

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Banks are trusted as all-service providers over insurance or brokerage companies.** The most Americans are not comfortable with purchasing all their financial services from one provider, nearly 50% would choose banks over others. Of 400 people surveyed, 48% would prefer to use savings banks as all-service providers, 44% commercial banks, 29% insurance cos, 29% brokerage cos. People under 35 are the most willing to consider one company for all their financial services; people 55+ are the least willing. (More from Creamer Dickson Basford, 350 Hudson St, NYC 10014; 212/367-6840)

U **The most persuasive words, as identified by a Yale U. study:** *discover, easy, guarantee, health, love, money, new, proven, results, safety, save & you.* These are important value words: *benefits, rights, fairness, security, education & sensitivity.* From special report *101 Ways to Influence People on the Job* from the editors of *Communication Briefings*. (1101 King St, Alexandria, VA 22314; 703/548-3800)

¶ **"Basic literacy & the ability to analyze ideas"** is the problem that comes with the Internet, writes John Graham of Graham Com'ns -- not computer literacy for the masses. That's because anyone can say anything at any time, and do it anonymously. Because there are no gatekeepers on the Internet, users' ability to think critically is a requirement today. The dream of the Socratic method as the basis of learning is now a necessity, he believes. *"Without the ability to critique ideas there is no way to separate fact from opinion & to identify misinformation & disinformation. It will take enormous skill for most people to analyze information. The Internet makes clear how far behind we are in this regard & the potentially harmful consequences if we fail in this task."* (More from him at 40 Oval Rd, Quincy, Mass 02170-3813; 617/328-0069)

U **"People in business have a special responsibility to nurture community,"** writes John Beardsley in Padilla Speer Beardsley's '97 *Contributions Report*. For the past 25 yrs, PSB has given more than 5% of its pretax profit to not-for-profit groups, as well as donated professional time. Back cover lists the org'ns helped financially in '97 -- 52 NPOs, and thru donated employee time -- 47 NPOs. "After all, business flourishes when society thrives. Moreover, the resources that all community-building efforts require most -- people & money -- are the very resources that successful businesses are good at managing." (More from PSB, 224 Franklin Ave West, Mpls 55404; 612/871-8877)

¶ **In Retrospect: Public Opinions 1997** is a compilation of highlights from surveys done last year by The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. It published 17 reports based on interviews of more than 23,000 men & women across the nation. This report "aims to place what we learned thru the year in a larger context. Here we identify themes that seem to us to be worth considering as we enter '98," notes dir Andrew Kohut. Subject areas include politics, gov't, international affairs, environment, media, society & the future. (Copy from them at 1875 Eye St, NW, DC 20006; 202/293-3126; <http://www.people-press.org>)

PR OPPORTUNITY: SIMPLIFYING DOCUMENTS CAN SIMPLIFY OPERATIONS

Even normal business documents need to communicate simply. The primary mission of simplification, according to Siegel & Gale (a pioneer in the "plain English" movement), is to:

- cut thru the clutter & complexity of business communications to "humanize" them
- enhance their usefulness
- build long-term customer relationships.

BENEFITS 1. **Customization:** Every document is a special relationship opportunity that can be tailored to the interests & desires of individual customers or colleagues

2. **Clarity:** Plain language, logical structure & engaging design gain credibility for the sender/organization & get the message across

3. **Branding:** Today's documents, especially in industries such as brokerage or insurance, define an organization's relationship with the customer, not just represent it. Often these documents have higher visibility & convey a style of doing business more effectively than traditional adv'g or collateral material

4. **Efficiency:** As forms are simplified, the procedures an organization uses to deliver its services are simplified --

- eliminating duplication
- reducing paperwork
- restructuring the flow of information
- creating more efficient & cost-effective ways to communicate.

Reengineering of documents can lead to the broader reengineering of an organization's operations.

