

THE FINDINGS: NOT A WHOLE LOT OF DIFFERENCE

- **Rigorous survey reached more households** (92% of the working phone numbers in its sample vs standard survey's 67%)
- **It also completed more interviews**, because those who initially refused were called again & persuaded to take part (79% cooperation rate vs standard's 65%)
- **BUT -- Results were strikingly similar.** Of 85 questions on media use, lifestyle & a range of political & social issues, only 5 questions showed statistically significant differences between the 2 surveys.
- **Average difference was 2.7 percentage points.** To put this in perspective, the margin of error for each of the surveys was 4 percentage points.
- **Rigorous sample was slightly more affluent**, somewhat better educated & included slightly more whites than the standard sample.
- **Rigorous sample had slightly higher opinions of the Republican Party**, were less sympathetic to racial minorities. But on a number of other questions -- including party identification & vote in the '96 presidential election -- **the rigorous sample was no more conservative than the standard sample.**
- **People in both samples did not differ in their media use**, daily activities & feelings toward others.

ATTITUDES TOWARD SURVEYS MIXED:

	<u>Standard</u>	<u>Rigorous</u>
Opinion polls work "for the best interest" of the public	66%	68%
Random sample of 1500-2000 can't "accurately reflect" the nation	67	65
Would participate in a survey again	75	78

Where significant differences occur between the 2 samples, a change in public opinion is reflected -- between June when both began & August when the rigorous survey was completed the balanced budget bill passed. These differences underscore one of the main advantages of the standard 5-day survey: *"shorter-term surveys are able to take a relatively quick snapshot of opinion that is not affected by changes in public attitudes over time."*

(More from Pew Research Ctr, 1150 18th St NW, DC 20036; 202/293-3126)

ITEM OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

- ¶ **"IdeaBank" offers free trial of its Web site** (<http://www.idea-bank.com>). Click on the button labeled "invitation to a free trial" & you will be given access to quotations, anecdotes, proverbs, jokes, tips on how to make winning presentations, even a miniature encyclopedia about people & events thruout history. While "IdeaBank" is 8 yrs old, its accessibility on the Internet is new. Annual subscription is \$250 but 200 items can be downloaded during the free trial with no obligation.

PERSONAL COMPETENCY & GUTS WILL PREPARE THE FUTURE OF PR

Achieving a seat at management's table requires overcoming two impediments: 1) competency & 2) initiative ("read guts"), believes counselor & ex-AT&T pr head **Ed Block**. He offers "top-of-the-head" thoughts to prr's invitation to dialogue on the subject (prr 5/11). Screen yourself against these lists:

COMPETENCY -- "clear thinking when it counts"

- Know how the organization (or your client) makes money
- Understand the core principles of what makes the organization tick
- Know the goals, objectives & policies of the organization
- Understand the soul of the organization, too
- Know the external trends, issues & constituencies that may, if unheeded or not understood, make it impossible to achieve the intended goals or objectives
- Be prepared to suggest alternatives -- assuming there are alternatives that will deliver the desired results
- Lay out & obtain buy-in on a pr strategy or plan that will overcome potential road blocks

INITIATIVE -- "being tuned in & turned on to opportunities & danger signs"

- Work behind the scenes letting others take the credit
- Count wins & losses by the number of times you focus your radar downward in the organization &, without being asked, bring your advice & your resources to assist a beleaguered functional manager or line executive in a collaborative effort to solve a business problem or achieve an objective
- If you get good results at least most of the time, your authority & your hunting license will be enlarged & you'll be welcomed at the table

"The ideas I've expressed have to do with defining the role of pr, establishing a higher order of expectations, modifying personal goals -- all of which is easy at the level of pontificating but damned hard to institutionalize across such a broad landscape of jobs & careers that are called public relations."

