

- Some estimate the majority of N.American & even European Catholics disagree about contraception & other matters of sexuality

4. And yes, certain rare media can be multi-topic OLS. *Consumer Reports* is possibly one. But our trust isn't in it as a medium, rather in the people who do the research (even tho we don't actually know them)

- What earns CR trust is its singular goal of serving readers with candid information about products, services, manufacturers & vendors. Few if any other media are analogous

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Risk Communication Rules May Need Addition After Wal-Mart Fracas.** 50 kids & adults suffered bruises, bloody noses & minor injuries after a promo event turned into a brawl in Brick Twp, NJ. 8 needed hospital treatment. Balloons filled with cash, gift certificates & prizes were released from the ceiling. In the rush to grab them, civility went out the window. Original risk rule (*actual danger + potential for outrage = risk*) -- pr 11/1/93 -- has been supplemented by the risk communication guideline (*information to be communicated + potential for misunderstanding = risk*) -- pr 10/10/94. Some new formulation for bulletproofing crowd behavior is now needed.

¶ **The One Minute Counselor.** Pat Wilson (Hanley-Wilson & Assoc, Knoxville) reminds us of the most basic consulting rule. Never tell a client "I think." Instead say "We have found" -- meaning the profession has, or the body of knowledge has, or the research you have in hand has.

¶ **Putting TV Folks in Their Proper Place.** In Australia, what N. Americans call "anchors" and more accurately titled. They're called "tv news readers."

¶ **Again, Nobel Economics Prize Shows PR Main Factor, Not Data.** The work of Amartya Sen, ex-Harvard & now master of Trinity College, Cambridge U, shows that even famines are caused more by panic -- i.e. information, relationships, psychology, trust in the system -- than by weather or poor harvests. He is said to be not a favorite of the economists' in-group because his work has basically involved, as one writer put it, "restoring an ethical dimension to economics" -- i.e. making economics serve human betterment rather than devising ever-narrower mathematical models. As the current state of world financial markets demonstrates, these models are inevitably flawed by their inability (or unwillingness) to account for human nature.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. Robert Schenkein (pres/ceo Schenkein/Sherman Public Relations, Denver) awarded Swede Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award by PRSA/Colorado.

STRATEGY FOR AN ERA WHERE FEW HAVE TIME TO READ

Or don't read, for whatever reason. Pulling together the many approaches practitioners report trying since this became a problem produces a 5-step strategy:

1. **Use face-to-face as the primary medium.** Identifying the opinion leaders or key players is a prerequisite. Then implement interpersonal dialogues, being careful to *listen* to them *first* -- so that their perceptions/misperceptions are known before stating your position or case

- This makes it possible to have an objective discussion of the data even with those who disagree with you, rather than tossing fact grenades back & forth (& stiffening the resistance, maybe forever)

2. **Practice stakeholder involvement & don't even ask 'em to read.** This requires taking the power & opinion leaders in key stakeholder groups by the hand and persuading them to become involved. No calling for "public participation" -- because the only ones who show up are the zealots

- The trick here is to have activities they can get involved in, or specific behaviors they can be asked for. Since the most powerful pr tool today is support from 3rd party advocates, this is worth investing significant time & budget in

3. **Structure steps 1 & 2 to build ongoing relationships** so these movers & shakers *will* read followup materials once they are involved

- It's a truism that while we ignore message after message from strangers, we rarely fail to check out what comes to us from those with whom we have relationships

4. **Use print, v-mail, e-mail or news media as followup, not primary, communication.** Once awareness has been created face-to-face -- whether it's new info, call to action or whatever -- *reinforce* it with traditional media

- The other way around just doesn't work any more -- because they don't read. But the need to make a cogent case, with data & detail, remains & these media provide that opportunity



5. Information map everything: publications, memos, e-mail, web sites

- They will read it only if it's pre-organized, & also will remember it much better (see prr 11/17/97 for info mapping detail)

TECHNOLOGY TRAP IS MAJOR DANGER TO IMPLEMENTING THIS STRATEGY

The allure of computerized messages -- the toy of our times -- seems to be leading many practitioners to believe they can escape the hard work involved in this strategy. That people who don't read well-spaced, nicely designed printed material or memos will somehow wade thru the extremely difficult to fathom, crowded pages that come via e-mail.

