

e-mail software decided to turn it into a word document, it couldn't handle it."

3. Unfortunately for PR Newswire, it was listed in the e-mail as an affiliate -- with locations & phone numbers given. "We're pretty upset that we got pulled into this mess. We've been getting calls. We are not an affiliate. We do have a working relationship with them in terms of news releases that our members would like to reach environmental media. We use E-Wire for that...& they've been very good with it. But this was certainly a wrong use of e-mail & the Internet system," Ira Krawitz, vp mktg, told pr.
4. Apparently what happened, explains Krawitz, is Jim Crabtree, head of E-Wire, was entering some sort of list into his computer, hit a couple of wrong keys & sent it out. And compounded the problem by doing it twice. "It wasn't malicious. He sent out an apology to everyone he thinks received it & we've been calling our clients that were affected. It's a very poor mistake. It's not something we'd like to be associated with, but unfortunately our name was mentioned." Good example of a snafu -- situation normal all fouled up.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Resource guide to the pr profession is launched on the Web.** Called PR Place (<http://www.prplace.com>), it lists names & addresses, hotlinked where appropriate, of major pr org's, mags, newsletters & research journals. Also includes a pr bibliography & scores of hotlinked Website addresses of national & international news services & journalism groups. Website was launched by Media Distribution Services, which simultaneously launched its own (<http://www.mdconnect.com>).

¶ **Summer dress code enforced** for the 4th year at The Kamber Group. No jackets, ties or uncomfortable clothing will be allowed for the rest of the summer. Staffers caught wearing them will be required to "read & make sense of all the proposed legislation on Campaign Finance Reform, then write a fundraising letter for the DNC to send to contributors that will cause them to send money rather than dissolve into gales of laughter." Employees donning the "uniform" for legitimate reasons -- meetings, formal occasions -- will not be punished. But, says Kamber, enforcement will otherwise be strict because "a comfortable employee is a more happy & productive employee."

¶ **Public relations fees are not all that far behind lawyers'**, according to *Law Office Mgmt & Administrative Report* data. Median fees charged by law firm partners are \$183/hr, not as high as intellectual property specialists (\$207) -- many of whom are also engineers, chemists or similar. Other categories: taxation, \$201; bankruptcy, \$197.50; corporate, \$187.50; estate plng/probate, \$178.50; general practice, \$160. While median data across the pr field are not available, pending pr resuming its Annual Report on the Profession, various studies by PRSA's Counselors Academy & others -- plus street talk among firms -- suggests pr has come of age as far as financial remuneration among consultants is concerned.

## BRILLIANT MIX: TRIGGERING EVENT, KEY GROUP, ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORS

When one of life's ultimate Triggering Events happens to a largely overlooked key stakeholder group -- but one which only 5 years later automatically becomes a major audience -- that's a genius moment for 1-on-1 relationship building that aims to motivate behavior.

"Rock 'N Read" is a program that reaches out to parents of newborns &, at that early moment, begins building a relationship between those families & their local schools.

### A STRATEGY OF SERVING

Program is built around reading. Free books are given to families -- while the babies are days old -- to encourage moms & dads to read to their children. Objective is to launch the hard-to-achieve behavior of parents participating in their children's education that every study finds is essential.

**A second objective:** "Along with promoting reading, we promote the development of a relationship between the school & the family. We want to begin developing & nurturing that relationship when the child is young. We invite them into the school so kids & parents can meet the custodians, the secretaries, the teachers, & develop a family/school relationship. Then when it comes time for kindergarten, moving into the school program will be just another step," Sean O'Donnell told pr. He coordinates the program in 3 Michigan school districts.

### WHY FOCUS ON READING?

The more research they did to discover what could make a difference in a child's life, the more they learned about the power of reading. "We found that the time to reach a child in a super window of opportunity is newborn to 3 years old. Info showed that the biggest factor in the development of one's self esteem is the ability to read." Other benefits: a) bonding occurs when a parent reads to his or her child; b) bonding creates a safety net that allows the child to begin exploring his or her surroundings; c) parents are role models -- if they read to their children, then their children will imitate them & become readers.

### HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

1. **Begins in the maternity ward.** "We do a little training with the nurses, explaining the program." When new moms deliver, they have to sign up for social security numbers, etc. At that time nurses give them the Rock 'N Read info/sign-up sheet which they fill out & leave at the hospital. Form asks for names & ages of other children at home so they



can be included too. O'Donnell collects these forms from the hospital every 3 or 4 weeks.

¶ "Last year we also involved the health dep't in signing up federal WIC-program moms. We're going to try to do more of that."

