

word as “a sensation of possibility undermined by the feeling reality never quite lives up to the idealized image.” It is pr, of course – the vaunted buzzzz – & lonely as well as hopeful, energetic & sociable.” It is a democracy without a constitution – & agreeing on one, or at least a set of rules, will dominate the next decade or longer.

¶ **Maybe Law Firms Won't Be Admitting Other Professionals as Partners**, reports Brad Carr of NY State Bar Assn. At least “in NY we won't see law firms gobbling up pr firms the way ad agencies have.” MDP (multidisciplinary practice) was overwhelmingly rejected in June. Carr's press release for the House of Delegates noted “unqualified opposition to the plans of billion dollar businesses [Big 5 accounting firms] to practice law.” Strategic alliances & other contractual relationships will work just as well when multiple disciplines are required by clients. But, outlining why other states are still grappling with the issue, NY Bar said it was “deliberately placing the public interest before the self-interest of lawyers & knowingly rejecting an opportunity for financial gain.” (Full report from him at bcarr@nysba.com, or summary press release from prr)

¶ **CPRS Closes Ottawa Office, Hires Ass'n Mgmt Firm**. Since operating the nat'l hq has cost about 50% of the society's expenditures, pres. Sarah Jones announced that Base Consulting & Mgmt (Toronto) will serve as hq on a 1-yr contract for '01. The 2 Ottawa staff members will receive severance packages & career counseling. Ironically, rumors of bad treatment of staff in the circumstances were circulating – even in a pr org'n! Bilingual services available to members will not change – might even increase if the arrangement frees up funds.

¶ **Bring the Baby to Work, Everyday**. New workplace trend allows employees to bring newborns to the office. Growing number of employers are allowing parents to bring kids in, not to an on-site daycare center but directly to their desk area. As with other creative efforts to retain employees – from flextime to job sharing – strategy has its skeptics. They contend babies reduce the output of parents *and* are distracting & disruptive to co-workers & clients. Still, many companies are finding that allowing babies keeps them from losing valuable workers, sometimes brings mothers back from maternity leave sooner. “It just allows a parent to be a caregiver. It doesn't involve all the production of having a daycare center, with the cost or licensing or liability. Parents don't have to make choices about, ‘Am I a parent or am I a worker?’” one source told *NYTimes*. Added benefit: people are nicer to each other if there's a baby around. “There's sort of a shared sensation that it's a department baby.”

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

MOVING ON. PRSA losing 2 stalwart staffers as Elaine Averick (dir educ & PRSSA) retires & Connie Rotunda (exec ass't to pres) pursues a new career in her field of dance movement education.

HONORS. PRSA/Philadelphia's Leadership Award to David Cohen (Ballad Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll). Peppercorn Awards posthumously to Frank Long & Deanne White, and new awards to be established in their names.

Happy Holidays to everyone! This is the last issue of 2000, giving staff & printer a much needed rest. Look for our in-depth, special topic, First-Of-The-Year Issue on January 1, 2001.

FBI USES EXPERIENTIAL, FACE-TO-FACE TECHNIQUE TO GAIN OPINION LEADER SUPPORT & UNDERSTANDING

Taking an idea successfully used by US Defense Dept, police & fire dep'ts & others, FBI's Dallas office offers selected business & professional leaders 30 hrs of class time over 9 weeks in its Citizens Academy – slated to become an annual event. Tested by other FBI offices, tactic has proven successful in helping citizens realize what FBI's true role is, agency reports.

- At final class, participants are taught proper handling of FBI-issue Glock .40-caliber pistols, to provide the authentic feel of life as a federal law enforcement agent

EMPLOYS SEVERAL WINNING PRINCIPLES

1. **Targets opinion leaders** likely to be interested & supportive once trained
2. **Builds face-to-face relationships** between agents & participants, the most effective way
3. Allows sufficient time for relationships to move to **communal stage**
4. Capitalizes on **natural curiosity** of citizenry – & **gets them inside** FBI offices
5. Permits **in-depth** information transfer – plus allows ample time for **questions & discussions**
6. **Experiential learning** surpasses other methods of gaining understanding & imparting knowledge
7. Participants develop kinship so **group support base** is created, not disparate individual advocates
8. Camaraderie permits dealing with **troubling issues** – in Dallas, the Wen Ho Lee case was explained
9. **Invitation is a Triggering Event**, motivating people to act on an interest they wouldn't or couldn't do on their own, or spontaneously
10. Repeat annual classes will create an **elite corps** – plus an alumni network of 3rd party advocates

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

“It just dispelled all the bad things I'd heard about the FBI, that the FBI was just sneaky & out to get people,” a university dean told *Dallas Morning News*. A Korean-American businessman who feels the Lee case was mishandled, says, “Thru the class, I saw that the FBI is trying to improve what they do.”

Classes took students into inner workings of the agency, with topics like how investigations get started & are conducted, which surveillance methods are allowable, how Congress has expanded FBI responsibilities. What org'n couldn't benefit from this technique?!



JARGON-FREE WEBSITE URGES PRACTITIONERS TO CUT THE CLUTTER IN MEDIA RELEASES, OFFERS A RATING OF THEIR COPY

The trouble with buzzwords is that, after a while, they start sounding like just buzzzzzz & their meaning is lost. Who cares about being *empowered* thru *innovation*? Or about *impactful solutions*? A new Web site by the Gable Group (San Diego) encourages (empowers?) practitioners to avoid jargon in press releases. "The idea came about when CEO & former Pulitzer-winning journalist Tom Gable was speaking to different reporters thruout the country," firm's Ashley Wood told [pr](#).

- Many reporters complained of the constant onslaught of releases from pr firms containing words like "leading," "cutting-edge" & worst of all, "solutions." "Instead of talking about a 'solution,' why not better target clearly what it is you're doing?" asks Wood
- An existing site, "Buzzkiller.net," created by magazine reporters, listed offending words & advised practitioners against using them. "We went to the next level by researching & putting together a tool which gives people a **rating of their copy**"

Site, up for a week, has as its mission promoting "clarity in pr." "Our profession has taken some awful hits in the media because of the jargon & practices of some new & inexperienced practitioners, so we started a crusade toward jargon-free pr," Gable explains.

THE JARGONATOR, JUNK WORD LISTS, ALTERNATIVES & A CONTEST

- Site lists offending words & phrases, e.g., "turnkey," "best of breed," "end to end." Visitors are invited to add more
- Features the "Jargonator," a tool that allows visitors to type in copy & get a jargon rating – 1 being jargon-free, 4 barely fit for human consumption, and 6 bottom of the bird cage
- Offers alternative words & a contest to see who can write the best (or worst) release. Top prizes include \$1000 to charity of winner's choice. "We're challenging people to stop copping out and use their creativity to make clear what it is they're trying to say," says Wood
- Warns against use of the "lame-ass quote" (LAQ) – meaningless, drippy sentences from some exec, used when writers can't get any "real" quotes. (More from [www.jargonfreeweb.com](#))

2ND YOUTH ISSUE TO WATCH: TIGHT RESTRICTIONS ON TEENS vs. WANING OF "JUVENILE" JUSTICE = CONFLICTED SOCIETY

When it comes to the youth public, does our culture want it both ways? Adults are employing new & more numerous methods to restrict kids' freedom (see last week's [pr](#)). From new technologies that track activities to curfews & laws requiring parental consent for fads such as body piercing, teens' lives are increasingly monitored & their behavior curtailed. E.g., in Maryland a new law will soon prohibit teens from driving together until the driver has had his/her license for a year or more.

But a simultaneous tho paradoxical trend is afoot – more juveniles are being tried as adults & serving adult sentences. In the past decade nearly every state has passed laws making it easier for minors to be tried in adult courts. Since '73, 17 people have been executed for crimes committed while under the age of 18 & most states with the death penalty say it's okay to execute juvenile offenders.

Underscoring all of this is the emergence of teens as a powerful market force. How should they be regarded? Treating them as a criminal underclass will hardly be satisfying them as customers.

WHO'S A GROWN UP?

Confusion arises from lack of standards – laws vary on when an individual reaches adulthood.

■ In general, at 18, kids can:

1. Vote (Cambridge, Mass., is considering lowering it to 16 for local elections)
2. Sign contracts
3. Fight in the military
4. File lawsuits
5. Make medical choices
6. Put a child up for adoption

■ At 21, they can:

1. Purchase a car & hold title
2. Drink liquor
3. Obtain abortions w/o parental consent (varies by state & whether sexual partner is a peer or adult)

DISAGREEMENT ON CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

National District Attorneys Ass'n says kids are more violent these days, which perception may explain both stepped up curfews & stricter punishments. An NDAA policy statement refers to "a new breed of juvenile delinquent – the serious, violent & habitual juvenile offender." "Kids are more prone, with less inhibition, to act violently in more extreme ways than ever in the past," says juvenile justice committee co-chair James Backstrom. "Instead of resolving their disputes with fists, kids are using baseball bats & hand guns. We didn't see that five years ago."

Psychologists & physicians disagree – say DAs blame the victim since teens are still children, learning, experiencing & maturing. Their studies find social causes – latchkey kids, available weapons, irresponsible parents, media culture of violence – cause some teens to act out in criminal ways.

Another driver could be what some call "drug-free hysteria." Mandatory drug testing in schools is being challenged in court as akin to entering a home without a warrant. In Ann Arbor, parents concerned about the overuse of school suspensions formed the Student Advocacy Center, which supports families whose children have been expelled because of zero-tolerance policies. "With zero tolerance, the really frightening part is we don't even pretend anymore we are committed to educating all children," says dir Ruth Zwifler. She calls the atmosphere at school "poisoned."

- Childhood, including teen years, is for learning – basic life education. There's agreement we all learn best from our failures & mistakes – as "learning org's" illustrate. Are we not applying these accepted truths to our own kids – also our customers & the next generation all of us will depend on when we're seniors? There's an opportunity for pr in facilitating this essential debate

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITONERS

- ¶ **Ups & Downs of New Tech Spawn Useful New Description: "Anticipointment".** Since everything in cyberspace accelerates, including time, perpetually optimistic Americans quickly find themselves disappointed when software, Websites or whatever are not as touted. Writing a chapter titled "Cyberspace, USA" in the new book *American Places*, historian Edward Ayers defines his