

RHODY: MANAGER MYTH, FAILURE TO POSITION SELVES HURT PR

"Savvy CEOs are realizing they stand no chance at all of reaching their goals unless they can create buy-in. The tool that creates buy-in is the one we own," Ron Rhody told Arthur Page Society. But, to succeed, corporations must have a "first rate pr staff under first rate leadership." Rhody gives 2 "most important" reasons why senior management picks non-professionals to head the function:

1. **"We've succumbed to the manager myth.** We've convinced ourselves that we have to be *managers*. So we get away from the hands-on activities that built our reputation & got us our promotions in the first place. We *delegate & supervise* & don't like to get our hands dirty writing speeches, or releases, or dealing face-to-face with the media. We think we'll get that seat at the table everyone seems so interested in sitting at if we walk & talk like *managers*.

"The thing that has differentiating value for the CEO -- when the chips are down -- is the professional whose skills, experience & judgment he can count on & that can help him create the buy-in he needs.... When we stop plying our trade we lose our edge & our value diminishes."

2. **"We do an awful job of marketing ourselves** back to the people who pay the bills.... If we think performance will speak for itself, we're wrong. If we think the value of what we've done is obvious, we're wrong. If we think there will be automatic appreciation for our work, we're wrong. And we know that. We know from our work on behalf of the corporation with the constituents important to it that all these statements are true. That's why we do many of the things we do -- to gain support & understanding for our corporation. Doing that same job inside, with the internal constituents important to our program's health & success, is no less important... & all the more important now with the stresses straining our business."

The known & respected senior tier of pr leaders is fading from the scene, he said. Will the new generation be able to claim their chairs in the dominant coalition -- or will non-pros get the jobs?

"DOING MEMOIRS IS A HOT-BUTTON ITEM FOR LOTS OF PEOPLE"

Alvie Smith, ex-GM corp com'ns dir whose memoirs were excerpted in last week's *t&t*, says "It represents a source of potential income for writers, one which will increase as people live longer in retirement. Many will need editorial assistance."

Memoirs involve 8 elements: 1) family trees; 2) key dates; 3) most important events in your life; 4) role models; 5) close friends; 6) awards & recognition (don't brag, but don't be bashful); 7) most important lessons learned; 8) photographic highlights (brings people & events to life). Smith's purpose for his book: "It was not an 'expose' or to criticize GM -- but to record events in which I played a key role & key people with whom I worked. Some may not like some of the things I say, particularly comments on arrogance, egos & power politics. My goal was to be accurate & fair, but not to ignore the facts for credibility. GM is a great corporation, well on its way to regaining its position of global leadership."

"SPIRITUALITY" IN ORG'NS JUST MEANS LIVING STATED VALUES

In an informal phone survey, Meg Ellis of Spirit @ Work (Santa Fe) found "spirituality in business" present in many companies but not explicitly defined as that. Instead "they're designing 8 or 12 core values & rather than having those values enumerated on the wall, managements are modeling them," she told *prr*.

**THERE IS FEAR AROUND
THE WORD "SPIRITUALITY"**

"I get farther with companies when I approach it from a company philosophy standpoint. People think the word implies dogma, but it doesn't.

It's simply what are your values? Your ethics? And are you living by them? It boils down to the Golden Rule: treat others as you want to be treated. In workshops, what people say they want is an environment that fosters **honesty, fairness, respect & trust.**"

**EMPLOYEES MUST TAKE
RESPONSIBILITY, TOO**

• If spirituality initiative is done poorly or not modeled by mgmt, "it could come across as another

flavor of the month & lose the value it could have," believes Ellis.

- **Each employee must know his or her own values,** stand by them & care about themselves enough that if their company doesn't have an environment that's right for them "then they must not settle for the money, they must take the responsibility to go somewhere else to get what they need. What I find is those people are respected & usually don't have to leave. They're leaders."
- **It's about respecting others, too.** "People tend to focus on the stereotypical bad manager which implies they have little control over their world, that if they're not treated with respect how can they treat others with respect. That's absurd. Every person creates a mini culture around themselves. They may be working in a terrible environment & have lots to overcome, but they can respect others. And this can go down to the people lowest on the hierarchy."

Why is this a concern of pr? Because "spirituality in business is really an umbrella for all the communication skills & career development. It's about how you speak your truth, how you listen to & value other people. And it's about challenging people to wake up -- asking them, what if you really could make a difference, what would you do?" In other words, a powerful agent for change.

