

## ITEM OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **PRSA/NY launches Fellows mentor program.** 15 Fellows were asked to meet with & provide counsel to 53 chapter members. Pilot program was such a success the chapter plans to make it a standing committee. "What has been most gratifying is that some of the most distinguished professionals in our industry came forward voluntarily to work with some of the younger people to help jump start their careers," notes Art Stevens who launched the program.

- Judy Van Slyke Turk, incoming national Fellows chair, has called a meeting at PRSA's Nov. nat'l conference to find ways to involve Fellows at the other end of the spectrum -- educating sr. mgrs about pr.

## 50+ MARKET = 65 MILLION FOLKS; TIPS ON REACHING THEM

This huge group represents \$1 trillion in annual spending power, 50% of the country's discretionary income, & 77% of all assets, notes Frank Conaway of Primelife (Orange, Calif). He offers this advice to marketers:

1. About 3/4ths of mature adults feel they are 8-10 yrs younger than their chronological age. This "cognitive age" is what marketers should consider when developing messages. They think Club Med, not canes & walkers.
2. As people approach their retirement years, discretionary purchases are influenced by "being experiences" -- interpersonal relationships, philosophical introspection, the conscious seeking out & contemplation of the joys of living.
3. "Survival experiences" (which dominate the beginning &, for many, the end of life) & "anti-being experiences" (which inhibit or curtail "being" experiences) should not be used in messages. Reminding an older person of his or her vulnerability & mortality is a particularly potent antibeing experience. Unfortunately, many marketing messages aimed at older consumers are laced with symbols that convey such negative images.

The *possession experience* (important to the young) & *catered experiences* (a strong focus for middle age) provide less satisfaction to the over 50 folks as intangible things grow in importance (*being experiences*).

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**HONORS.** Virginia Sheng (Whirlpool Corp, Benton Harbor, Mich) wins Master's Thesis Award sponsored by The Institute for PR Research &

Education. Her thesis: *Multicultural Public Relations: A Normative Approach.*

## STUDY FINDS DOUBT: USE MEDIA OR MOVE TO FACE-TO-FACE?

Talking to Business, a survey of 70 major organizations across Canada, was conducted last March by MacDonald & Co and The Cairns Group (both Toronto). Goal was to assess how all types of org'ns are communicating to other org'ns -- contrasted with communication to consumers. Findings predictably wouldn't be much different in the US or elsewhere.

1. **Forms of com'n used to reach audiences in the business community**, as reported in an aided question: media relations (88%); speaking engagements (77%); publications (66%); advertising (62%); trade shows (59%); event sponsorships (59%); symposiums & conferences (56%) direct mail (50%); Internet (37%, up from 15% in '95).

¶ But 3 unaided choices were named by respondents: face-to-face presentations (12%); memberships (4%); telemarketing (4%).

2. **Most effective tactics** are ranked as: media rels (34%); adv'g (14%); face-to-face presentations (12%); speaking engagements (8%) pub'ns (8%).

[Note falloff of media in effectiveness vs. usage above]

¶ The high showing for face-to-face presentations is noteworthy because this activity was volunteered by respondents.

3. **But -- when listing pr techniques they use now** to communicate to business vs 5 yrs ago, respondents say in an open-ended question that the majority of tasks (in italics) involve personal, relationship-building contact:

	1996	1991
Media relations	67%	69%
Publications	24	19
Face-to-face meetings	19	8
Speaking engagements	17	13
Comty, charitable activities	14	4
Relationship development	14	13
Presentations, seminars, conferences	13	10
Events, sponsorships	8	13
Advertising	6	13
Direct mail	5	--
Internet	3	--
Trade shows	3	10



Clearly, there's uncertainty among those who communicate to businesses whether to stick with the mass media approach; or move to face-to-face.

4. **Top reason organizations communicate with the business community is to improve their "general corporate image,"** say 90% of respondents.

[Do they really mean "image" -- a false construct -- or "reputation"?)

"While almost 90% said they use media relations as a technique, 73% listed it among their top 3 choices for effectiveness, suggesting a significant minority consider it a necessary arrow for their quiver but not one to be drawn first."