Or that they will not only find the time to go to websites -- but get more out of the typical eye candy & dull paragraphic matter there than they would from a high class brochure or publication.

1. This is a retreat to the long disproved belief that information motivates behavior

- Awareness is required before any behavior occurs, but the evidence is strong that people rarely proceed from awareness to behavior. There are other steps in the process & they involve other people, not data

2. The main impact of technology, as a pr firm CEO put it in the 30th Survey of the Profession, is "speed without analysis, data without wise interpretation" (prr 9/28)

3. The need for most employers to monitor e-mail & web use pinpoints the problem.

With time & experience, plus new technological development, the effective uses of computer communication will emerge. For instance, the uniform capability on any system of designing how messages appear on the page will make e-mail easier to read & remember. Larger screen will permit seeing a whole page at a time, eliminating the scrolling now required. And who knows what other advantageous elements are now being created in a loft or garage somewhere.

For now, face-to-face relationship-building is the effective strategy.

RULE OF PSYCHOLOGY: THAT WHICH COSTS NOTHING VALUED AT SAME

Promise Keepers, the religious movement aimed at helping males improve as husbands & fathers, reports a large falloff in attendance at its stadium events (motivational rallies, really). The cause may be losing some steam after its impressive beginnings. Otherwise, the only change is that PK has stopped charging admission to its events.

- PK spokespersons explain that it didn't seem in the spirit of things to exact a charge from men coming to pledge improvement in their lives for the betterment of society.

Sounds sensible. Except that the org'n had to let its entire staff go at one point for lack of revenue, now must maintain fundraising efforts.

Basic rule of psychology: People usually value things in relation to the sacrifice (read cost) necessary to obtain them. Paying the entry fee actually enhanced the value participants felt for PK events. After all, they weren't doing something for PK -- which free admission implies -- PK was doing something for them.

ARE THERE ANY NATIONAL OR ALL-TOPIC OPINION LEADERS ANYMORE?

As opinion leadership becomes a subject-by-subject characteristic. And as the number of OLs therefore increases, to cover the expanding number of subjects. Has the one-size-fits-all OL of former days disappeared?

Remember Bernard Baruch anyone? A financier, he advised several presidents & numerous other leaders. Bernie would take a brown bag lunch to a particular bench in Central Park, NYC, & people would flock there for his advice on just about any topic. This was then disseminated by reporters.

IS THERE ANYONE LIKE HIM TODAY?

Can there be, given the need for specialization to stay abreast of ever more complicated subjects? Some tentative nominations & thoughts about why they may qualify:

1. In the US, there may be one: Dr. C. Everett Koop -- at least on any aspect of health or personal well being

- Partly it's his stern bearded visage -- he looks like a patriarch. His deep voice helps

- But it's probably the fact he earned trust by confounding the expectations of him as a right wing functionary when he was appointed. Confronted with the responsibility & reality, he spoke frankly on abortion, AIDS & other topics in a very unexpected, sensible way

2. Before his recent death, Barry Goldwater seemed to have attained this position -- at least on any aspect of government, laws & politics

- Again, he earned trust by showing in later years that perceptions gained from his '64 presidential race were vastly overpainted

- This founder of the conservative political movement supported gays in the military & several other open-minded positions, which imbued him with the seeming ability to change his mind toward softer positions

3. The Pope illustrates how hard it is to cover multiple topics. Large percentages of Catholic faithful disagree with him on many issues

- Nuns are open about their desire for ordaining women, which John Paul II strongly opposes