

Who was responsible for communicating ongoing changes?

CEO/President	52%	Immediate Supervisor	8
HR executive	16	General manager	4
Division manager	15	Other, including pr	13
Senior management	12		

(More from Brouillard, 420 Lexington av, NYC 10170; 212/210-8985)

RECOGNITION DAWNING THAT REAL HEALTH ISSUE IS COMMUNICATION

A dilemma exists: "Health professionals know how to prevent & treat disease but are ineffective in communicating vital health information. The predictable result is that individual patients are not appropriately informed," writes Scott Ratzan in *American Behavioral Scientist*.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention has established an Office of Health Communication "to integrate health communication into overall prevention programs as a means of influencing individual behavior to reduce risks to health." Prevention, according to CDC, will be "much more important than it has in the past" because of skyrocketing treatment costs. Prevention requires communication. But, "people are getting their health info from the popular press. Not from their physician," notes Ratzan.

TRAINING A NEW GROUP FOR A JOB PR DEPT'S SHOULD DO

To resolve this dilemma, Emerson College & Tufts Univ Schl of Medicine have created a joint Master's Degree in Health Communication. Currently 34 students are enrolled. It's a "collaborative effort between those who understand human physiology as well as the origin, course & spread of disease; and those who understand human communication." Emerson-Tufts' plan has been approved as a model at Michigan State, is being looked at elsewhere.

Program's goal is to "improve communication capabilities of health professionals at all levels -- from the interpersonal doctor-patient act to social marketing campaigns designed to reach mass audiences."

"Medicine has changed. The doctor no longer walks in & whatever he or she says the patient follows. Patients ask questions. We're trying to get patients involved in the negotiation framework to make their best decision. That's why we have negotiation & communication as cornerstones of the program."

HOW CAN COMMUNICATION AFFECT PATIENT BEHAVIOR?

"Much of our program is campaign oriented," Ratzan told *pr*. "We know that fear appeals don't work long term. They might get people's attention but won't change behavior. Instead, we use a multi-faceted approach -- dealing with people on both the local & community level, opinion leaders, people they respect. Includes many phases: from the individual to family & friends, workplace, religious groups, healthcare professionals. At the same time working from the top down with gov't & media. Using some repetitious messages."

C BERNAYS' INNOVATIONS: THE TOOL KIT HE LEFT US ALL

What can today's practitioners learn from a legend -- and his 80 years of experimentation? From your editors' personal experience with him, and his voluminous writings, these are some of the salient lessons:

1. **Use opinion leaders.** In his campaigns, they were the target -- with society or key publics reached thru them. One tactic he loved was to have clients or their employees & supporters write personal letters to biographees in Who's Who on behalf of some idea or cause.
2. **Persistence pays.** His decades-long effort to secure licensure of practitioners shows this tactic in a current setting. When Eddie gave a speech, you knew after a while the exact words he'd use to push this concept. But he was **getting thru to the majority** -- who hadn't heard the idea or his particular appeal on its behalf -- and reminding the rest no matter how many times they'd heard it.

Such consistency usually worked. Evidence: most of his obits called him "the father of public relations," a term he reiterated for years the historians say it is debatable.

3. **Public relations is a behavioral science,** going far beyond the process of communicating. His objectives were behavioral -- to get families using bar soap, designers to use the color green or clothing manufacturers to use velvet material (to cite 3 famous cases). By starting from that point, he was able to design activities that remained focused on the real objectives.

He said practitioners were "societal technicians with the skills to bring about accommodations between opposing parties."

4. **Make news, not news releases.** While a master at using the media for his client's purposes, he did it in a way that **also gave the media something -- real news.** It's an oblique strategy: Create the event that symbolizes what you're trying to get across, let that lead to the result you want. The product he was promoting or behavior he was attempting to motivate often was never mentioned. It flowed naturally as a result.

This, of course, made media willing to cover & opinion leaders willing to participate -- since it was not an obvious commercial pitch.