5. **Other reasons to communicate to businesses:** marketing (66%); protect/enhance shareholder value (58%); gov't lobbying (53%); sales support (45%); promote new investment (42%); charitable/fundraising (36%); supplier development (25%); personnel/dealer recruitment (21%).

**GROWING ARENA**

- In the past 5 yrs, the amount of com'n directed at the business community has **increased, say 81%**.

- Compared to 5 yrs ago, this com'n is **more important** (85%).
- Since '91, 44% say the **budget** for it has increased. Decreased report 25%, remained the same say 26%.
- **58% employ market research** as part of their com'ns planning for business audiences. [Why *market* research instead of more actionable pr research?]

**METHODS USED TO MEASURE BUSINESS COM'NS**

- 1) **research** & surveys (58%)
- 2) **behavioral results** observed, e.g. sales leads, new business partnerships, money raised, increase in share price (32%)
- 3) **media coverage**, response (25%)
- 4) **direct feedback**, comments (14%)
- 5) **activity** e.g. number of speaking engagements, participation on boards (5%).

**RESEARCHERS' CONCLUSION**

"It is hard to assess why more large Canadian org'ns rely on media relations -- a delivery mechanism in which they give up control over the message -- than any other technique. That it is part of a mix of tools ameliorates that reliance to some degree. But when nearly 90% of org'ns have some aspect of media relations in their plan, it is another testimony to the power *we accord to media*" (italic added, since research finds them not as powerful as some think, in most cases).

(More from MacDonald & Co, 131 Avenue rd, Toronto M5R 2H7; 416/975-1572, fax 416/975-5356)

**IF YOU CAN'T PROVE YOUR VALUE, YOUR POSITION IS AT RISK**

In today's lean organizations, research is imperative; knowing how to do it or use it required. David Geary, dpa, put the case this way to public affairs pros affiliated with US Dep't of Energy's Albuquerque Operations -- "which has responsibility for the \$4.3 billion core of the US nuclear weapons complex & has major operations in 6 states":

- **"Accountability.** It's a word that can strike fear in the faint of heart. But like it or not, we must prove what we do adds value. And we must go beyond the anecdotal evidence, the story-telling that we rely on much too often. As budgets are threatened, the search goes on for programs & positions to be cut. We must ensure we are not vulnerable.
- **"Many think what communicators do is 'soft'** -- not contributing as much to the organization as 'hard' business lines. We know different, but it's no secret that many of our colleagues in industry are out on the street because they were thought of as outsiders in their own companies; they didn't prove their worth by speaking management's language, the language of numbers; they were good at products but not adept at talking long-term strategy & delivering on the promises; or worse, they managed programs they thought were good but that fell with a resounding thud.
- **"Most of our colleagues who have survived lead programs that deliver results** -- & they can prove it with numbers. Many of you have been exposed to metrics. Embrace them. Make them part of your worklife. You may be called upon to prove what you do is worth the taxpayer's dollar. Make sure you're ready to pass the test."

**NEW FREE NEWSLETTER OFFERS RESEARCH & MEASUREMENT TIPS**

Distributed by Ketchum PR, first issue of *Research Ideas For PR Pros* illustrates how an org'n conducted

on-the-spot focus groups to get immediate reaction & feedback from consumers during a crisis.

**The case:** A fruit, promoted by a Commodity Board, was about to be featured (possibly in a negative way) on *48 Hours*. To monitor & evaluate consumer reactions, a 3-phase research exercise was set up:

1. *pre-crisis* phone poll of 250 consumers to obtain benchmark data;
2. *during-the-crisis* focus group with a dozen consumers held during the actual broadcast to get immediate reactions & feedback;
3. *post-crisis* phone poll of 250 consumers to gauge overall impact.

Data enabled the Board to effectively plan its pr/marketing activities.

**Future issues will cover how to:**

- a) survey hard-to-reach opinion leaders,
- b) conduct reliable & valid surveys when budgets are limited,
- c) conduct research when the issues under discussion are highly confidential & proprietary, notes Walt Lindenmann, svp & dir of research.

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