

- **“The number one reason why people volunteer is because they are asked,”** says ex-Sen. & univ pres Harris Wofford, CEO. “Thru this campaign, RSVP is asking – & I hope millions of Americans age 55 & over will answer the call”
- **But it isn’t just being asked.** The studies show it’s being asked *by someone we know & respect* that draws volunteers. In other words, not the appeal but the relationship!

Breaking away from the myth that messages, appeals, information, com’n by itself can motivate action is without doubt the biggest barrier to devising methods that can truly measure pr’s impact.

SPOKESMAN SPEAKES’ TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SPOKESMANSHIP

President Reagan’s press secretary Larry Speakes shared with PRSA conference attendees some lessons learned from his years in the White House:

- **Spokesman’s prayer:** Lord, teach me to utter words that are tender & sweet
Because tomorrow those are the words I may have to eat
- **Ultimate pr wisdom:** As articulated to him by Sen. Eastland of Mississippi –
“You don’t have to explain what you don’t say”
- **Never upstage your boss** (or the President, in his case): The reason Reagan didn’t allow tv coverage of media briefings, because Speakes – not Reagan – would be on stage. Pres Clinton does allow this now, but it is worthy of strategic thought as to when it helps, when not
- **Staying on message:** When Reagan took office, no one was seen in the Oval Office, no trips or speeches were planned, nothing done at all that did not contribute to his 2 campaign promises: a tax cut & increased defense budget. Those were the only topics he or his cabinet or staff would discuss – & there was a briefing book each worked from to enforce the strategy. PR pro Mike Deaver as appointments secretary saw to this. Result: tax cut by summer, increased defense appropriation by fall

ITEM OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **Experts Know University President Job Requires PR Skill**, even if search committees & faculty often don’t. “The tenor of the job is changing. More & more stresses are being put on them to not only address university issues but community & social measures. You have to have a *public relations person*, a business person & an academic person rolled into one,” says Judy Fischer, mng dir, Exec Compensation Advisory Services. Description could be applied to CEOs in any type org’n.

- Pay packages for presidents now average \$393,288 for research universities, \$218,703 for doctoral universities, \$194,640 for baccalaureate colleges. BUT – Delta Airlines Boeing 777 captains will earn \$267,000 if they sign the contract now being negotiated, one example of what many consider egregious pay disparities. An MD-88 pilot – airline critics like to call them high-flying truck drivers since autopilots, controllers & other aids do much of the work – will earn \$195,500. If you attended a liberal arts college, that’s probably more than your school’s president makes.

RATIONALIZING HI-TECH TOOLS: NECESSARY BUT TOUGH

It’s a safe prediction practitioners & management will spend the next several years sorting out the substantial benefits of the e-world – & finding ways to eliminate or overcome the very real problems that come with them. As reality brings a decade of hype down to earth, this is an essential task.

- **A possible guide may be eToys’ holiday strategy.** The e-tailer, rated #1 in Best of the Web survey, is distributing 36-pg, glossy, 4-color inserts in Sunday papers to lure shoppers. Websites as push media & web ads aren’t sufficient, clearly
- **Prior research has shown exactly that** – specifically, that the main draw to Websites is word-of-mouth – but many dot.coms seem to be contemptuous of such studies in their zealous belief all things will come their way via cyberspace. Conclusion: Schertz’ rule remains true – for every \$1 spent creating a vehicle, \$5 must be spent drawing an audience. eToys recognizes this & is taking action accordingly – a sign of maturing dot.com mgmt teams
- **The real value of e-tailing is that making selections & ordering are often easier.** Instead of “living on the Web” as once predicted, a 3-step strategy emerges: 1) traditional methods draw shoppers (a la brick-&-mortar retailers); 2) select & order from e-tailers (the biggest of whom now are the old brick-&-mortar stores); 3) parcel service delivers the goods

BUT – the test of survival will be e-tailing’s ability to handle returns, process & ship orders smoothly & quickly, & other customer satisfaction characteristics faced by any org’n selling goods/services at the retail level. At issue is what value is added by doing it on the Web. Just the type of rationalizing that must be applied to all hi-tech venues.

DECIDE ON BENEFITS vs. DRAWBACKS WITH FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

A recent roundtable of practitioners tackled a few hi-tech vehicles – starting by listing the pros & cons generically (see chart). Next step, eliminate the factors that don’t apply to your org’n. Then, weigh the relevant factors to reach a decision – which will guide creation of a *protocol*.

	Pros	Cons
E-mail	1-on-1 communication “Global reach” when needed Ideal for managerial publication Great for quick timelines Feedback easy Cost effective Permanent record (also a con) Summaries & links available Can be multi-media with proper equipment	Way too many, time waster Thought killer with instant response required Mistakes multiply quicker A vortex of unwanted messages Exclusionary if no access Right now destroys priorities Bad writing, hard-to-read Misinterpretation rife Technical problems common



	Pros	Cons
Websites	Link with e-mail Interactive capability, streaming Distrust remover if transparent Global reach or targeted Push availability – but tough Quicker, cheaper, flexible Chat rooms, monitor pro & con “Their time” availability, 24/7 Easy sign up method	Still basically a pull medium Distrust unless handled well Doesn’t exist anywhere – no record Chat rooms can be dangerous Blow off, accidental hits Difficult to measure effect Proper indexing vital, w/updates Eye candy drives people away
Intranet/WAN	Knowledge management source Best practices storehouse Policies in a central place Timely changes can be made Allows “instant on” messaging	Digital divide for those without computer access Harder to read & remember than print media Must update constantly or lose audience
Powerpoint	Create graphic interest Color can be visual support for points being made	Eye candy distracts from com’n Misused, too many pages, data overload Presentation too canned
Modems/Palm pilots etc	Pull docs from anywhere Keep in touch by the minute	Slaves, can never get away

Videoconferencing, “instant on” employee com’n systems, gang voice mail & other hi-tech tools need similar evaluation. Once protocols are designed, pr’s change agent phase begins: getting agreement on their use, & policing the inevitable misusers (maybe with a hot new e-tool!).

IS MAKING MANAGERS INTO COMMUNICATORS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EDUCATORS – OR PRACTITIONERS WHO WORK WITH THEM?

A small number of business schools offer “corporate com’n” training to undergraduate & MBA students – Dartmouth, Notre Dame, CUNY, Fordham & others. Also some European schools. Sometimes courses are mandatory, more often elective. PRSA has tried, Arthur W. Page Society is now engaged in growing this number.

- Teachers of the courses say the term “pr” – despite its correctness in describing *relations* built with *publics* – turns off their colleagues. Thus the euphemism “corpcom.” Whatever works ...

That some future execs are learning about the essential pr tool in their mgmt toolkit is heartening. Yet it’s clear practitioners must train the existing exec class – those unlikely to be going back to school.

NEEDED: A STRATEGIC CURRICULUM

For this to happen, someone’s going to have to design 1) a counseling strategy, coupled with

2) a curriculum – based on precisely what a mgr needs to learn, and in which order. Here’s a priority project for Page, PRSA or an entrepreneurial educator.

For practitioners just to show execs what’s needed each time a situation arises is not teaching. True teaching requires explaining the *why-to* (which usually involves theory or research findings), then the

how-to (involving case studies & topical research) in a *systematic* way. Which requires learning counseling skills to do this unobtrusively & in a helpful fashion – therefore the need for a method or curriculum. The philosophical underpinnings of the need are baffling:

- Com’n/relationship-bldg isn’t a skill mgrs & professional workers need to have – it’s *the* skill.** Management = “getting things done with people.” This cannot occur without precise, persuasive com’n. It isn’t effective unless relations between everyone involved are positive
- Org’ns are like living organisms:** they’re made up of cells (work units) connected by a circulatory system (com’n). Com’n is the lifeblood of org’ns. It’s what *creates* an org’n from a collection of individuals. Relationships build teams, motivate, deal with change etc
- Why then do we take it for granted, or leave it to chance?** Most mgrs are not educated in it at school, nor do most org’ns train them on the job. Yet what exec wouldn’t want mastery of skills with such impact on their success?

Is the cause deep-seated reliance on command-&-control: you get to be boss, people will automatically do what you say? They may in fact obey, i.e. not visibly contradict. But success comes from enthusiastic response, & engagement, in order to achieve lofty goals. This is what separates leaders from managers, the very successful from the chair-holders.

Why don’t org’ns get it? Or is it pr that needs to get it – to realize humans will change their ways only when it is less uncomfortable to change than to stick with old ways? This is where education works, by dramatically illuminating the difference. Ergo, the need for a strategic curriculum.

TO MEASURE PR, WE MUST UNDERSTAND ITS PRECEPTS

Evidence for the previous article is seen regularly in misunderstandings expressed by mgmt or by observers of pr & com’n. 2 current examples:

1. **“Election was big win for Fidelity”** proclaims a newspaper headline. “Latest ads reached audience of 62m” is the subhead & “proof” of the headline. The financial services company invested heavily in election day news coverage, which had huge viewership. Ergo, in the view of the ad columnist writing the story, a “big win”
 - **But that is measuring “reach”.** Using the highly dubious tv research numbers to boot. The question is, of course: How many of these viewers’ behaviors were *motivated* (to open a Fidelity account or add to an existing one), *modified* (to change one’s mind about the company as an investment venue after having negative feelings toward Fidelity previously), or *reinforced* (to feel good about already being a Fidelity customer)
 - **The best evidence suggests it’s the latter** – reinforcement – that can be delivered by 1-way promotional messages in today’s cluttered com’n environment. If pr messaging is to be measured accurately, it must go beyond reach; & reinforcement is valuable when that is the objective, or perhaps as a cost-free add-on while pursuing other goals
2. **To get more volunteers for its RSVP program**, Corp for Nat’l Service made a fuss last week about its new tv PSA. Retired Senior Volunteer Program is an important one for both the seniors who volunteer in its community service activities & the NPOs who employ them. But there appears to be a major misunderstanding of the likely effect of PSAs