

Co-sponsored by Nat'l Ass'n of Secondary Schl Principals & Horatio Alger Ass'n, decennial study surveyed 1,000 youngsters 13-17. Sample was representative of teenage population by 7 measures: geographic diversity, population density, household size, income, ethnicity, age, gender.

WHAT SHOULD PRACTITIONERS DO WHEN CONFRONTED WITH SUCH CASES?

Here we see reputable researchers, using apparently sound methodologies, arriving at

opposite conclusions. Cause could be 1) question phrasing; 2) increasing incidence of respondents giving dishonest answers -- especially to life-style questions where a social stigma may be attached.

But does it matter to practitioners? Whichever side you counsel, the other side has data that negates yours. Strategy ideas:

1. **Facts matter less & less.** Indeed, fewer & fewer people read/hear about them on their own, must have them put boldly in front of them. Even then, skepticism reigns.
2. **Focusing on the solution,** not the problem, catches more attention -- & support. This quickly moves beyond the issue of which data are correct.
3. **Interpersonal, word-of-mouth, face-to-face** programs are vital here, because believability shifts from the debatable data to the **individuals** carrying the message.
4. **Existing relationships with opinion leaders** carry the day -- if you have them in place. They're the credible individuals. And with a program to achieve it, they become your third-party advocates.

MEMBERSHIP IN WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SOARS

Speaking of opinion leaders, Business Women's Network reports 200 new women's groups have been added to *The Business Women's Network Directory* -- 40% increase over last year's edition. Directory contains in-depth profiles of 700 women's org'ns. Top 12 groups (by membership) in the US:

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| 1. Nat'l Ass'n for Female Execs
(210,000 mbrs) | 6. Nat'l Council of Negro Women
(60,000) |
| 2. American Nurses Ass'n (200,000) | 7. American Agri-Women (50,000) |
| 3. American Ass'n of Univ Women
(150,000) | 8. Soroptimist Int'l (48,000) |
| 4. American Business Women's Ass'n
(90,000) | 9. Prof'l Secretaries Int'l
(40,000) |
| 5. Business & Prof'l Women (70,000) | 10. Zonta International (35,000) |
| | 11. Women, Inc. (25,000) |
| | 12. Coalition of Labor Union Women
(21,000) |

One-day conference at the US Chamber of Commerce (Sept 10) will celebrate the accomplishments of top exec women & the new directory will be released. (Info: BWN, 1146 19th st, NW, DC 20036; 1-800-48-WOMEN)

2 - WAY FACE - TO - FACE + E - MAIL WORKS AGAIN IN CRISIS

"Dialogue-based communications 1) offers opportunity for questions & answers ... 2) allows managers to offer insights that employees might not get in a printed piece ... 3) helps people feel connected to what's going on & that it's okay to ask questions -- **it facilitates understanding,**" Jan Botz of Dow Corning (Midland, Mich) told prr. This was the key strategy when the company filed for protection under Chapter 11.

On May 4, 1995 Dow Corning announced it was considering filing Chapter 11 (a legal requirement for filing), actually filed May 15. "Planning had to be quick, working nights & weekends. Fortunately (or unfortunately) we had experience with last minute planning & execution over the past 4 years with the breast implant issue," notes Botz, then mgr of internal com'ns. Won *double* Gold Quills, for both internal & crisis com'ns.

BEGAN WITH MEETING, E-MAIL MIX

1. Day after announcing it was considering Chapter 11, operating committee of 15 sr mgrs was deployed worldwide to speak with employees. "They couldn't say a whole lot because we didn't know a whole lot, but we wanted them in front of employees right away. We put together a **presentation for them so all would be giving a consistent message.**"
2. Within 15 minutes of filing Chapter 11, an e-mail message went to all employees. "We strove to **meet or beat the press** so employees would be the first to know whenever possible."
3. Next, held 2 meetings in local high school gym. Employees & spouses/significant others were invited. CEO & bankruptcy attorney spoke & answered questions. Member of firm hired to do psychological counseling talked about **handling stress.**
4. **Held employee forums** around the country at all major sites. Very informal. Upper managers talked in the cafeteria at various hours during the day. Routinely done quarterly & as needed.

"Managers had the same questions & concerns as employees. We needed to quickly educate them, to give them confidence in responding to employee questions. Yet, we were already sharing everything we knew with the general employee audience. It was quickly clear that the **opportunity** to communicate, to ask & to learn, was the important factor -- **whether or not there was new information to share.** Hearing consistent messages from management was reassuring to employees."

VITAL INGREDIENT WAS ABILITY TO GET QUESTIONS ANSWERED PROMPTLY

- 5. **E-mail was available** for any employee to send in a question. Answers came from top mgmt, "unless we felt comfortable giving the answer. But everything had to be reviewed by legal in this situation." Hundreds of questions came in the first couple of months.
- 6. E-mail is company's primary print vehicle. "Virtually 100% of employees have e-mail, worldwide. We have a daily newsletter but that wasn't as useful because most of the things we needed to do were so timely that we **didn't want to wait for a newsletter to get written & printed.**"
- 7. If employees had questions or an issue was erupting, **drop-in sessions** were held in the cafeteria with a manager or two. Over lunch or during the day. "They worked well even if only 10 or 20 people came. Word spreads. The key was access to top management. They were very visible & accessible. That makes employees feel a lot more comfortable...that things are being managed & folks are confident."
- 8. **Employees were ambassadors.** Tho not formally trained, they were told early on this was an expectation. "We told them we want them to feel comfortable talking with family, friends & neighbors. At meetings we'd say 'when you're talking to your family & friends, here are the facts, here's how to respond to what's being said in the media.' We gave them a constant stream of information. It was on-the-job training. The feedback is they felt informed & always knew what was happening. So they felt comfortable acting as ambassadors."
- 9. **Training for middle managers:** "Running the Rapids" was done with HR due to concern about employee retention. Modules included a) how to talk to those considering leaving or b) have been contacted by headhunters; c) what future business looks like. "We're still below industry average in turnover & haven't suffered in that regard because of Chapter 11."
- 10. Key messages were repeated over & over both internally & externally "because if you start straying from your key messages, then people get confused. **Repetition is important** -- people feel they're getting the straight scoop when they hear the same message from various sources."

"We had great support from upper management. We don't do a lot of scripting for them. We make it informal. They just talk & answer questions. We do some talking points, but we don't want it to be canned. That's why we held these meetings in cafeterias rather than renting an auditorium & putting them up on a stage 100 feet away from their audience. We want it to be folksy."

MEASURING SUCCESS

Employee satisfaction survey of 4,600 US employees in '94 (prior to Chapter 11 filing) was compared to surveys done in June '95 (sample of 700 employees) & in November '95 (another sample group). Score of 80%+ is considered a bedrock organizational strength; 73%-79% is considered a strength:

	'94	6/95	11/95
My need for info on the breast implant issue is being met.	82% agree	92% agree	89% agree
How satisfied are you with the info you receive from mgmt on what's going on in the company?	74% positive	69% pos	71% pos
How do you rate this company in providing job security for people like yourself?	72% positive	69% pos	71% pos
I am proud to say I work for Dow Corning.	82% agree	87% agree	87% agree

- **Employee-sponsored, 6-page ad** in Midland Daily News read: "To: Dow Corning Executive Management. Your Employees Are Behind You 100%!" Those who wished to "sign-on" contributed \$2.50 to the cost. Over 2,050 signatures were gathered.
- **Hundreds of unsolicited notes of thanks** for timely, informative com'ns were sent to the com'ns dep't & execs.
- Company had a record-breaking year, "a sure sign **employees stayed focused** on their work & performed at their peak."
- **Employees wrote supportive letters** to media, gov't officials.
- From May-Dec, nearly 400 non-Chapter 11-related updates were distributed, **symbolizing continuation of business-as-usual.**

RESEARCH: WHOSE STUDY DO YOU BELIEVE? IS PR PROBLEM

Headlines & lead tv stories everywhere last week proclaimed big rise in teenage drug use. Republican candidates are using it to attack the administration for mishandling the problem. But there are 2 current studies:

- **Gov't research** says drug use among 12-17 age group is up 105% since '92.
 - ¶ In that year, 5.3% of this population said they were users
 - ¶ By '95, figure had risen to 10.9%
 - ¶ In '85, users stood at 13.2%, then dropped til '92
- Nat'l Household Survey on Drug Abuse includes 17,747 people over age 12.
- **Mood of American Youth survey** (prx 8/26) found only 4% of surveyed teens ever had used illegal drugs.
 - ¶ Indeed, 84% said they didn't believe experimenting with drug use is "part of growing up"
 - ¶ However, they name drugs as the worst influence on youth today