

- 84% feel a company's image in the community is "important." 54% believe it's "very important."
- 76% rate their company average or above as a neighbor (only 10% give poor ratings). Number increases to 82% when asked to compare their company with others.
- Most have a positive perception of their company -- 74% say their employer is one of the more community-conscious companies in the area.
- But study points out need for further research: employees didn't specifically connect their company's community image with its community involvement. Employees from both companies felt they knew little about their company's community relations programs.

"If projections for the 21st century are correct in predicting that employees will become the most vital asset to a successful company, & if there is an association between a company's community relations program & its ability to attract the best & brightest employees, then it is in the best interests of the corporation to establish a quantifiable measurement of its employees' attitudes toward the company with regard to the corporation's community relations activity & its corporate image in the community," finds the pilot study.

("Employee Assessment of Corporate Image & Organizational Commitment," \$15 mbrs, \$30 nonmbrs; from CCCR 617/552-0722; e-mail labanac@hermes.bc.edu)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Supreme Irony: face-to-face is the no.1 way surfers find Web sites!** Coopers & Lybrand study, *Electronic Access '96*, finds 44% are led to Web sites by word-of-mouth, vs. 39% for magazines/books/newspapers combined. Considering the space being given to the Web by these media, there's a message here for practitioners. Web browsing accounts for 32%. Apparently the plethora of new "directories" of all types haven't caught on. Links to other sites got 10%, on-line directory 7%, on-line advertising 2%. The great impersonal, off-by-myself medium depends on human contact!

¶ **"Public relations counsel constitutes an increasingly valued input whenever & wherever leadership decisions are made in statecraft,"** Israel's President Eizer Weisman said in a meeting with IPRA president Colin Church. Church presented him with the IPRA Code of Athens. If ever a situation called for the supreme elements of pr practice, strategy & philosophy it must be the Middle East today.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

RETIRES. H. William Chaddock (sr vp & dir, Columbia Gas System Service, Wilmington, Dela) after 32 yrs of service with Columbia companies. He is a past nat'l dir of PRSA.

Donald Frenette (exec dir pr, 3M, Mpls) at end of year or early '97. "I plan to do nothing for 3-6 months. Then, if I'm feeling professionally deprived, I would welcome invitations to practice part time."

✓ CREDIBLE COMMUNICATION "MUST COME FROM THE SOUL"

Gerry Spence, renowned lawyer who has never lost a criminal trial (some famous clients were Karen Silkwood, Imelda Marcos, Randy Weaver) shows why it applies to pr in *How To Argue And Win Every Time* (St.Martin's Press):

- **Excitement.** "The form & content of the winning argument may stem from the logical, intellectual, linear progeny of the mind. But the energy, the power, the stuff that excites & moves, that makes us credible & eventually convinces, is born of the soul."
- **Truth.** "Because an argument from the soul is truthful, it bears the ring of truth. When we fail to tell the truth, our communication string will always be out of sync. It is as though a platoon marches down the street, but one of the soldiers is left-footed."
- **Feelings.** "When we truthfully reveal our feelings, the *chosen words* are released in sync with the *sound words* and *physical words*. When we tell the truth factually & emotionally, all the elements of communications, physical & verbal, automatically come together... Ah, the power of the honest who will but tell us *who they are* and *what they want!*"

1. THE FEAR OF ARGUING By the time we're adults the word *argue* calls up dark feelings. Early on we're "fabricated into well-behaved students, predictable consumers, obedient citizens. We've learned it is better to conform than to be. Argue?"

Fear of alienating ourselves from family, friends, employer, community disables us. How do we deal with it? "Fear is our ally. Fear is energy that is convertible to power -- our power. To argue in the face of our fear brings on the magical 'yes,' the simple affirmation of our being. Argument springs out of our authority. When we give ourselves *permission*, argument bursts out of our lungs ... we rediscover our will to win."

2. TELLING THE TRUTH We are "a society that rewards not who we are, but how we appear. It's more important to look good than be good. We are so confused by our disguises & theirs we no longer know who anyone is. Therein lies the power of standing naked, for we all know when the *Other* stands naked before us. We recognize he or she is real. At that point another dynamic comes into play. That the *Other* has trusted us sufficiently to disrobe his psyche in front of us confirms that the *Other* is trustworthy as well. Behind our psychic shrouds lies the credibility that permits us to **argue, to be heard, to be understood, to win.**"



3. STORYTELLING

The essential ingredient for any argument -- parables, stories of tribal chieftains, fairy tales & fables "that are the very undergarments of our society." Why is the story form so powerful? "Because it speaks in the language form of the species. It permits the storyteller to speak easily, openly, powerfully from the heart zone. It provokes interest. It is an antidote to the worst poison that can be injected into any argument -- the doldrums. We are moved by story."