"Paper, procedures & systems are all closely connected: a change in one immediately affects the others. Ask anyone who has tried to redesign an invoice, or simplify an insurance policy, or standardize a correspondence system. Just to move a bar code, expand a data field, or customize a message, means wrestling with the massive complexity underneath," writes Ken Morris, pres of Siegel & Gale. (More from Irene Etzkorn, head of the Simplification Unit at S&G, 10 Rockefeller Plaza, NYC 10020; 212/707-3960; www.siegelgale.com)



BY SIMPLIFYING DOCUMENTS FIRST

... organizations can overcome obstacles in the business process, e.g.:

- **Allow all affected groups** in the company -- systems, marketing, legal, customer service, pr/pa, operations -- to work together for a common cause & gain a clear picture of the end product. Changes can be made before the document is "locked" by the system, when further changes become costly or unfeasible.
- **For organizations structured along product lines**, with each group producing documents that perform essentially the same function, document simplification works across product lines & focuses on a document's function in the overall process.

PANEL ISSUES GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Public interest in nutrition, food & health studies has increased dramatically. But increased news coverage has not brought the intended understanding. Rather, it has brought confusion. For several reasons:

- 1) **Lack of familiarity with the scientific process** makes the research appear contradictory & confusing
- 2) **Scientists don't always agree** on what constitutes scientific evidence sufficient to warrant changing recommendations
- 3) **How it's communicated** -- by scientists, journals, media & the many interest groups that influence the process -- has a powerful effect on the public's understanding (and much of it is health hype)

NEEDED GUIDELINES DEVELOPED

To examine these issues, Harvard School of Public Health & International Food Information Council Fdn convened an advisory group of experts. Following an initial meeting, 8 roundtables were held around the country involving 60 other nutrition researchers, food scientists, journal editors, university press officers, broadcast & print reporters, consumer groups & food industry execs.

Based on their input, a set of guiding principles for the communication of emerging science was developed. First draft was reviewed by a 2nd meeting of advisory group members & revised. Final draft was circulated to roundtable participants prior to publication.

Guidelines are intended to suggest how to provide the context that enables the average person to weigh the info appropriately. They outline the data, disclosures & contextual qualifiers needed to help the public evaluate a study's relevance & importance.

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL PARTIES IN THE COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

1. Will your communication enhance public understanding of diet & health? Have you appropriately represented the study's overall conclusions & avoided highlighting selective findings which, on their own, might present a misleading picture?
2. Have you put the study findings into context? If the findings are preliminary & non-conclusive, have you made that clear?
3. Have the study or findings been peer-reviewed? If not, are the findings so important that they should be communicated to the public before peer review?
4. Have you disclosed the important facts about the study? Acknowledged any limitations or shortcomings the study may have?
5. Have you disclosed all key information about the study's funding? Have you considered what the funders stand to gain or lose from the outcome?

B. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SCIENTISTS

1. Have you provided essential background about the study in your written findings, or to journalists or others requesting it, in a language that can be understood? Are you reporting study findings consistent with the original purpose of the data collection?
2. Have you clarified dietary risks & benefits?
3. Have you met the needs of the media? Have you reviewed & approved the final version of your institution's news release?

C. GUIDELINES FOR INDUSTRY, CONSUMER & OTHER INTEREST GROUPS

1. Have you provided accurate information & feedback to the media? Do you tactfully correct misinformation in the media? Do you provide scientific explanations of why the story is incorrect, not simply express opinions or judgments of a few individuals? Do you follow-up with journalists to acknowledge an accurate, insightful story?
2. Do you adhere to ethical standards in providing diet & health information? Have you avoided promoting or writing news releases on studies that have not been peer-reviewed? Have you acknowledged that results that have not been scientifically reviewed are preliminary findings & do not call for a change in behavior?

Useful for reporting any research findings in any field. (Full text from IFIC Fdn, 1100 Connecticut Ave NW, DC 20036; <http://ificinfo.health.org>)