

Having tested the scheme, a public venue was next. Announcements in media or similar communication would have limited reach, and no real "grab." But a symbolic event would have both grab & coverage -- and be seen live by many people as well.

With a disc jockey playing *Here Comes the Bride* & the *Macarena*, the firms' staff & friends -- "dressed to the nines in their favorite old formal wear" -- recreated a wedding reception in Copley Square. This included a bride & groom, wedding cake, sparkling grape juice (no liquor permit) & dancing for everyone. Prizes were given for most dresses donated, oldest tuxedo and, of course, to the lucky woman who caught the bouquet.

Over 200 dresses were donated during this first drive. No one has calculated how many future brides or ball attenders will be able to manage their own budgets because of this new public resource.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

Power of semantics is tangible in current public topics. Practitioners for one side employ it, and so often those for the other side let 'em get away with it. 2 prominent cases: Note how militia, even terrorist groups are trying to commandeer the term "patriot." Ultra-right, anti-gov't & skinhead org'n's include the word in either their name or slogan time after time. Similarly, conservative, evangelical, born agains have taken ownership of "Christian." Just read the headlines for proof.

Do you use www.all-links.com? It connects to sites of 3500 newspapers in US & 80 other countries -- the Internet's largest index of newspapers, says Aaron Dickinson who operates All-Links. Also has an index of web chat sites. And now Dick Weiner has a site there for Webster's New World Dictionary of Media & Communications: www.all-links.com/dictionary. All-Links ties to other pr sites such as PRSA, PR Central, Luce Press & several others.

One-third of US households have unlisted phones. For 2 reasons: mobility and choice, reports Survey Sampling, Inc. Each year, approx. 20% of households move. These tend to be younger, urban, non-homeowners. Households unlisted by choice tend to have higher average incomes; they want privacy. Top 11 cities for unlisted numbers are all in Calif: Sacramento, Oakland, Fresno, LA-Long Beach, San Diego, San Jose, Orange Cty, Riverside-San Bernadino, Bakersfield, San Francisco & Ventura. Of top 25, only 4 are not in the West: Jersey City, Detroit, Chicago & Miami.

On-line chatting growing but far from overwhelming. Merrill Lynch asked Luntz Research to find out whether people with a couple free hours in the evening would rather spend them talking to neighbors over the back fence or chatting on-line with folks who share their interests. Only 18% of respondents opted for chatting -- but that's a respectable number given chat lines' relative newness. 80% said they'd rather talk to neighbors & 2% were uncertain.

C COMMUNICATION, INVOLVEMENT KEYS TO TRANSFORMING ORGANIZATIONS

How do organizations transform themselves for competitive excellence? Without incurring unacceptable risk? Consultant Robert Miles (Hopkins Fellow in Org'n & Mgmt, Goizueta School of Biz, Emory U) offers a general framework for making successful change in his book *Corporate Comeback*. Key to successful transformation is a series of public relations functions.

After a vision of the future is created, and then a specific process for attaining it, whether or not transformation occurs depends on what Miles terms "Creating a Transformation Process Architecture." This consists of:

- a) education, b) involvement & c) communication

which enable employees at all levels to acquire the understanding, ability & motivation to modify their perceptions & behaviors as needed to bring about the transformation. In addition:

Coordination & feedback mechanisms must be installed to orchestrate the rollout & continuous refinement of all transformation initiatives.

TACTICS THAT WORK: HOW IT'S DONE

- A. Team Leader as Communicator. Education & involvement must cascade down thru the org'n as soon as the basic nature of the transformation takes shape. Line leaders should be in the driver's seat. (See [prr](#)) These cascades should:

1. Honor the past, recognizing past contributions
2. Distill the transformation's rationale & objectives and interpret its meaning in a form relevant to each level & part of the org'n
3. Be action-learning vehicles so new learning can be applied
4. Create opportunities for participants to dialogue among themselves & with their leaders
5. Serve as important sources of feedback
6. Call employees to action & specific accountabilities, with planned follow-up for all participants

B. CORPORATEWIDE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN ... is essential to launch & sustain transformation. The amount of communication is easily underestimated.