- **It's about trying to take away what is prevalent in corporations -- blaming the other person.** "We need to talk about what happened, to hold the other person accountable, not just complain. People too often abdicate responsibility."
- **"This needs to be in the current conversation of the organization, & people need to be measured on it.** That's when it works. It doesn't have to come from the top but it makes life a lot easier if it does."

"It's wonderful when a company creates an environment where people feel they have permission to talk about the things they want to talk about & bring up issues about their whole life -- what's going on at home, in the community, how they feel about work. But too often companies say spirituality programs aren't in alignment with management philosophy. Often these companies are hurting. My thinking is if anyone needs it, they do." (More from her at 505/820-2154)

THIS IS A TREND ON THE UPSWING

- In their campaign rhetoric, Clinton & Dole are both talking about work/family issues.
- Marketplace Ministries, a nonprofit service in Dallas, provides contract chaplains to 170 business sites in 30 states. Most of its growth has occurred in the past 3 yrs, according to Human Resource Management News in an article on employee counseling.
- Nat'l Institute of Business & Industrial Chaplains estimates that as many as 4,000 companies use the services of chaplains. To meet the increasing demand, the Dallas Theological Seminary has established the nation's first **master's degree program for corporate chaplains.**

ELECTION CAMPAIGNS SHOW OVERCOMMUNICATION DELAYS DECISIONS

"A lesson of political campaigning, clearly with wider relevance, is that **people in an information-abundant society are becoming more information-resistant** right up to the point of making the decision. They receive a certain level of information but stop short of 'absorbing' it for personal value or converting it to use," counselor Bruce Harrison (DC) writes pr:

- **The abundance of info available is the reason for the resistance.** "It's like a person confident that water will be available to drink when he or she is thirsty, so water fountains are routinely ignored. This doesn't happen in a country where drinkable water is a problem," notes a Washington political leader.
- **How many tv commercials do you not absorb until you need it?** When do you absorb the information that drives the action to choose one brand of a product over another?
- **When information-resistance is coupled with an absence of clear or burning desire** to vote for one candidate or the other, the impact of 11th-hr

information is particularly instrumental in personal decisionmaking. [The old primacy v. recency strategy question is relevant again]

- **"Most of the time, campaign information is not news an individual can put to use,** & he or she has more pressing decisions to make for which he or she is information-absorbent," said a campaign analyst. "We know that -- very close to the time they will vote -- we have to help people recall some of the information they received during the campaign, and add new, action-driving information that will not be resisted because then it will be needed."
- **Is this different from the general concept of cognitive dissonance,** where it is presumed that the potential decisionmaker (voter, consumer, listener) is constantly tuning out that which is irrelevant to personal interest or need?
- **Political pros are divided about how soon to begin saturation messaging,** hoping for absorption. It's probably in the range of 2 to 3 weeks in a major campaign, or even less, particularly when money is short; but they agree it is never too late to add that last absorbent that will result in action. "The signs on sticks outside the polling place still make sense," a veteran campaigner observed. "Only -- if we were allowed to do it -- it probably should be a video screen with fast clips of commercials or messages that research showed were most memorable. The information flow, received, resisted & absorbed, is primarily visual, which means tv images."

WHAT'S PROPER & WHAT'S NOT IN THE USE OF E-MAIL?

Recommendations from Nadine Udall Fischer of NADIA, The Professional Speaking Company (Lawrenceville, NJ):

1. **Use it for urgent, time-sensitive matters.** Otherwise, use another communications tool for the task.
2. **Be brief,** action-oriented & direct, making your point within 30 seconds of the reader's time. Reserve chattiness for face-to-face interaction.
3. **Be sensitive.** Avoid hiding behind e-mail to say something you wouldn't want to say face-to-face. Write in upper & lower case -- **WRITING IN ALL CAPS IS THE E-MAIL EQUIVALENT OF HOLLERING.** Avoid slam-o-grams (negative, curt e-mail messages).
4. Assume e-mail to be **in the public domain.** If your message is meant to be private or confidential, deliver it in another way.
5. **Check for accuracy.** Apply the same rules for good business writing: use correct grammar, spelling & punctuation.
6. **Follow up.** E-mail is a passive process that requires action from the reader. So if you don't get a timely response, follow up.
7. **Read your own e-mail** regularly to integrate it into the mix of other communication tools.