

Court ruled in May, law barring giving false statements to gov't doesn't apply to lying to courts, and implied it doesn't apply to Congress either.

**STUDY TAKES NEW, AND POSITIVE, LOOK AT ANNUAL REPORTS**

Should public companies produce high end annual reports (with graphs & captivating photos) or merely meet SEC regulations? To determine AR audience preferences, needs & expectations, Potlatch Corp (a paper manufacturer) commissioned a study by Yankelovich Partners. 20-min phone interviews with 303 individual investors with portfolios of over \$5,000, portfolio mgrs of the largest institutional investors, & securities analysts covering a wide range of industries on both the buy & sell side revealed data valuable to any organization using the annual report medium:

- "ARs are the most important single document a public company can produce": portfolio mgrs (67%); security analysts (54%)
- Info sources ranked on a 6 pt scale:
  - 4.8 - interim reports
  - 4.7 - ARs (with portfolio mgrs valuing the most of any)
  - 4.2 - reports in news media
  - 3.3 & under - adv'g, sales brochures & newsletters
- "ARs produced with 'cheap materials' signal business is not good": 40% of individual investors agree
- ARs without photos or illustration would be "boring": 6 of 10 individual investors & portfolio mgrs; 4 of 10 securities analysts
- Read all or most of ARs: securities analysts (75%); individual investors (45%); portfolio mgrs (43%)
- High level of interest (5 or 6 rating out of 6) in:

	portfolio managers	securities analysts	individual investors
Chairman's letter	67%	38%	28%
Detailed discussion of company's financials	61	75	47
Discussion of specific issues facing the company's industry	67	73	38
Discussion of company's strategies for meeting future biz challenges	68	71	36
Descriptions of company's products & operations	47	48	45
Descriptions of company's R&D efforts	45	25	48

(More from Potlatch, P.O. Box 510, Cloquet, Minn 55720; fax 218/879-1005)

**HELPING EMPLOYEES INTERNALIZE THEIR ROLE AS AMBASSADORS**

Storytelling is "a good vehicle for getting a message across. If you can entertain people while educating them, so much the better," Karen Larsen, dpr, Maine Township High School District 207 (Park Ridge, Ill) told prr. Following her own advice, she created a 3-fold, 8 1/2 x 14 piece that educates district staff about their role as ambassadors.

Titled "First Lay the Egg! Then Cackle," piece begins with a fable she wrote about 3 hens that explains the role of public relations. One laid many eggs but never cackled to let the farmer know. Another cackled all the time but laid few eggs. The third both laid eggs & cackled. When hens were needed for chicken soup, farmer saved only the third one.

Paper stock is color of brown eggs. Booklet includes:

- What the pr office does.
- What to do if a reporter calls.
- Staff's role in pr -- "Every time you answer the telephone, speak to a parent, or talk to a neighbor, you are sending a message to the public about our district & the kind of people who work here."
- Form for alerting pr office when there is something "our communities &/or co-workers should know about." Asks for who, what, when, where, how & the contact's name & extension.
- Bookmark made from the trim off the paper stock. "I remembered a workshop that said if you have trim, you can get a bookmark for nothing. So I designed one."

**TO USE OR NOT WHEN BUDGET CUT**

Piece was ready for use just when budgets were being cut. Altho paid for before cuts, it was not used at all the schools. "The perception was that this was not a good thing to go around & talk about with all its fancy copy when people were worried about losing their jobs." Larsen presented it to one entire school, & some staff at the others. Since then, piece is given to new teachers & support staff at their orientation sessions. "I do a 20-min presentation on the subject with slides."

**EMPLOYEES AS AMBASSADORS**

"People don't really understand how important their role is in this area. They don't realize the impact they have in casual conversation." Larsen recalls an illustration used at the recent NSPRA conference.

Presenter overheard 2 women in a supermarket talking about school starting. One said how she was dreading it. As they talked it became clear that the woman dreading school was a teacher staying in her job only be-



cause she was 2 yrs from retirement. The presenter went up to the 2 women & asked the one where she taught. Turns out it was a district several towns away. Then the presenter explained to her that "if you taught in this district, I was going to call the superintendent & ask him to release you tomorrow because I don't want kids in this district taught by someone who feels about her job the way you do."