2. **Superintendent sends a letter** of congratulations to the family with their first free book from the program.
3. **Between 2 & 6 months a volunteer calls on the family.** "Because moms of newborns have so many things thrown at them, we wait a little while for things to settle down. Then, even tho we've already given them information, we go back to just reinforce the fact that it's a school district program -- that this isn't a hoax & we're not trying to sell magazines."
4. **Twice a year a "social" is held** at the school library (early Dec & in the spring). These are open to all preschoolers. Ads are placed & invitations sent. Names of new people who didn't get signed up in the hospital are added to the list & sent invitations to future "socials."
5. **Books are given away to those attending the "socials."** Local businesses & service clubs donate funds to buy the books & are duly credited.
 

¶ Participation by biz sponsors & by volunteers who visit families adds another level of supportive community participation.
6. **"Friendly contact" is maintained thruout the year:** a postcard wishing the moms a happy Mother's Day; *The Night Before Christmas* was printed & mailed at Christmas time for special reading material.

#### MAJOR PR BENEFIT

One of the untapped support groups for schools is parents of preschool children. Even if the family has older kids already in school, the triggering event of little Johnny going off to kindergarten is a moment for capturing all the positives of the relationship between the parent-taxpayer & the school. Parents involved in schools at that time stay involved & stay positive.

"We have close to 10,000 students participating among the 3 districts and it costs about \$3,200/year for books, mailings & special printing." (More info from O'Donnell, Strengthening Education Through Partnerships, 101 S. Pioneer av, Negaunee, Mich 49866; 906/475-7703)

#### "WE'RE PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE CHILD"

"Sometimes there just isn't much of a good situation for some children. But if there is, it's going to be at the time of birth. We're trying to capitalize on that opportunity. We're developing a strong parenting component to this. If we can intervene at day 1 & support parents with some education, that's when it needs to be done. And that's when the reading needs to be done. The social & emotional development of the child, vocabulary, ability to learn math -- those things are in place in the child's brain by the time she or he is 3 years old. It's their window of opportunity. So we're jumping in now. Already our first newborns will be entering kindergarten this fall. It doesn't take that long."

#### STUDY: CORPORATE PR EXECS DO COUNSEL CEOs

54% of senior corporate com'ns officials report directly to the CEO or president. And 93% participate in strategic counsel with the CEO at least weekly, reveals a study by Edelman PR Worldwide, Opinion Research Corp & the Integrated Mktg Com'ns Dep't of Northwestern U. Other findings:

- **Rank-to-effectiveness ratio.** In organizations where the most senior com'n official is at a higher level (svp, exec vp or corp vp) communications effectiveness ranks significantly higher overall.
- **Firms increase effectiveness.** 9 in 10 respondents use external com'ns firms at corp headquarters. Only 5% report their organizations do not use any outside firm. This latter group reports significantly lower effectiveness scores (average of 3.2 of a possible 5 points) than those that do employ counsel (average of 3.71).
- **Does integration help?** Study did not find a connection between the degree of cooperation between external firms & the overall effectiveness of com'ns programs, indicating that the major responsibility for the effectiveness of an integrated program lies at the corporate level.
- **Budget matters.** Altho there's no apparent connection between the importance corporate leadership places on individual com'n functions & the budget allocated to each function, survey data show those functions receiving the largest budget allocations are consistently more effective.
- **Unified structure helps.** Org'ns where 7 or more com'n functions fall under a single umbrella report significantly higher levels of com'ns effectiveness than org'ns with a narrower scope of com'n responsibility.
- **Research & Intranet add value.** Communicators using electronic technologies & placing a high emphasis on Intranet in their programs report significantly higher levels of com'n effectiveness, as do those exhibiting a high emphasis on research & measurement of com'n activities.

"Corporate Communications Benchmark ~ 1997" surveyed senior practitioners at 100 major companies. (More from Marianne Swallie at 312/240-2685 or mswallie@edelman.com)

#### BEWARE: SPAMMING CAN BE ACCIDENTAL BUT THEY'RE STILL MAD

Environment News Service (E-Wire) gets the "shoot yourself in the foot" award for unintentionally spamming about 500 communications professionals with a large (64K) e-mail...twice! And it was a marketing message, soliciting new clients.

1. "They listed every person in the 'to' section. They repeated the message 3 times. And then listed every publication they go to, from A to Z," Steven Blinn told prr. His firm was spammed.
2. After the first message he e-mailed them asking to be deleted from their list. But the next morning he received another. "It was so long my