

## ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

**PRSA Partners With LEXIS-NEXIS For Members' Research Needs.** Requests will be handled thru NEXISExpress service at 10% discount to members. Results will be delivered (e-mailed, faxed or sent via US Mail or overnight carrier) within 24 hrs of a request & is available between the hours of 8am-6pm EST. PRSA's Professional Practice Ctr, formerly called the Information Ctr, has been restructured as a clearinghouse for the Society's body of knowledge.

**Corporate Annual Reports Are Making A Comeback** after several years of decline, notes longtime AR-watcher Richard Lewis, pres, The Conceptual Communications Group. "CEOs need to communicate because they are under fire both for cutting jobs & for taking too much pay. The AR is the one place corporate leaders can speak out & explain themselves fully, without having their words distorted. Take away the AR & there's nothing in the corporate arsenal to replace it." It's also a good place to explain bad news, he believes. "Once you've fully explained the issue in your AR, you can tell a reporter it's old news." (65 Bleecker st, NYC 10012; 212/505-1607)

**One Solution To The Voice Mail Turnoff** is this first response callers get from the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston): "Welcome to our mail order gift catalog. In order to serve you better, please listen to our complete directions before making your selection." The pleasing voice then offers 3 choices: to place an order, to check on one, to get info.

**Public Interest Profiles 1996-97** takes an updated look at 200 of the most influential public interest & public policy organizations in the US. 50 groups are new -- & some are newly powerful. Many have seen their constituencies & resources change dramatically. In response, many have changed their culture & tactics. Each entry includes info on: staff; purpose/current concern; budget; funding sources; tax status; political action committee info; dir/bd of dirs; scope/membership; method of operation; pub's/newsletter; conferences; effectiveness; & e-mail addresses, Web sites, gophers & ftp servers for each org'n as available. Direct quotes from news sources provide perspective on the groups' recent activities & effectiveness. Researched & written by Congressional Quarterly with Fdn for Public Affairs guidance. (From CQ Books, 1414 22nd st NW, DC 20037; 800/638-1710; fax 202/887-6706; e-mail: bookhelp@cqalert.com)

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**HONORS.** Jean Ludlow (consultant & retired pr mgr, Prudential, Jacksonville, Fla) receives the Davis Award for Lifetime Achievement for dedication to community service. Ludlow has held leadership positions in many org'ns, including PRSA & FPRA. Awarded by YWCA of Jacksonville.

Bill Lutholtz will posthumously be given IABC's Chairman's Award. Lutholtz died of leukemia Nov 6 at 41. He was customer comm coord, Indiana Power & Light Co. Award recognizes his initiative, leadership & significant contributions to IABC & the profession.

## CASE: TO ALTER BEHAVIOR, GO BEYOND FACTS, GET PERSONAL

Goals for Los Alamos National Laboratory's HIV/AIDS awareness campaign were "to reduce employees' fears & to replace the staggering statistics with the names, faces & individual stories of the lives impacted -- to **humanize the data.**" Award winning program (prr 6/10) is a model for the many org'ns attempting to deal with this or related health & social issues.

**BACKGROUND** Approximately 1.5 million Americans (1 in every 250 people) are infected with HIV. The majority of these & of those likely to be infected in future are between 25-44 -- a significant percentage of the present & future workforce. World's largest data bank on HIV resides at LANL, where computer modeling to track mutations in the virus continues -- so the subject is salient for testing a program there.

**FACTS ALONE DON'T WORK** Past "AIDS awareness" experience shows medical facts stir up fears & anxiety in the workplace. People's dis-ease with HIV/AIDS must be addressed.

- Meaningful discussions must include traditionally unacceptable subjects like illegal drug use, sexuality & death -- which can invoke deep personal feelings about morality & religious beliefs.

**COMMUNICATION TOOLS** To introduce the program, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was displayed -- a humanizing touch, dealing with real people with AIDS. Discussions were stimulated by articles in the employee newspaper. Follow-up was a week of AIDS awareness activities including a variety of speakers, exhibits & 1.5 mile "fun run."

- Next, intent was to make this a **structured training program**, going thru each Lab division very systematically. Because of downsizing & funding problems, training has had to be done only by request of the division manager.
- **Award winning documentary**, produced internally, personalized the dis-ease. *Our Faces* features interviews with HIV-positive individuals, their families & friends, & HIV-healthcare providers. It mixes medical, scientific & human aspects of the disease. Televised on several public access & cable stations, it

"Until recently, Santa Fe had the highest number of homosexuals per capita in the country, more than San Francisco. So AIDS is a very dear concern in the region. And to participate in the AIDS Walk in Santa Fe is a significant corporate move here," Judy Goldie of Public Affairs told prr.



is being widely used by schools & religious organizations for their HIV/AIDS awareness initiatives.

