokespersons. Strategically, it allows them to be held in reserve as a backup to speak on a more narrow focus. I've participated in numerous strategic meetings with lawyers, 7 to 9 of them around a table with myself as the pr counselor. I find equal respect is accorded pr in many, not all, cases." -- Bruce Rubin
- **Good communicators but long-winded.** "My experience is that they need guidance. Litigators need to learn how to pare down what they say because they're used to having long explanations. That doesn't always work well in the media." -- Ellen Blattel, Blattel/Assocs PR (SF)
- **Can confuse.** "They look at an issue in a different way & that sometimes obfuscates the whole thing. They tend to confuse communications or avoid it." -- Rolf Fuessler, Fuessler Group (Boston)
- **Willingness to learn pr skills.** "There's a continuing & growing trend among law firms, even small ones, to seek pr assistance." -- Ellen Blattel
- **Corporate clout.** "As lawyers understand public opinion & apply it with their other skills, they move up the corporate ladder faster & have greater influence with CEOs than pr people who limit their skills to just being communicators & not understanding some of the other functions management is focused on." -- Joe Epley, Epley Assocs (Charlotte)
- **Persuasive ability.** "Litigators are trained to use their verbal skills to persuade. Most pr people are trained to write...journalistically rather than persuasively. But information isn't worth a damn unless someone acts on it. That's where some lawyers are seeing an opportunity." -- Joe Epley