

"The journalists whose inquiries seem to have lit the fuse in this case did nothing irresponsible, unethical or even out of the ordinary. That is what is chilling. They were simply doing their jobs, as those jobs are understood today."

Third, it's safest to assume media & critics today are "out to get you." The news service had questioned Boorda about the decoration a year ago. Rather than argue, he stopped wearing them. Shouldn't that settle it?

Fourth, you may survive the first blow, but then assume trouble.

Newsweek was no doubt lured by the recent rash of Navy scandals, one after the other, for several years. Thus a tiny incident like a disagreement over a campaign ribbon could be a "gotcha."

Mike Royko put "gotcha" journalism in perspective in a recent column -- another in a chorus of criticisms of presentday journalism by top journalists. (Copy from prr)

Fifth, changing culture is dangerous for executives.

Boorda was being tough about cleaning up the scandals. Some officers thought he should try to protect Navy men involved instead of rooting out the behavior.

Sixth, persons of power who come from unconventional backgrounds are in special danger. Boorda lied about his age to enlist as a common seaman at 16 after dropping out of high school -- then rose all the way to the top. This apparently didn't sit well with the Establishment.

## ITEM OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

Accessing academic research on pr is about to get easier. The Institute for PR Research & Education will soon add a new category under its "Campus Connection" section -- hot links to professors' home pages. In addition it will carry a 100-word abstract describing the content of each page. Professors interested in participating should e-mail their URLs & abstracts to Todd Hunt at Rutgers <thunt@scils.rutgers.edu>. The Institute's URL is <<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/iprre/homepage.htm>>

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**HONORS.** Gary Grates (Boxenbaum Grates, NYC) named outstanding pr/journalism alum at Utica College of Syracuse U. He presented a new award in honor of his parents -- Fred & Corinne Grates/Raymond Simon Institute Achievement award -- recognizing outstanding personal & extra-curricular effort by a pr/journalism student.

Sharon Weiner (pres, Stryker Weiner Assocs, Honolulu) participated as a Community Hero Torchbearer of the '96 Olympic Torch Relay -- one of 5,500 (10 from Hawaii) chosen to carry the Olympic Flame in a relay that started in LA, ends in Atlanta for the summer Olympics.

## LEADERS ARE OPEN TO CHANGE BUT KNOW ITS EFFECTS ON PEOPLE

A star attraction at pr conferences is urban cultural anthropologist Jennifer James. Her new book, *Thinking In The Future Tense*, strengthens a point many practitioners have felt about the long-term impact of change:

*Leading organizations into the future requires balance: openness to change, even excitement & anticipation of it; but also understanding & empathy for the grief change can cause in people's lives.*

1. The profound changes we are facing would normally take 2 or 3 generations to be assimilated. We are trying to make the stretch in a decade. No wonder the result is anxiety & even chaos. We face a depth & breadth of change unparalleled since the Industrial Revolution. The old values & institutions are breaking up, & we are unsure what will replace them.
2. You can teach your mind to adapt to change, just as our bodies adapted to change thru biological evolution. We must teach our children to increase their intelligence, to cooperate, to think in new ways.
3. Key is the ability to "think in the future tense." To understand how technological change will affect your life & work, how economic changes will affect your business & its place in the global market, how demographic & cultural changes will alter your self-perception, perception of others & of society.

## 8 SKILLS ARE NEEDED -- & THEY'RE ONES GOOD PRACTITIONERS ALREADY HAVE

1. **PERSPECTIVE:** shaped by your past, your race & gender, it influences your reaction to change. Perspective skills include:
  - ability to relax
  - sense of humor
  - insight & intuition
  - knowledge of your personal & cultural history
  - resilience
  - multiple info sources
  - attention to the repressed
  - high tolerance for chaos
  - ability to insulate your hot buttons
  - empathy
  - time to visualize
2. **PATTERN RECOGNITION:** An eye for bits of info or clues that, when assembled, present us with a new & visible pattern or trend. And to be able to determine whether it is a harbinger of genuine change or just a brief fad. Being able to tell the difference is important. The payoff is the ability to anticipate change, not just follow it.