5. **Campaigns must be systematized.** Shoot-from-the-hip creative ideas or hoping to be able to take advantage of opportunities as they come along is an amateur approach, he argued. Rather, there is a disciplined process to be used -- which he called "the engineering of consent." (See t&t 12/18/78 or write pr for a copy)

6. **Always begin with research.** So many of his solutions arose directly from research findings, which he studied assiduously to decipher the specific item in the data that would be the key. Another type of research he relied on was use of other professions' body of knowledge. He used psychologists, political scientists, physicians, economists & other experts to learn precisely what might be causing, or would resolve, a situation.

Today, such experts aren't even used as speakers at professional conferences! An indication of how far ahead ELB was...or how far behind we, his successors, are.

7. **The ultimate ethical test:** be ready to alter your thinking or behavior to get in sync with your publics. Then you can motivate their thinking or behavior. Don't try to cram your viewpoint down their throats with hard sell campaigns -- which only "stiffen the resistance."

ELB's 3 RULES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Don't stiffen the resistance** If you start right out with an "I know best" or unlistening approach, no one will even listen to your ideas. A corollary: there's always some skepticism, doubt or opposition to any proposal.
- Ask for a willing suspension of disbelief** To be sure they're willing to consider your ideas, use phrases or techniques that allow even skeptics to suspend their doubts & hear you out. Examples: self denigration (I'm not the most brilliant interpreter of this, but it could be that...) or simply "You won't believe this, but...."
- Emphasize the benefits statement** Once you have earned the audience's attention, concentrate on telling them what's in it for them.

A STUDY IN AUDACITY vs. CHUTZPAH Perhaps above all else, ELB's life illustrates that audacity in innovating & boldly offering new ideas makes a counselor effective. Then chutzpah makes one controversial, which in turn sets clients' expectations & readies them for audacious ideas -- a perfect psychological cycle. It seems few counselors have the backbone for either.

HIDING BEHIND THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO SPECULATE ?

The Wall Street Journal's gratuitous attack on the memory of popular & socially conscious athlete Reggie Lewis 2 weeks ago elicited this response from another journalist, Donna Britt of the WashPost. After she sets forth his "philanthropy & immaculate reputation," Britt wonders why did WSJ speculate now, "2 years after Lewis' death & weeks before his jersey is to be retired," that the cause of his untimely demise could possibly have been drugs?

"What rankles is that the Journal couldn't prove that cocaine killed Lewis, and still speculated about it in print. What's intolerable is that a man who can't defend himself, and the feelings of his widow & children, were hurt in the name of 'the public's right to know.'

"Or the public's right to suspect."

When African-American youth badly need heroes, the reputation of yet another one has been "forever soiled" merely so the media could speculate, with no real evidence whatsoever. Lewis wasn't a public official involved in some coverup or other public issue. What purpose was served?

Have media become, in the true sense, **anti-social**? Another reason to fly under the radar & go direct to key stakeholders.

EXECS & IMPLEMENTERS DISAGREE ON EFFECTS OF RESTRUCTURING

310 sr execs from large manufacturing & service companies, & 71 professional/managerial positions, were asked questions regarding their personal experience with restructuring. Findings:

	Sr. Execs	Implementers	Gap
Yielded improvements in productivity	80%	58%	22%
Higher profitability	80	48	32
Customer satisfaction enhanced	74	50	24
Employee involvement improved	63	47	16
Employee empowerment enhanced	62	34	28
Companies better positioned to compete	93	83	10

Morale & Communication

Employee morale has suffered	2%	31%	29%
Employee communication before & during restructuring handled properly	78	59	19
Employees were not given advance info	NA	69	--

Tools used to communicate changes to employees included:

Division/group meetings (75%)
 Memos (62%)
 Report meetings with immediate supervisors (56%)
 Corporate newsletters (51%)
Word-of-mouth (51%)