

- Respondents expect comms spending to increase in '96. 66% anticipate increases for external comms; 42% for internal comms. 54% anticipate the '96 business climate will improve over last year.

(More from 212/614-4000)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **INVESTIGATION FOR INFLUENCING JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS IS ONE MORE DANGER** for counselors, or maybe just publicists, as demonstrated by latest John Scanlon antic. His career of using media to manipulate, or of manipulating the media -- depending on one's viewpoint -- often breaks new ground, and he's done it again. A grand jury is investigating whether he used media to intimidate a witness in Justice Dep't's cases against Big Tobacco on nicotine addiction. What he admits doing is trying to get coverage of the witness's past record, which may indeed discredit the witness. Any practitioner fighting it out in the media (usually a dubious strategy) could get into this position. That such basic functions as media relations can have this level of impact adds to evidence that pr is a profession. (More from pr)

¶ **AFTER 57 YEARS, PRSA SUSPENDS PUBLICATION OF PR JOURNAL.** Circulation of both *PR Tactics*, its monthly newspaper, & *PR Strategist*, its quarterly mag, will be expanded. "Realizing these publications have the potential to continue to attract readers & advertisers from both the corporate & agency sectors, we decided to expand our advertising sales efforts in order to increase non-dues revenues," explains PRSA pres Luis Morales. *Journal* "was not meeting specific member needs & the resources saved could support other programs that have a greater impact on our membership." Move was obvious once the new pubs appeared, shows how non-dues income drives decisions. Sometimes a leader, sometimes shallow, PRJ in its long history nonetheless was a most-cited resource. Some feel *Tactics* is an embarrassment to the profession -- treating the field as the shallowest of trades or industries.

¶ **IS THERE REALLY A DEMAND FOR EXPERIENCED INTERNATIONAL PRACTITIONERS**, as the pr press is reporting? wonders Gloria Walker of Lucas Industries (London, Eng). She has an MA & 20+ years experience (over 10 in Europe doing internal comms, pr & now pa). Wanting to return to the states, she has contacted 39 headhunters. Only 7 have responded & "only 2 actually seemed interested," she writes pr. "Perhaps this is an example of one person's opinion being published as industry trends. From the response I've had, I'm not sure international experience is wanted at all." (Contact Walker at 44-46 Park St, London W1Y 4DJ; phone: 44 71 493 6793)

¶ **HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS TOOL: NEW ATLAS SHOWS NO RATIONAL SYSTEM** but rather that geography makes significant difference in use of best practices. *Dartmouth Atlas of Healthcare*, funded by Robert Wood Johnson Fdn & published by AHA, finds serious discrepancies in 306 US healthcare markets. Example: breast cancer patients in Boston are 7x as likely to have a lumpectomy (non-radical surgery) as those in much of the South. Will be important database in healthcare debate -- including cost-reduction strategies & attempts to mandate best practices. (From AHA; or, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~atlas>)

TRUST, TODAY'S BASIC ISSUE, REACHES FAR BEYOND GOVERNMENT

It may appear that trust has eroded most among politicians, that no other group has as low a level of public trust. But **business has a worse erosion of trust**, finds a Roper study. 1,986 people (18+ yrs old) were asked, face-to-face in their homes, whether most people in particular groups listed tend to act more in their own self-interest or in the public interest. Results are instructive:

	Public Interest	Self-Interest	DK
Federal Court Judges	54%	32%	15%
Cabinet Officers	37	45	17
Labor Leaders	36	50	14
Government Officials	34	53	13
Senators	29	60	11
Congressmen	29	61	10
Execs of Large Corporations	18	72	10

"What we are seeing is the public's increasing disenchantment with institutional decisionmakers. These attitudes are consistent with other research indicating Americans have little faith in elected officials or big business when it comes to protecting the average person. The trend is toward individual responsibility with fewer & fewer expectations that either gov't or big business will be effective in solving today's problems," notes Jay Wilson, CEO of Roper Starch Worldwide. (More from 714/756-2600)

STUDY REVEALS NATION'S CYNICISM

Washington Post, Harvard & Kaiser Family Fdn joined together to interview 1514 randomly selected adults to measure the ways info shapes how people think & act. [Does info move people to act?] WashPost published a 6-part series on the findings. Two dozen public officials were asked to discuss the erosion of trust. Some points important to practitioners:

1. **Media are a major part of the problem**, therefore it's imperative that we go direct to stakeholders (pr 10/25/93, Kettering Fdn's "Meaningful Chaos" study). Explains Sen. Bill Bradley (D-NJ): "The media tend to emphasize & encourage conflict (pr 9/2/91), when there is much more consensus in the society. It exaggerates the sensational. Complexity is reduced to a sound bite. There is not enough context to journalism. And there is an exaggeration of the negative. America is not as bad as it looks on the evening news." Pres. Clinton concurs, noting that this counterproductive approach also destroys confidence in the media.



