

IF LANGUAGE IS LIVING, GROWING & CAN CHANGE, then public relations must add new meaning to the word "actionable." As Ginger Kaderabek called to our attention, it has been used primarily as a legal term meaning "giving just cause for legal action," according to the American Heritage Dictionary. For some time, however, many including pr have used the word to describe something that *brings or facilitates action, can be acted on* -- e.g., actionable research, actionable information. It's time for "actionable" to grow beyond its "legal" confines -- because it's such a useful word.

MANAGING UP BEGINS WITH A STRATEGY TO DO IT, finds Bob Berzok, Union Carbide dir corp comms, after that company's difficult odyssey following Bhopal. "I firmly believe we have to **approach senior management as an audience**, just like employees, customers & other audiences."

READER URGES MORE INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK: "I agree with every point you made on pr's role in the workplace violence situations (pr 3/6). I regret only that you didn't take the golden opportunity to stress the need for interdisciplinary activity...that they -- the pr practitioners -- take the initiative to work collaboratively with human resources and the legal department. We have a fatal tendency to work in isolation from the other major disciplines and to optimistically (presumptuously?) think we can solve all problems unilaterally." -- John Budd, PRSA Counselor-in-Residence, NYC.

PRSA ESTABLISHES EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS SECTION co-chaired by Gary Grates (Boxenbaum Grates, NYC) & Dave Bicofsky (corp comms counsel, Teaneck, NJ). Points up growing realization this is every organization's #1 public. Fulfills goal set by task force that established sections in '74 to expand someday to basic technical areas. To join, call Jill Weiner at 212/460-1480. Non-mbrs can join by calling the membership dep't at 212/460-1492.

AT LAST, AN INDEPENDENT STUDY COMMUNICATIONS MGMT MASTER'S DEGREE offered by Syracuse U's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Flexible format **requires only brief onsite residencies** led by faculty. Allows participants to study while working anywhere in the world. Program is open to experienced professionals in pr or related fields, with at least 5 yrs experience. "We believe this to be the only independent study program in the public relations field in North America," says dean David Rubin. Degree requires completion of ten 3-credit courses & either a 6-credit master's thesis or one additional elective course & a 3-credit professional project. (More info: 315/443-3284)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. Dennis Whalen (dir media rels, Ohio State Bar Ass'n, Columbus) receives Nat'l Ass'n of Bar

Execs' E.A. Richter Leadership Award for extraordinary achievement in the field of legal communications.

BACK TO BASICS: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MAKING READING EASY

Being reader friendly isn't nice, it's essential. "Certain typographical elements not only do not encourage reading, but actually discourage the reader by throwing unnecessary distractions in his or her path," writes Colin Wheildon in his just published book, *Type & Layout: How Typography & Design Can Get Your Message Across -- Or Get In The Way*.

Wheildon bases his findings on 9 years of research. Before beginning it, he sought the advice of research consultants & academics in the US, Britain & Australia; submitted his proposed methodology & later the results to them. Consensus: his study is "both valid & valuable." He uses many illustrations & charts to report his findings. Some include:

- **Reading gravity:** Its influence (where the eyes move from top left corner, across & down the page, returning after each left-to-right sweep to an Axis of Orientation) is substantial. More than twice as many readers will readily understand text presented in a layout complying with the principles of reading gravity than one defying it.
- **Serif type:** More than 5 times as many readers are likely to show good comprehension when a serif body type is used instead of a sans serif.
- **Headline type:** There is little difference in legibility between headlines set in serif & sans serif, or between roman & italic.
- **Lower case heads:** Headlines set in capital letters are significantly less legible than those set in lower case.
- **Kerning:** Undermines legibility in heads. Not one reader in the study indicated that headlines in which the letters merged were easy to read.
- **The darker the headline,** the greater the comprehension level. Black headlines were well understood by nearly four times as many readers as brightly colored headlines.
- **Use black ink for text:** 7 times as many participants in the study demonstrated good comprehension when text was black as opposed to either muted or high intensity colors.
- **Lightly tinted backgrounds:** Black text printed on light tint has high comprehensibility. Readers find tinted backgrounds attractive.
- **Reverses are taboo:** Printing text in white on black or colored background makes it virtually impossible for readers to understand -- whether text is serif or sans serif.



- **Boldface backfires:** Printing text in boldface type undermines reading comprehension. Fewer than half will easily understand the message.
- **Surprise, designers -- justified lines are best:** Ragged right or left does not aid comprehension. Almost twice as many readers understand totally justified text than text set ragged right. Nearly 7 times as many show good comprehension of justified compared to ragged left.
- **Readers are easily annoyed.** Most complained about special screening effects on illustrations; articles in which body type jumps over an illustration or pull quote; multi-deck headlines; long, wordy headlines; & jumps (which 4 of 5 claimed to disobey).
- **Subheads work:** Most find them useful, especially in longer articles.
- **All caps a non-no:** Text set in capitals is difficult to read.
- **No periods in heads:** Using periods at the end of headlines may have a detrimental effect on readers' comprehension.

Wheildon's compilation of reader-ease research emphasizes what has been mentioned in these pages by others. Designers too often are practicing art -- not *communication*. To reach audiences the watchword is, "Beware, designers at work!" What's required is *graphic psychology*, not design. (Strathmoor Press, 2550 Ninth st, Suite 1000, Berkeley, Ca. 94710-2516; 510/843-8888; \$24.95, Canada \$32.95.)

ANOTHER RESPONSE TO OVERCOMMUNICATION: UNLISTED PHONES

Bellwether California may portend an increasing resistance to unsolicited info (which most pr communication is)...or a growing need for privacy. Two-thirds of phones in major cities are unlisted! In a ranking of households with unlisted phone numbers, top 11 markets are within California. In Sacramento unlisted are up 47% from 10 yrs ago. San Diego rose 24%.

Unlisted Households

	1994	1984		1994	1984
1. Sacramento	68%	47%	12. Las Vegas, NV	60	59
2. Oakland	67	49	13. Jersey City, NJ	48	56
3. Fresno	67	51	14. Tacoma, WA	45	35
4. LA-Long Beach	67	52	15. Portland, OR	44	33
5. San Jose	67	49	16. Detroit, MI	41	38
6. San Diego	65	41	17. Tucson, AZ	40	44
7. Orange County	63	48	18. Honolulu, HI	40	34
8. Riverside-			19. El Paso, TX	39	41
San Bernardino	62	47	20. Phoenix-Mesa, AZ	38	39
9. San Francisco	61	43	21. Chicago, IL	38	45
10. Bakersfield	61	45	22. San Antonio, TX	38	34
11. Ventura	60	46	23. Miami, FL	37	35
			24. Seattle, WA	37	25
			25. Houston, TX	36	34

MEANING OF THIS PHENOMENON?

Are people reacting to increasing activity of telemarketers? Direct mailers? Fundraisers? Phone surveys? Loss of privacy via computers? Tasteless advertising? Too many demands/messages along with a sense of helplessness? Certainly it is another manifestation of overcommunication.

Is this also an indication people are attempting to regain control...in whatever way they can? What does this mean for public relations? (For a ranking of the top 100 metro markets unlisted phone data, contact Survey Sampling, Inc, 1 Post rd, Fairfield, Ct. 06430)

STUDY SETS VOLUNTEER \ DONOR "WHOLE PERSONALITY" MOTIVATION

As more & more organizations discover the employee & community relations payoff of organized volunteer programs -- and powerful techniques like constituency relations, issue anticipation teams & ambassador projects utilize volunteers within the organization -- a critical question is: What motivates someone to volunteer? NPOs & educational institutions need similar info on donors.

A new Independent Sector survey finds givers/volunteers reported the following **experiences in their youth:**

- a) were members of youth groups;
- b) volunteered;
- c) went door-to-door to raise money for a cause;
- d) saw a person they admired (not a family member) help others;
- e) personally were helped by others;
- f) have always wanted to make significant changes in society;
- g) were active in student government.

LINKAGE TO PERSUASION THEORY

Scholars identify 6 persuasion methods. The most holistic is the Whole Personality Method. Using it necessitates identifying lifestyle & personality traits, then appealing to the person's personality profile -- as opposed, e.g., to the Motivation Method, which appeals simply to a person's desire to make or save money, be liked etc.

An advantage of the Whole Personality Method is ability to find "types" involved in existing groups or movements who might be persuaded to join your group or movement. Example: personality profiles that opposed war in Vietnam were highly likely to support environmental or civil rights causes.

(More on study from IS, 1828 L st NW, Washington, DC 20036; 202/223-8100; info on the 6 persuasion methods from pr)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

SONY'S PR/AD/MKTG MANAGER, NOBUYUIKI IDEI, BECOMES ITS NEW PRESIDENT. He was hand picked by the retiring president -- who bypassed at least 11 people with more senior titles. "It's a remarkable promotion," says an electronics analyst in Tokyo.