"It's so important for employees to know what's going on so when they're asked they can answer intelligently, or know where to get the info & then get back to the person asking. No one believes the public relations person. **We need to see ourselves less as technicians & more as resource people who help other people tell the story.**"

(Copy of "First Lay the Egg! Then Cackle" from Larsen, Maine Township High School Dist 207, Park Ridge, Ill. 60068-4398; 708/692-8013)

### IRONY: CAMPAIGN CREDITED WITH GREAT IDEA IT DIDN'T THINK OF

Minnesota Medical Ass'n targeted a cause -- teens not getting enough sleep -- & brought it to public awareness, hoping to change the early hour schools open.

According to research, many teens need as much as 9 1/2 hrs of sleep for maximum alertness. 16-25 year olds account for more than half of crashes attributed to the driver falling asleep. Then consider "some kids have to be at the bus stop by 6:15am to start school at 7:15. They're involved in extra curricular activities, sports, working, homework. They're going to school half asleep," Mark Vukelich, dir comms, told prr.

- MMA issued a news release statewide & sent a letter to school superintendents "asking them to be aware that adolescent kids need more sleep & whatever they can do to have a later starting time would be in the best interest of the kids."
- A number of school boards have taken up the issue, many parents have called. "We can't mandate all schools change their starting time. There are a lot of hurdles & roadblocks. Nevertheless, people are taking the message seriously."
- Nationwide media coverage has been "phenomenal." However, notes Vukelich, "it's amazing to hear how the story grows & gets changed." A prestigious wellness newsletter reported MMA had called school board members at 5:30am, the time many teens are rising to get ready for school, to make its point. A powerful triggering event. In fact, MMA did not do this. "That's a great idea. I wish we had thought of it."

### SHIFT: NOW WORLD'S FAIR CLASS EVENTS COME TO THE PEOPLE

A special event extravaganza is in the works: a 30-acre **touring World's Fair/Exposition** visiting 44 cities between 1998 & 2002. 30-45 million people are expected to attend the "New Century Exposition."

Director Ralph Weisinger did the Freedom Train where, according to Denny Griswold, "for the first time 4 giant corporations got together to form one public relations push." This event will work similarly but with 8 corporations. Weisinger is in the process of talking with corporations & cannot reveal names until they sign.

Exposition will include ten 20,000 sq ft pavilions, each with a different theme & dramatic vision of the future. "Sponsors have to have a vision for the future in their field. And represent their whole field, not just themselves. This is the highest level of integrity."

#### WHAT IT'LL BE LIKE

"You'll start in a time tunnel back to the 1890s. Take a 3D 'ride' with glasses looking back at the 20th century. Then doors will open to the New Century Plaza. There will be 8 giant pavilions each with a different theme/vision of the future. It's a 5 hr experience." Geared for school children during weekdays. After 4pm, shows will change for a more adult audience. "It will be more entertaining during the day, more wonderment in the evening."

#### WHY A TRAVELING SHOW?

"The fact is, about 85% of Americans never travel more than 500 miles from their homes. We're going to bring this to the people. They don't have to buy a plane ticket." Exposition will be put up in parking lots of places like Giant Stadium, the Kingdome, etc. Places with public transportation, easy for people to get to. (48 million people attended The Freedom Train.)

#### THERE IS A CAUSE

"Education & a future generation of youth. To instill in them the future is going to be grand as long as they're willing to work at it. They can be what they want to be & be part of this future." A 501(c)(3) foundation has been formed (The New Century Foundation) to do presentation in schools (K-7). "We're going to award kids for excelling in their special areas, with parents & teachers on stage for the award. My feeling is that an award on the wall will do more than any scholarship to instill in them pride & recognition." Teachers will recommend award winners -- any activity where kids are excelling.

#### USING FALSE NAMES ON LOBBYING TELEGRAMS NOT ILLEGAL

Prosecutors can't take action against a lobbying firm -- whose name they would not tell prr -- for generating hundreds of allegedly fraudulent telegrams to Congress. An earlier Supreme Court decision "in effect legalizes lying to Congress," as AP put it.

"It's only in those instances where a name is not accurate that there is no statute we can find that would make it a crime. If you sent fraudulent telegrams based on other information, that could be a criminal offense," Kevin Ohlson of the Wash (DC) DA's office told prr. Case involved wires using names of the dead & people who had not authorized them. Issue was rewrite of telecommunications law. Wires were sent on behalf of telecommunications giants & a prominent ex-senator was apparently involved.