2. **Decisions are being made poorly, based on overnight polling.** And it "has to stop" says Sen. William Cohen (R-Me) -- who sees politicians acting out of increasing fear. Bradley agrees: "You govern tactically, by the latest focus group, the latest poll. You never pull back & try to figure out the bigger narrative, where the story is going & where it ought to go."

Kettering study (pr 8/7/95) concurs: "Public opinion as it is recorded in polls is frequently uninformed, almost always unsteady, even inchoate, mushy, & more an indication of what people might be willing to engage with than an evidence of what they have concluded."

3. **Face-to-face works**, connecting people & passing info in both directions. But some caveats:

- Explain yourself & your projects better, warns HUD Sec'y Henry Cisneros. "The essence of the teaching function is to repeat & repeat & repeat."
- Bradley, who meets in people's living rooms, challenges those who ask him questions. "I throw the question back at them. I try to force conflict & honesty on all sides, & have them leave thinking they have some individual responsibility for these problems too."
- Clinton's town meetings -- "something that really gave people a feeling that they were connected" -- ended because of the media. Reporters inevitably would pick up "one mistake or one moment of conflict" & make that the story 100 million people see, Clinton explains. "It undermines my ability to conduct that kind of dialogue."

4. **Even direct mail sabotages trust.** "The only way direct mail works is to paint things in the starkest terms," notes Rep. Robert Walker (R-Pa), undermining the public's ability to engage in responsible public debate.

5. **What people know & don't know shapes how they think about things.** Without basic knowledge, the survey found people tune out, in this case to politics, & turn off to voting. Clinton advocates that politicians & the press must help "give people basic facts.... We need to identify that not all facts are equally important, but [focus on] somewhere between 5 & 10 things we believe every American ought to know about where we are...then repeat it & show it often enough...that the critical mass of people will know these facts." He also recommends *doing* things that restore trust -- e.g. Ameri-Corps which offers college aid in return for a period of community service, volunteer civic programs, etc.

6. **What part does technology play in people becoming disconnected?** "The aggregate impact of television is to have people be more isolated & to interrupt our sustained engagement with others," Clinton told the Post -- a view shared by others in the discussion. Building community -- internally & externally -- is critical today.

(Copy from Kaiser Family Fdn, 1-800-656-4533; ask for report No. 1110)

B-M NOW CALLS ITSELF "THE PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT FIRM"

Perceptions color "what we see, how we interpret, what we believe, how we behave," reads a brochure from Burson-Marsteller. Created a year ago, this reflects a new mission at B-M. Vice chrm Jeff Hunt told prr this reflects

"a broader definition of the business that we're in...which is perception management. PR is one of the more powerful parts of that, but not the only part, or tool, that we use. If you look at all we do, you'll recognize that the common denominator is perception management." (See prr 1/3/83, which first put forth this thesis; call for a copy)

Key to perception management is creating positive business results -- not just getting ink or planning an event. Perceptions, according to the brochure, motivate behavior & behavior creates results.

PERCEPTION MGMT INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT, SURVEY SHOWS

90% say it's increasing in their companies. 48% say the person most responsible for managing perceptions

of the company among key audiences is the most senior management -- CEO, chrm & president, who increasingly are assuming the role of "chief perception officers." Sponsored by B-M, survey was done by the Wirthlin Group at a Conference Board seminar attended by 300 senior pr, pa, adv'g & mktg professionals. 100 participated in the survey. Further findings:

- 56% say customer focus is the most important "driver" of their company's reputation; only 2% say portrayal in the media, 1% say stock price.
- Factors that "most contribute" to a company's reputation among external audiences are customer focus (73%) & product quality (69%). Only 28% say stock price.
- Top 3 most critical audiences companies must communicate effectively with in '96 are: customers (90%); employees (76%); Wall Street (36%). Media were cited by just 35%.

- 74% expect their company's emphasis on global markets to increase in '96; 41% expect such increases to be "a lot."

- The internet is perceived as a key tool for shaping reputation. 70% say they have a home page. Of these, 71% say its "primary purpose" is corporate image or product adv'g.

"Companies today need a chief perception officer. The job of managing perceptions is becoming far too important to be left in the hands of middle managers. In fact, it should be a board-monitored function. The old days of quietly following the rules are over. Companies that want to be perceived as good corporate citizens must seek out ways to proactively manage these perceptions by contributing to society & reaching out to every stakeholder. In doing so, a company can clearly demonstrate how it adds value to its stakeholders' lives." -- Thomas Bell, B-M's pres & CEO.