3. **CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE** (harnessing the power of myths & symbols): In times of rapid transition, individuals who can recognize myth shifts will stay well ahead of the pack. Some ways to find them:

- check out children's myths
- read/watch science fiction
- survey the arts & adv'g
- notice sitcom trends
- best sellers, children's books, new mags
- pick up on anomalies, opposites & tension
- watch trends in other countries
- be prepared for the death rattles of dying myths

4. **FLEXIBILITY:** Key to handling change. There are 5 ways people do it:

- a) **Incremental** -- the most common, taking little steps that add up to something big (*effective method*)
- b) **Systemic** -- the visceral "aha" moment, where you have a complete sense of knowing, bringing about a total transformation (*effective*)
- c) **Exception** -- avoid making changes by making exceptions, i.e., "Education is in trouble, but my child's school is fine." (*ineffective*)
- d) **Coercion** -- when those with greater power apply pressure. "Coercing change in the workplace is the *least effective* management style."
- e) **Pendulum swing** -- going from one fixed system to another: formal to informal, addiction to abstention, etc. Preferred style of the most rigid, who hate ambiguity & want complete control (*ineffective*)

5. **VISION:** Accurate knowledge of the past produces accurate knowledge of the present & a way to predict the future. Easily distorted by nostalgia, however, so recognizing that nostalgia & anxiety walk hand in hand lets us see how human behavior can go awry in times of rapid change. The gloom, cynicism, paranoia & threats of Armageddon that emerge -- **listen, for example, to talk radio** -- are entirely predictable.

Underlying it all is depression or anger, the most common responses to anxiety. Nostalgia becomes sad rage. We carry memories of 'the good old days' in our brains like tree rings, & the 'spirits' of the past give them power. It is a mythical belief that **what was once right is right for all time** -- "the outcome can be deadly."

6. **ENERGY & SECURITY:** Security reduces anxiety, increases hope, heightens physical & mental energy. But it is no longer a given in our lives or our workplaces. We must build it ourselves. Some ways to do this:

- a) **Notice people in your life who build or take away energy** by their presence. Apply what you learn to your way of being with others.
- b) **Make technology your friend;** determine your technology comfort zone & it will cooperate.

c) **Address conflicts** by speaking honestly & openly. Dialogue is the glue that holds an organization together.

7. **INTELLIGENCE:** "We need a new vision of intelligence, one that integrates the right brain of images & creativity with the left brain of words & calculations, in the context of the social environment. You could call it 'middle brain' intelligence, somewhere between reason & creative freefall. It is a fluid thought process that leads us to question our usual assumptions, to rein in our judgments, to take a fresh look at our world & what we really know about it. It is the core of a twenty-first-century mind & an essential skill for anyone who aspires to effective leadership."

8. **GLOBAL VALUES:** "Our ability to come to terms with differences in nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, disability & religion -- all the elements of diversity -- will be a critical predictor of economic success in the next century."

"We will pay a price for the current technological, economic & cultural changes because of their magnitude, but we will also reap rich rewards when new contracts are finally in place. We will find new excitement in our work as well as in our relationships. We will follow our leaders with more confidence & become better leaders ourselves. **We will lead by growing closer to each other** [i.e. relationships].. We will move forward by going deeper." [On the last point, see prr 11/27/95, 2/26 & 5/20]

## ANY LESSONS FOR PRACTITIONERS IN NAVAL BOSS' SUICIDE ?

**First is the reminder that every org'n better have an emergency plan** -- for even the most *seemingly* absurd possibilities.

**Second**, Adm. Boorda's case is another example why media credibility continues to decline -- making **media a less & less useful pr tool**.

1. A voyeuristic "news service" -- retailing juicy tidbits about military operations -- said he wore a Vietnam combat campaign ribbon he wasn't entitled to. Experts are divided whether it was an honest error, but his commanding officer at the time says he was entitled to it.
2. Navy Times carried an *anonymous* letter attacking him, which it has been revealed was from a disgruntled officer who had been relieved of a command. It made fun of Boorda's height (5'4") as "Little Mikey Boorda."
3. Newsweek was considering running a story. PA chief Ken Pease had made an appointment for Boorda with the mag for precisely the time he shot himself.

Since Vietnam there's been mutual mistrust between media & military. "Was he another victim of a media obsession with tearing down the reputations of the high & mighty?" asks military writer Jim Hoagland in WashPost. The longtime correspondent concludes: