

using these products, perhaps you will find an extra few minutes in your busy day to give me a call.' The next morning, the president called."  
-- Eric Yaverbaum (heads his own pr firm in NYC & co-authored this book)

- "No matter how many times my associates & I called Mr. Big, he refused to speak to us. Once while at the Pittsburgh airport, I was thinking about what I could do to get to this guy. I happened to walk by a Mutual of Omaha booth. So I impulsively bought a \$500,000 flight accidental death life insurance policy naming Mr. Big as the beneficiary. The woman at the booth gave me a copy of the policy, which I sent to Mr. Big with a note saying 'Thinking of you.' Two days later, he called to set up an appointment to see me." -- CEO of a Fortune 500 company, used when he was starting his career

## ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶**Oops...** typo gremlins at work again. The number for Cindy Newman (Dow) reported in 12/2 pr is wrong. It should be 517/636-5783.

¶**"The millennium starts January 1, 2001,"** exhorts Jim Wallace, pres of CENTURY (Committee for Enlisting News Types' Understanding of Reference Years). "I can't believe Noel Turnbull wrote an entire book (*The Millennium Edge*, pr 11/4) without realizing this. His points may be entirely valid & noteworthy, but he missed the boat as far as the timing is concerned." CENTURY seeks to correct the mistaken belief, frequently fostered by the news media, that the year 2000 will be the first year of the 21st century. In fact, notes Wallace, 2000 will be the last year of the 20th century, & 2001 will be the first year of the 21st century. (More from him at 3120 Bolero Drive, Atlanta 30341; e-mail: JKSR85A@prodigy.com)

¶**As we learn more about whether hi-tech linkups constitute true relationships** -- or will to new generations raised with a computer mouse in their hands -- rising number of crimes committed against people met on-line is instructive. Commenting on one on-line dating case where the actual face-to-face meeting resulted in rape, a district attorney notes: "People who are normally wary about meeting strangers on the street develop this confused sense of intimacy about people they meet on the Web. It's dangerous because you can't see the body language. You don't have eye contact. You can't see if he has the jitters. You can't see if he hasn't shaved in a week. Somehow people develop trust over computers, and often they're dead wrong."

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**PEOPLE.** David D'Alessandro, 13 yrs ago joined John Hancock Mutual Life Ins (Boston) as head of pr, is now sr exec vp, will become pres & chief operations ofcr effective Jan '98. ◆

**Happy Holidays to everyone!** This is the last issue of 1996, giving staff & printer a much needed rest. You can still call (or fax or e-mail) us; we'll be monitoring our messages. Look for our in-depth, special topic, First of the Year issue on January 6, 1997.

## CURRENT QUERY: ARE PR SOCIETIES KEEPING UP WITH CHANGE?

As public relations evolves from its beginnings in media publicity to current involvement in strategic management, professionals' needs change. Consequently, professional org'ns that serve them must change too, or risk becoming dinosaurs. Recognizing this, ASHMPR merged, changed its name -- from American Society for Healthcare Marketing & Public Relations to Society for Healthcare Strategy & Market Development (pr 10/7) -- & adopted a new focus positioning pr as *strategic* in nature.

Are other org'ns being as vigilant? Is PRSA's recent brouhaha over its proposed (but defeated) dues increase actually a "referendum on service," as some members say? Or is there a deeper message? The oldest such org'n, Women In Communication, Inc (WICI) is a case study of the issues.

### WICI CONFRONTS CHANGE & FINDS MISUNDERSTANDING

Reports of its demise are untrue. Barbara Haas, former nat'l pres & chair of the task force that initiated changes, told pr, "IRS records have WICI mixed up with a foundation. Rather than fight the IRS, our lawyers advised us simply to reincorporate in Virginia (WICI was incorporated in Texas) & to choose a similar name."

"When we read what Jack O'Dwyer had written (that WICI died) we were a bit shocked," Lucia Libretti, mbr & media liaison for WICI's interim board, told pr. As a member of WICI -- which has included men for several years -- he attended its recent nat'l conference where a business meeting agenda item was WICI's "dissolution." "It's an unfortunate choice of words, but it's a legal term. It doesn't mean we're going down the drain. There was unanimous agreement to continue a national presence. We voted to become Ass'n of Women in Communications (AWIC) & to restructure how we operate."

Along with these legal changes, \$500,000+ debt was completely paid off, leaving the new org'n "debt free," explains Haas. "Now we're looking at fundraising to get us on a good footing, using zero-based budgeting & going on from there," adds Libretti.

### ADDRESSING FUTURE NEEDS: THE ROLE OF NATIONAL HQ

Interim board of 11, representing chapters, metro areas, independents & students, is looking at what AWIC needs to be like in the future. "Org'ns need to grow. The question is, what kind of group does this need to be in our new world?" asks Haas.