**BECOMING SOMETHING
WE'VE NEVER BEEN BEFORE**

"A key element is preparing the next generation of practitioners, researchers & academics for what is clearly emerging as a 'new' challenge to be something we've never been before," **David Pincus** told prr:

- Former competencies & ways of thinking & solving problems will no longer be appropriate or sufficient

- Need wholesale changes in college curricula, both in communication & business schools, & on-the-job training efforts
- Dare we continue to produce would-be professionals grounded in fundamental communication skills -- i.e., writers -- with hardly any solid business knowledge, or

"The (professional) organizations that are supposed to represent the best interests of their members prefer to be guardians of the status quo rather than advocates for the future. Perhaps, more than any other change in our field, that needs to change," notes Pincus, the only pr pro ever to head a university MBA program.

- Should we be developing business professionals with special knowledge & capabilities in the communication/human relations area?
- To what extent are we damaging our own cause with those at the tops of the organizations we seek to influence & who we need to succeed by continuing to label ourselves in narrow, limiting ways? If adapting to our target audiences -- in message & language, particularly -- is still a primary tenet of 'good' communication, then either we've forgotten the principle or simply don't practice what we preach.

RESEARCH ESSENTIAL TO MOVE BEYOND THE TACTICAL

"Research is clearly the crucial stepping stone to planning & evaluating pr that makes a strategic difference -- rather than

serves tactical needs," writes a reader in the Midwest. "I am concerned that not enough attention is paid to producing materials that clearly explain to CEOs the possibilities for using research-oriented pr methods as a tool for measuring progress vis-à-vis strategic goals -- as opposed to simply viewing pr as tactical only. Much as we need 'pr about pr' we need 'research into research' focusing on organizational impediments to structuring strategic pr based on research & evaluation, cross-tabbed by type of organization. Is it just about money? Or not?"

"Government needs to be weaned off a dependency on mass media. Sadly, gov't execs will be the last leaders in America to forgo an attachment to the mass media as their primary means for communication," notes this public sector worker.

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS WHAT DIFFERENTIATES SUPERIOR PERFORMERS

Winning organizations exhibit 3 customer-satisfaction characteristics. They:

1. train their employees as customer service advocates
2. develop a proprietary customer-interaction process
3. insure they can provide a strong tie between branding & bonding -- since bonding can lead to lifetime customers

OTHER FINDINGS FROM A REPORT BY PUBLIC AFFAIRS GROUP:

- Strong connection exists between loyal employees & loyal customers
- Study by MIT's Sloan School of Mgmt confirms loyalty & organizational performance links
- Loyalty is down; trust, a key element for retaining employees, has declined
- Best companies demand a "laser-beam focus" for customer value. They share goals, invest in training, teach customer service, invest in incentives, & reinforce thru recognition & rewards
- CEOs of best companies are articulate about customer service
- Winners use technology to monitor data & build 1-on-1 customer relationships
- Companies with expert knowledge of their customer portfolios are able to focus more effectively on the most valuable customer relations, leverage their resources & connect and grow customer revenues. Their managers are relationship driven.

Employees want involvement & control over their future. Two activities most effective in supporting quality in customer service offer this: 1) employee involvement & 2) education/training, according to a Towers Perrin study.

Report is part of an ongoing program called Best Practices in Corporate Communications. Each month, PAG researches (via conference calls, roundtables, etc with a working group of 40+ leading companies) a different topic. (More from Edie Fraser at 800/724-8764 or 202/463-3766; <http://www.tpag.com>)

PEW STUDY REFUTES CRITICS OF QUICK, NATIONAL OPINION POLLS

Critics of quick, national polls say these polls produce biased & inaccurate results. The polls are based, they say, on skewed samples that don't fully represent certain kinds of people or points of view. Because it's hard to get people to participate today, these polls are becoming less reliable, they charge. Scholars agree. They say too many corners are cut to produce immediate results.

To explore these charges, Pew Research Ctr conducted 2 surveys that asked the same questions: 1) the "standard survey" using typical polling techniques, contacted 1,000 adults by phone in a 5-day period beginning June 18, 1997; 2) the "rigorous survey" conducted over 8 weeks beginning June 18. The longer time frame of the "rigorous survey" allowed for an exhaustive effort (advance letters & small monetary gifts as tokens of appreciation) to interview highly mobile people & to gain the cooperation of those who were initially reluctant to participate.

Experiment was designed 1) to see who gets left out in a standard poll & 2) whether the excluded segment of the population is any different politically from those who are included in a more rigorous survey.