

PS: It would be interesting to find out the position of the Center for Missing Children on this case.

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ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ Hot topic, "The Ethics of Keeping Secrets," at IABC conference. Confidentiality vs. public's right to know will be dissected by folks who have truly been there: Reagan press secretary Larry Speakes, now USPS pr head; Bill Harlow, CIA dpr; Ken Pease, head of Navy pa during an issue-filled period & now vp-comm General Dynamics; media lawyer & First Amendment champion Gene Bechtel; Bob Berzok, who headed Union Carbide's pr dep't during the Bhopal tragedy; counselor Lon Walls, ex-dir media rels US Dep't of Transportation. The flip side -- leaks -- will no doubt also be discussed. *Communication World* ed Gloria Gordon will moderate, Pat Jackson will lead the Socratic Dialogue Monday, June 21 (www.iabc.com or 800/776-4222)

¶ Prime-time viewing of the major tv nets is down again, by 3½ million people. NBC, CBS, ABC & Fox dropped by an average of 7% -- with NBC the real loser at 14% (from 1 yr ago). Ironically, ad rates are climbing as audience declines -- because despite the explosion of media choices, they still deliver the largest audience at any one time. CBS & NBC each average 13 million per night, vs. 12 million ABC & 11 million Fox. Getting your issue, product or personality on prime time tv remains the largest media reach -- assuming visibility/awareness is your goal. Population growth lets tv stay big. Tho percentages are way down, more actual eyes now watch Jay Leno's generally lukewarm Tonight Show than watched Johnny Carson in his best years.

¶ To measure pr you must have goals that are measurable. A guidebook to help practitioners set such objectives is now available from the Institute for PR. In addition to supporting org'l strategies, the publication aims to help practitioners demonstrate accountability. 14-pg Guidelines for Setting Measurable PR Objectives is easy to read, with clear advice & a chart to aid in goal-setting. Also tackles the question of ads vs. publicity, measuring issue campaigns & several other common pr assignments in both profit & NPO sectors. (\$15 from PO Box 118400, Gainesville, Fla 32611-8400; 352/392-0280)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

TITLE TREND. Ted Graham named worldwide dir, Knowledge Mgmt Svcs at Hill & Knowlton. Task is to "drive the use, development & sharing of knowledge across the H&K network of offices & practice areas." As best practices, research, case studies & other

"knowledge" elements proliferate, many org'ns find that keeping everyone up to speed is a major challenge. Among others in pr with the title are Leslie Gaines-Ross of Burson-Marsteller (see lead article).

SHOULD YOUR CEO BE A BRAND NAME? OR IN THE SHADOWS?

"It's definitely worth something in the marketplace," argues the June *Across the Board*. "Falling Stars: Twilight of the Gods: CEO as American Icon Slips Into Down Cycle" counters *The Wall Street Journal*.

THE ARGUMENT FOR

Cited by Burson-Marsteller execs Leslie Gaines-Ross & Chris Komisarjevsky in the magazine

article are these points:

1. CEO's job is to "recite the company's values & act out a model of desirable behavior so that it becomes a living credo to employees & customers alike" -- i.e. to personify the org'n. Brand name CEOs bring more suasion to this vital task.
2. CEOs "understand the power of symbolic acts to form a firm connection between leaders & followers" -- e.g., Lou Gerstner wearing a blue shirt his first day at IBM to signal that the "white shirt only" rule & the stodginess it signified was over. When brand name execs do this, it is powerful.
3. The CEO may be the only differentiator an org'n has. He or she can make the org'n stand out in the crowd when its products or services are the same as everyone else's.
4. Nonfinancial indicators now reign in the stock market & other org'l evaluations. Key among them are managerial credibility & ability to execute strategy -- "both of which emanate from the CEO suite."

This may be the ideal time to make your CEO a brand name. Reason? So few execs are visible today. You probably know GE's CEO. But who's at GM? Exxon? Wal-Mart? Daimler-Chrysler? Sony? Prudential?

THE ARGUMENT AGAINST

Sam Walton of Wal-Mart & Roberto Goizueta of Coca-Cola are dead. Bob Crandall of American Airlines has retired & Jack Welch is about to. Bill Gates looked bad in his anti-trust case appearances. Who's left? Asked *WSJ* in a noted January front-page article. And why are they less visible?

1. "Quite frankly, I don't have time to be a celebrity," says Crandall's successor Don Carty. CEOs these days are supposed to do it all -- like the list of advantageous tasks above + + +. Crandall agrees with this



strategy, saying his challenge was "transforming the company's public image" -- which required a Mr. Outside. Carty is improving operations.

2. **Many are more comfortable communicating by computer**, especially in the red hot cyber industries. If people skills & charisma isn't in their character, what sensible pr pro would put them out front? Case cited: charming, forceful Jim Barksdale of Netscape is a spellbinder. But his company was bought by AOL, whose Steve Case shies from the limelight.
 - **But hear his reason:** "If I resigned tomorrow, AOL would go on. If Bill gates did, people would be shocked" with attendant problems
 - **Not too long ago this was "the Lee Iacocca syndrome."** He became so entwined with Chrysler's reputation there was fear & trembling when he retired. The company has continued to prosper -- indeed, done better than ever -- but can you name the CEO who took over from Lee?
3. **"I think it makes people far keener to take a shot at you,"** adds Pillsbury's Paul Walsh. The bigger they are, the harder they fall. So under-the-radar strategies may actually be an example of effectiveness over managerial ego.
4. **Partnering, teamwork, servant leaders drive solid org'ns now.** Toro CEO Ken Melrose advocates "turning the org'n upside down, where the management or leader works for the employees, & the employees serve the customer."

There's no set answer to this conundrum. Like everything else now, it is situational -- based on the orgn's circumstance at the moment & the CEO's persona. (Copies of both articles from prr)

CHAMPION IN-THE-SHADOWS CEO MAY BE EXXON'S LEE RAYMOND

He told a reporter at the Mobil merger announcement press briefing, "To be candid about it, I'm not interested in your views on how we should deal with the FTC."

In an earlier interview, he was asked about his comparative invisibility: "It's true, I do have a low profile. I don't think much about it. I've never perceived that it's a great problem. I've never had a focus group to decide what my persona is out there. Sorry."

To check this thesis, B-M & Wirthlin Worldwide queried 2,500 business stakeholders -- CEOs, senior execs, biz media, analysts, recruiters & gov't officials -- about the importance of a CEO's reputation to the org'n. Respondents estimate that 40% of an orgn's reputation is attributable to the reputation of its CEO. If correct, implications of this for succession planning are immense. The Iacocca Syndrome may now be pr's Achilles Heel -- or its Path to Glory.

DOES MEDIA COVERAGE INFLUENCE JURIES & PROSECUTORS? CASE RAISES QUESTION WHETHER PR SHOULD SERVE EVERYONE

Eddie Bernays never failed to point out that he withheld his methods from Franco, Hitler & some others who sought his services, because they were anti-social. Since pr's role is to serve society, he argued, those out to harm social rule should not be represented by ethical practitioners.

FAGAN KIDNAPPING CASE: SPIN 1, PR 0

Boston Globe headline reads, "PR Firm Puts Positive Spin on Kidnapping." Regan Group (Boston) is the firm. As the *Globe* puts it:

- "For most observers, what started as a legal disposition ended as a demonstration of the transforming power of public relations as the Fagan family, buoyed by the resources of second wife Harriet Golding, pulled out all the stops to control the image of the man whom, under different circumstances, might have been publicly reviled."

THE CASE:

A man kidnaps his 2 daughters, tells them their mother is dead, moves far away & creates a new identity, avoids prosecution for his crime for over 20 years. Then, possibly because of the coverage, gets probation, a fine & 5 years community service.

THE PR TACTICS:

Wage a smear campaign against the girls' mother; have the daughters defend their father as "a martyr" who "made sacrifices" for them; tell reporters where the girls & Fagan would be dining after the verdict (at a client restaurant) as a photo-op; place the daughters on "Larry King Live," "Today" & other venues.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PROFESSION:

What does the Uniform Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations say about this, if anything? Does this pave the way one more time for the smearing of pr? Is it a victory for the power of pr, as the newspaper said? Another bit of evidence for those who feel pr is spin doctoring?

Did it demonstrate honesty & integrity to pass out media-style kits filled with documents & news stories of the mother's past alleged drinking problems. Did the pr mislead the public -- & influence prosecutors? Why was there no coverage of Fagan's past behaviors? Has the Court of Law been taken over by pr influence? Is the law suspended for the well off?

Many remain skeptical of the attack on the mother -- who earned her PhD & is now a cellular biologist, remarried & living in Virginia. Has she been victimized by a pr firm? If this is the role of practitioners in lawsuits -- & it seems to be now -- can that be reconciled with the pr philosophy of creating harmony & bringing people together? Are we just guns for hire after all, as pr's critics loudly proclaim?