Interim board is looking at "what do we want from national? It may be a cafeteria plan where chapters pay their membership dues according to what



services they are going to use. We still want to have a national conference, give awards. We're going to come out with something exciting & ready for what the new century is going to offer us," says Libretti.

Decision has been made to use a mgmt firm instead of staff. Nominations for new board are now being solicited. Current membership is about 8,000. How many will stay under the new agenda? Will it grow AWIC?

#### PAY EQUITY / GLASS CEILING A CENTRAL FOCUS OF AWIC

But with this comes inherent difficulty: "We have always tried to keep the dues structure low so women who are freelancers, or working parttime, or in low paying jobs, could belong. That lack of access to capital has always kept us from growing the way we needed to grow to meet the needs of members -- compared to the way other org'ns that charge 2 & 3 times our dues could grow. Maybe we are penny wise & pound foolish. It's which comes first, the chicken or the egg. You have women needing to work together to get women's salaries more on a par with men's & to end discrimination, but not having the money to do it," Kathy Lewton, past WICI pres, told prr.

#### WHY THE RISE OF NEW ENTITIES?

Arthur W. Page Society is one example. Begun as a sort of alumni body for Ma Bell practitioners after the 1984 breakup of AT&T, it has become a premier group of corporate pr execs & counselors. It rivals PR Seminar, an "exclusive" summer gathering of the same type folks.

Yet why aren't these connected to, say, PRSA -- giving it more clout & ending the proliferation of org'ns fragmenting the profession?

- **Breakaways & Mergers.** Then there's the case of Institute for PR Research & Education. Established as PRSA's foundation, it broke away & became a membership org'n with its own programming. In contrast, Academy of Hospital PR merged into PRSA's Health Section to form the Health Academy.
- **Sector or Industry Org'ns** like CASE (Council for the Advancement & Support of Education) for higher education, NSPRA (Nat'l School PR Ass'n) for schools, or Agricultural Relations Council have a *raison d'être*. Yet PRSA has sections designed to serve specific sectors. CASE differs in having institutional, not individual, memberships.

#### THE REAL ISSUE?

Underlying this plethora of org'ns, and the resulting multiple memberships held by many practitioners -- and the program duplication -- may well be a **maturity & discipline issue**:

1. Can practitioners, whatever their sector or specialty, work together for the common good -- like the bar ass'n, medical ass'n & accountants?
2. Do individual leaders prefer being big frogs in smaller ponds?

Then there's that original question: **Who's leading pr toward strategy?**

#### "PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT" IS LATEST EUPHEMISM FOR PR

New book on community mobilization by Families & Work Institute is a primer (filled with case studies) on building public relationships to bring about planned objectives -- in this case the support of young children & their families. Its authors write, "Community mobilization involves the joining of public awareness with *public engagement* as stakeholders engage in an ongoing process of problem-solving to develop visions, goals & strategies to achieve those goals."

- **Public engagement is not the same as public relations**, claims Jean Johnson, svp, Public Agenda (a nonpartisan, nonprofit public opinion research & citizen education org'n), whose definition is quoted in the book. Unfortunately, Johnson still sees pr as 1-way communication: "The traditional public relations model is built around a top-down, 'one-way street' method of communications. Leaders & experts focus on developing a persuasive strategy to convince the public to accept a predetermined alternative."
- **But her definition of public engagement sounds familiar to prr**: it "entails drawing the public into the communications process -- encouraging them to weigh a range of choices & allowing them time to deliberate & reach their own conclusions. In this 'two-way street' model, the public grapples with issues, & is not passive. Public engagement requires greater time & energy on behalf of leaders & experts, but it gets to the root of what democracy is about." Not unlike the public relations prr writes about.
- In a second example, Danforth Fdn is supporting a pilot program in 10 school districts across the US called The Public Engagement Initiative.

(Copy of book *Community Mobilization: Strategies to Support Young Children & Their Families* from the Institute, 330 Seventh Ave, 14th Floor, NYC 10001; 212/465-2044 or thru its web site <http://www.familiesandwork.org>)

#### GETTING PHONE CALLS RETURNED CAN BE TOUGH, SO TRY THIS

Even tougher with voice-mail. 156 creative techniques for making it happen have been collected in *I'll Get Back To You* by Robert Shook & Eric Yaverbaum (McGraw Hill). Could you pull off examples like these?

- "Every now & then, I'll find I have placed several calls to a reporter who hasn't called back. When this happens, I sometimes send him or her a little rubber skeleton -- you know, the kind you see on Halloween that dangles on a string -- in a small coffinlike box. Along with the package, I send a note: "This is me, waiting for you to call me back." It's amazing how many people respond to this!" -- Terrie Williams (heads her own pr firm in NYC)
- "I had a messenger deliver a big box to the vp that contained packages of **instant oatmeal, instant coffee, instant pudding, instant mashed potatoes, instant glue, instant hair dye, one-minute nails & a can of minute orange juice**. In the box, I enclosed a handwritten note: 'By