1. Core messages must be repeated over & over again -- from multiple sources & thru different communication vehicles.



2. **Rumors will fill any communication gaps** or lapses in intensity. Employees will revert to their old ways of doing things & the org'n will risk becoming recaptured by immediate issues & obstacles.

3. **Leadership's commitment must be conveyed.** Opportunities to demonstrate their alignment must be designed into as many communication mechanisms as possible. And they *must speak with One Clear Voice*:

"The most powerful source of meaning employees receive about corporate transformation is the information from their immediate boss & the extent to which what he or she passes on squares with the messages that are delivered by other leaders & embedded in the overall communication campaign."

4. **Modeling desired behaviors** is the most important lever for generating & sustaining energy. "Virtually every key leader in the organization, starting at the top, must become a walking & talking hyperbole of the behaviors & attitudes required to reach the vision state if the transformation is going to be successful.

"If only a few leaders at the top are unable or unwilling to assume this leadership stance, hundreds or thousands in the organization will be stifled in their attempts to make the changes & assume the risks necessary to support the transformation effort."

C. EXTERNAL COM'NS ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT ... because external people & groups "have the power to grant or withhold resources, loyalty & goodwill upon which the transforming organization critically depends.

- "Relationships with them also necessitate the development & implementation of a comprehensive external communication effort."

INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION

1. Practitioners who aren't among the leaders of the transformation effort are abdicating their professional responsibilities. Far more than just delivering the messages & info is involved. Training managers in how to walk the talk, counseling team leaders in holding effective cascades, creating & framing the vision are strategic assignments here.

2. Managements that don't utilize pr pros in transformation programs are assuring their failure.

"Transformative leaders are getting the job done. There's a transformative quality about the way they are doing it so that other people working with them feel empowered without management empowering them." (From *The New Bottom Line* by Wm Renesch -- prr 6/30)

(Miles' book dissects this process as it worked at National Semiconductor -- a day-to-day account of its successful transformation. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome st, San Francisco 94104; 800/956-7739; \$27)

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: WHAT EXACTLY IS IT, ANYWAY?

The more knowledge managers talk, the more confusing it gets, as summaries of PRSA's Professional Services Section seminar on the subject illustrate.

- "It's not the **next management fad**," says Alan Kantrow of Monitor Co., whose title is chief knowledge officer.
- What it is is a **tangible asset**: Prosperous economies no longer depend on having natural resources or agriculture. Instead, boomers like Singapore & Japan "have informed knowledgeable people." So is it developed nations as opposed to the Third World?
- **PR gets involved**, because Alan Webber of *Fast Company Magazine* says the challenge to managing knowledge is cultural. Getting people to think & act differently "boils down to managing people."
- **The dark side**, notes Jeffrey Rayport of Harvard Biz School, is the fear it can reduce highly knowledgeable workers or execs to CD-ROMs -- "sucking all knowledge out of people."
- **Only face-to-face interactive meetings work** to share wisdom & high level knowledge, Rayport finds. Data & stats can be transferred by impersonal media, but not wisdom or high level knowledge. Again, a basic pr principle to the rescue.
- **Not to worry.** One study found reengineering & knowledge mgmt had the least success among recent mgmt techniques, reports John Byrne of *Business Week*.

Ostensibly the idea is to manage an organization's sum total or body of knowledge the same as managing its financial assets, real estate or human resources. That is, to understand them & their role in the enterprise, then to leverage their potential for maximum impact. Or is that just jargon, too?

GOOD OLD PROMO EVENTS CAN BECOME TODAY'S SYMBOLIC MESSAGES

A mock wedding reception in a public square signaled that Goodwill Industries accepts all unwanted clothing -- even formal wear. Naturally media covered -- how could they resist such a story & photo op?

PR PRO'S BUDGET WOES SPAWNED THE IDEA

Jennifer McCann of Schneider & Assoc (Boston) was a bridesmaid 3 times in one month. All those dollars for a single use? She & Joan Schneider looked for an NPO that would take formal wear donations -- and found Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries.

Result was the first Dressy Dress Drive. First tactic was a photo of the women which became the firm's holiday card, mailed widely. Immediately calls came in from clients & friends with dresses available.