4. BEING HEARD

When we begin an argument, the *Other* will often take a defensive stance. "The key to opening the *Other* to our arguments is to empower the *Other* to reject us. By relinquishing power to the *Other*, we avoid the *Other's* fear of us or our argument. If the *Other* retains the power to accept or reject our argument, there remains nothing against which the *Other* need defend."

BEING AUTHENTIC IN THE WORKPLACE

Before anyone can argue & win in the workplace, it's necessary to understand the nature of corporations. The corporation, argues Spence, is a *fictional structure* -- a nonliving, nonbreathing, nonhuman form. The corporations are not alive, they possess a life of their own. "We know that human beings serve corporations, nourish them with their lives, manage them, & are, at last, consumed & junked by them (we call the latter condition 'retirement'), but the corporation is a mere construct & can never be understood as anything else. People are not corporations."

Money owns the corporation, & money bears no responsibility. Spence notes that in the 10 yrs Amitai Etzioni (George Washington U) has studied America's largest corporations, **2/3rds have been involved in some form of illegal behavior.** "The problem is not that corporate officers are without morality. The problem is that the corporate structure itself allows the corporation to operate without regard to moral values."

To whom, then, do we answer? "One wins by satisfying one's self that the job done is good & honest. One also wins by not expecting a pat on the back from the handless bureaucracy, but by patting oneself on the back for having satisfied one's self. Remember, no matter who signs the paycheck, we always work for ourselves. Always we live up to our own standards."

What about job security? No employer can provide it, says Spence. "The ultimate security in this life is the product of courage. The self is the source of all security. **As a worker one will be most secure if one comes to work each morning willing to be fired.** What better security exists than the knowledge one is not trapped, not dependent, not owned, has not sucked up to the corporate plan that will, at last, reduce one to a mere number?"

WHAT DOES THIS SAY TO PR PROFESSIONALS?

1) They need to **reveal the truth**, painful or not, to those leading the org'n; 2) to communicate authentically & powerfully **from one's center**, 3) to bring responsibility to bear **on decisions made.** "I am not against profit. I am against the inhuman, vicious & false doctrines by which profit becomes virtue. My purpose is not to condemn the system, but

to unveil the myths that permit our system to exploit the weak, myths that will at last be its undoing."

"One of the most effective means by which we share ourselves is argument. I say, therefore, **one has a duty to argue.** It is part of the price we pay for the space we occupy on this earth."

THE DOWNSIDE OF RFP SELECTION OF PR FIRMS

The reason gov't contracts are so often badly performed & have cost overruns is pretty clear: they go to the low bidder. Even when they don't, the successful applicant can't be much above the lowest bid. Other critically important factors -- which in the long haul may be more influential on true costs -- rarely come into play.

Requests for proposals to pr firms are mirroring the gov't situation. Cost rules. This isn't all bad, since many RFPs are for "vendor" services -- e.g. media placement or publications for an already established plan. (Yes, yes, every firm says they're really retained for counsel, but...) The firms claim they can do the job best because they "know the media," for instance, truth is that is less important than 1) having **useful material** to offer media & 2) **diligence** in tactful pursuit of journalists.

THE ANTITHESIS OF REDUCING CYCLE TIME

This key Quality principle is out the window when a "nationwide search" is launched to "find the best firm for the job" -- whether seeking counsel or vendor. Half the job could often be completed, or at least well begun, by the time the selection is made. In most cases there are 2 or 3 firms the client is comfortable with -- indeed, they're on the RFP list. Why not talk with them, **use some managerial judgment & make a decision** -- and start working?

- Some clients aren't candid about telling present firms they want to make a change, and use the RFP process **to get rid of them.**
- More & more RFPs reflect **internal politics.** Everyone wants to make the selection along with the pr executive.
- What's amusing is the number of cases prr hears about where RFPs are used in **rush circumstances**, like breaking issues.

NOW, METRICS ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES

There's plenty of *anecdotal evidence* that an organization's community image influences employee attitudes & behavior. But there has been no definitive study to measure the relationship. So Center for Corporate Community Relations did a pilot study based on 2 Massachusetts-based companies -- Polaroid & Gillette -- to determine how much a company's community relations activities affect an employee's commitment to the company. Findings: