

INTERNET LACK OF REGULATION LETS EVEN SECURITY DATA FLY FREE

US Air Force pilot who circulated a firsthand account of the rescue of Capt Scott O'Grady from Bosnian Serbs after his plane was shot down will not be disciplined -- because he used America Online and there is no policy for releasing sensitive info on the Internet.

The Pentagon says someone who committed the same breach of secrecy using a letter or conversation would be sternly punished. The account was sent to a few military friends, who told others, AP reports. This resulted in material the military wanted to keep secret being available worldwide to 3 million subscribers. Now, Congress, about keeping porn & other "objectionable" material off the info hiway.... A policy to classify e-mail material as an "official record" is in the works.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

New Toll-Free Number (1-888-...) Will Begin Use Next April when the reserve of available 800 numbers (roughly 900,000 -- which gives an idea of their popularity) will be exhausted. 888 is being introduced because of increasing demand for toll free numbers from businesses, pagers, modems & faxes. 800 numbers will continue. Organizations will need to convince customers that 888 works equally well. When 888 numbers are used up, the industry plans to add 877, then 866 & so on. This year, about \$135 billion in goods & services will be sold over 800 numbers, according to industry sources.

Free Newsletter on Trade Shows offers tips & strategies on how to make the most of them. Will "teach exhibitors how to maximize their trade show dollars to reach their target audience face-to-face," explains editor Sharon Sultan. Articles include: "The Power & Profits of Trade Show Exhibiting"; "The Stage Presence of the Successful Trade Show Exhibitor"; "Mature Marketing"; "Publicizing Your Participation at Trade Shows." (From Theme Expos, 425 Smith st, Farmingdale, NY 11735; 516/753-3976)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. Frank Weaver (pres, Dallas Medical Resource) of a heart attack June 15. Prior to becoming the 1st member of the staff of DMR in '89, he was dir, corp dev'l & pa, The Cleveland Clinic Fdn where he had a 9 yr tenure. Before that he was dpa, Baylor College of Medicine (Houston). He was 49 yrs old.

Dan Bishop (St. Louis) of cancer. Retired May '94 as dir corp comms group, Monsanto, after 28 yrs with the company. He was 61.

HONORS. NSPRA's Presidents Award, its highest, to Ginny Ross (Alexandria, Va), consultant & longtime staffer, for "outstanding contributions to educational pr." Her most recent achievement was leading the fundraising campaign for a new ass'n HQ building.

Jerre Stead (CEO, Legent Corp, Herndon, Va. -- see story above) receives Excellence in Communication Award -- IABC's highest award to a nonmember.

USING VIDEO TO EASE FEARS, BUILD TRUST, FACILITATE CHANGE

As in most places these days, the work environment for employees at The Consumers' Gas Company (Scarborough, Ont) is one of accelerated change:

- increased deregulation
- new competition
- \$90 million tech upgrade
- internal cultural renewal process
- constant media coverage of layoffs in every industry, including energy
- in '93, an announcement that Consumers' Gas was being sold for the 3rd time in 3 years.

As a result, lack of company stability & fear of job loss "had a dampening effect on employee morale, at a time when the company required employee support to help accomplish the many change initiatives under way," notes Ed Bishop, mgr internal comms. Program, "Taking Charge of Change," responded to employees' concerns, won a '95 Gold Anvil from IABC.

STRATEGY: USE EASE & DIRECTNESS OF VIDEO TO STIMULATE FACE-TO-FACE

Use the **employee annual meeting** as a focal point, & thru **videotapes** made especially for use there & for a series of **small group meetings** afterwards, present a positive message about change & the role each employee plays.

IMPLEMENTATION CONCENTRATED ON HELPING MANAGERS PLAY THEIR ROLES

1. **Focus groups** with a cross section of employees guided recommendations for employee annual meeting content, with summaries sent to all participants. They "confirmed that change -- particularly the impact of technological change -- was the main issue concerning employees."
2. **Speeches** at the employee annual meeting focused on the direction of change & its impact on job security -- what employees said they were concerned about. Additional messages included: the impact of technological change on individuals & the company; the role of employees & human resources in supporting change; & future growth opportunities.
3. **To emphasize employee input**, a video featuring employee comments was used to set up each speaker's presentation. Following the presentations was an hour-long Q&A session directed by employees to senior execs.
4. **Videos** covering 1) issues presented at the meeting & 2) the Q&A sessions were distributed afterwards. The 1st was mandatory viewing for all work groups; the 2nd was offered as a supplement.



5. **Leader's Guide** was developed to go with the videos to ensure a consistent roll-out & encourage group discussion.
6. **Meeting info** was also carried in the employee newsletter. A hard copy of the Q&A was distributed to all employees.
7. **To gain sr mgmt support**, 20 meetings were held in advance of the annual employee meeting to obtain buy-in; & to prepare them for their role in helping to communicate a consistent message & involve employees in discussions. Managers were informed of the main issues & the importance of responding in an open, honest manner. Additional meetings were held following the employee annual meeting to present senior mgrs with the video roll-out strategy & reinforce the importance of their involvement.

TIMELINE Process began in Dec '93; employee annual meeting was held in April '94; videos were rolled out in early May. Timing was tight. The meeting video had to be presented a) before the info became stale, b) in time to kick-off business planning, c) before summer vacation period. "The video was the last roll-out on the list, however, & managers were already overwhelmed.

"To solve this, we advised senior managers of the timing & importance of completing the video meetings within 6 wks of its availability. We also worked with the other roll-out sponsors to co-ordinate timing & link them strategically. As a result, 95% of employees viewed the video within 6 wks of its availability."

Budget was \$45,000; \$30,000 for videos, \$15,000 for hotel facilities & staging. Speechwriting, slides, focus groups, design work were all done in-house.

RESULTS Based on evaluations completed by participants, they:

- Feel main issues were addressed thru this process
- Have a better understanding of change & how it affects them
- Feel positive about their future at Consumers' Gas
- Would participate again in the process
- Noted 90% of all meetings were led by a senior manager.

50% of employees responded to an open question on the evaluation form that what they liked best was management's openness & honesty in addressing the issue of job security. "Taking Charge of Change" is now being used as a benchmark for other change initiatives.

HI TECH LEADER'S ADVICE HELPS PR DEAL WITH ANTI-PEOPLE NERDS

The enemy of good human relations is often within -- in the MIS or IT dep'ts. Everything from maddening v-mail to computer systems that bend people to fit machines is arising everywhere, in the name of "efficiency" of course. But Charles Wang of Computer Associates International defies them. His company is the #2 software supplier, after Microsoft. It is

completing a \$1.7B takeover of Legent Corp. His advice, as told to Newsweek:

- "The wonders of the dawning digital era? Interactivity? 'Bull! It's hype,' he says bluntly. Technology isn't fun & games."
- Wang lives his beliefs: "He doesn't do e-mail. He doesn't surf the net. He doesn't answer his voice mail. In fact, he doesn't even have voice mail."
- "For business folks who buy his software (basic products he labels 'mission critical' software) Wang offers simple advice: 'if a product doesn't add directly to your bottom line, don't buy it.'"
- "US companies have 'wasted' more than \$1 trillion over the past decade on computer software & hardware they flat-out didn't need. He decries trendy information managers who drop one expensive system for another almost as readily as they change their suits. 'Technology is an investment,' he says again and again. 'You don't throw investments away. You make them work.'"
- Speaking of his pride-&-joy daycare center at HQ -- "something really important" -- he adds: "When in doubt about how to invest, put your money in people. They're the best software there is."

PAUL REVERE'S RIDE IS CASE STUDY IN GRASSROOTS COMMUNICATION

Paul Revere's Ride by David Hackett Fisher (Oxford Univ Press) explains how Revere was not a lone rider but organized a "painstakingly developed communications network of local citizen leaders," explains John Budd (The Omega Group). He offers this pr-oriented review of the book:

- Revere's team of express riders did not ride to awaken the farmhouses but to specifically alert the institutions of New England, namely the town leaders, the local military commanders, the churches, ministers, lawyers, physicians & family groups.
- Revere & his fellow Whigs realized that political institutions are instruments of human will & amplifiers of individual action which required careful preparation. The linchpins of the revolutionary movement were 255 men, members of 7 patriot groups, which Revere coalesced into the principal communicators, coordinators & organizers of the collective effort.
- While the printers & preachers were busy mobilizing the public after Lexington & Concord, Committee on Public Safety was executing a dazzling & critical pr coup. 4 days after the battle it collected 100 eye-witness accounts, packaging the deposition with an open letter to the people of Great Britain, sending it by swift packet to England. Instantly published they swung public opinion to the American cause. The relevance to pr planners is how the battle of popular persuasion was conducted via deposition, newspapers & sermons.