- Basic resource for employees is 54-pg booklet, *A Positive Approach*. Includes: a) Lab's employment policies on AIDS or other life-threatening illnesses; b) Q&As to dispel myths about the infection; c) section where readers can test their HIV/AIDS awareness by answering questions about workplace scenarios; d) summaries of laws, guidelines & resources available for assistance in handling HIV/AIDS issues in the workplace. Booklet has been distributed to more than 15,000 employees & subcontract personnel, is now being used by the entire DOE complex.
- **Management support:** "This organization has allowed me the freedom to pursue controversial topics like HIV/AIDS & as a team we've been able to increase awareness about HIV & AIDS in the workplace. They aren't the most popular topics & Lab management has supported these efforts," notes Debbi Wersonick, who developed the booklet & headed the campaign.
- **Community outreach** is also pursued, to play the messages back inside thru community members. Wersonick has accepted & delivered more than 100 speaking engagements, on her own time, at schools, churches etc.

**EVALUATION** "Initial fears & concerns related to HIV/AIDS have given way to a more supportive, concerned attitude by the workforce about the people infected with & affected by this disease. Employees infected, or affected, by AIDS who were initially afraid to disclose their status, now feel they are in a safe, supportive environment. And, many of our employees are involved in community outreach, volunteer their time to local/regional AIDS programs, & after just 3 years, the Lab's AIDS Walk team has grown from 30 members to more than 400."

**PERSONALIZING A FEARFUL SUBJECT**

... is an extraordinary way to remove defenses & build bridges. Another powerful personalizer is to exhibit masks made of the faces of people with AIDS, along with a tape of each person's voice telling his or her own story. Viewer stands eye-to-eye with the mask & listens to the accompanying tape thru headphones. No one can experience this without being touched.

**THE MAJOR INTEREST-GROUP FOR 50 YEARS IS WINDING DOWN**

No, it's not boomers -- it's veterans. As they leave the podium to others, here are a few lessons learned for practitioners:

1. **Tho perceived to be a powerful voice** because as a class it numbered millions, as an organized force it was relatively small. Its "power" came from the idea that veterans thought or acted as a monolithic body -- a ridiculous notion, but often seen.
2. **The organized veterans force** -- members of the American Legion & similar org'ns -- tended to be a certain type, from a lower middle class eco-

conomic & educational status. Vets who were achievers seldom were active members or even bothered to join.

3. **This vets lobby** played on the psychology of patriotism, sometimes jingoism or xenophobia: the fear most org'ns or gov'ts have of appearing to be "unpatriotic." Flag waving & engendering guilt for "not honoring those who fought" were their ultimate weapons.
4. Illustrating **they do not think alike** is the cleft between WWII & Korean vets & Vietnam vets. The latter includes a strong Veterans for Peace contingent that often opposes military spending plans.

**EVIDENCE OF THEIR DEMISE**

Aside from undeniable demographics -- there are fewer vets, and the major glut from WWII are dying off -- consider these incidents:

- A. **Bob Dole's strategists are divided** on whether his status as a heroic disabled vet, or as a vet period, is a drawing card or a turn-off. Those who once would automatically have responded are reduced to a fraction of the voters. And having served in a war that ended 50 yrs ago is a reminder of the age issue (tho he's only 74).
- B. **Today's elected officials are not vets.** 424 Congresspersons are not. 49 Senators have not served in uniform. Among prominent Republicans, Newt Gingrich, Phil Gramm, Lamar Alexander, Pat Buchanan, Trent Lott, Dick Cheney & many others never served. Neither did Bill Clinton, and while those listed here criticize him for getting a deferment, so did they.
- C. On D-Day anniversary, June 6, the Peanuts comic strip commemorated the event. It felt like an **anachronism**.

**A SYSTEMS CONSULTANT LOOKS AT EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS**

Peter Griffith has designed systems for operating giant org'ns like Chase Manhattan & Prudential. His view of the internal communicator's role:

- A. **"To enable dissemination of normal information"**
  - Managers & team leaders are *responsible & accountable* for communicating & they do it, face-to-face with their teams
  - The new role of practitioners in counseling, providing strategies, guiding message creation, training, seeing that the channels work
- B. **"To disseminate abnormal information"**
  - The old role of actually putting out red alerts, publishing new-age newsletters & similar -- about the Big Stuff, the triggering events
  - Supervising use of new media like Town Halls, videoconferences, meeting cascades etc.