

Tho the strategy almost broke him, he improved the product & customers came back. Today, if someone wants to send, say, a snowsuit or a shoe back to Bean, the rep will ask the customer what s/he expected of the item &, based on the reply, will replace, repair, or refund.

- **“The point is that the customer determines the expectation, not us,”** Spaulding told *Fast Company* mag. “99.9% of our customers are totally honest. They’re just like your neighbors. And when you realize that your customers are just like you, the whole dynamic of your interaction with them changes”

**LANGUAGE LOVERS LISTEN UP:
WORDTREE HELPS YOU SAY EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN**

The power of word meaning is very influential, says *Wordtree* founding ed Henry Burger, brother of well-known counselor Chester Burger. For instance: “The very word ‘terrorist’ bestows power on that misfit.” Since behavioral science studies show the person who attacks innocent civilians really seeks to gain the aura of power, he suggests renaming terrorists ‘hell-bound savages’ or ‘condemned barbarians’ (pr 4/4/88).”

“Fastening” a grounded object can be a very different thing than “fastening” a sewn object. That’s why one is “staking,” the other is “suturing.” The word “jockeying” combines “riding” & “maneuvering.” This inside-out way of tracking is one of the functions of the *Wordtree* dictionary, a resource that attempts to “solve physical & social problems.” *Wordtree* is a type of reverse dictionary that codifies words, allowing wordsmiths et al to pinpoint concepts and trace cause and effect. Resource can be a useful tool for practitioners seeking exactitude in their communications.

A TIP FOR G.W. BUSH Burger says that poor memorability (mnemonics) and terminology (eponymy) are what’s holding back the Republicans from attaining statecraft. “Clinton ranks low in character polls,” he notes. “And so, the Democrats cleverly cite him distinctly from their new candidates. Note Gore’s promise of ‘reform’ (implying dissociation from his immediate predecessor).”

“Conservatives should be doing everything possible to make the two men indivisible.” That is, talking about the “Gore-Clinton” proposal, the “Gore Clinton years,” etc. “For similar reasons, Republicans should not term his candidate wife “Hillary Rodham Clinton,” but rather, “Mrs. Bill Clinton.” (More from *Wordtree* at 913/469-1010)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE FOR PROFESSIONALS

¶ **If Misery Loves Company, Practitioners Will Enjoy Reading *Not For Attribution*** – subtitled *A Treasury of Public Relations/Public Affairs Anecdotes*. Author Jon Allen says it shares “the foibles & idiosyncrasies of chief executive officers, told as only their pr & pa staffers can.” Collection outlines in wry, often humorous detail how things sometimes don’t go as planned. (\$18 from Xlibris Books, 436 Walnut St, Phila 19106-3703; 888/795-4747)

¶ **Under The Radar Strategy Reaches New Low – 6 Pt Type, To Be Exact** – in a fullpage ad urging more effort be put into overcoming high blood pressure, as the federal Healthy People 2000 initiative proposed. Signed by 35 top physicians, whose positions & bios dominate, ad is sponsored by drugmaker Bristol Myers Squibb – notes the tiny, almost unreadable line at the bottom. Why so shy?

**STUDY: INTRANET BECOMING TOOL OF CHOICE FOR REACHING
EMPLOYEES – BUT MORE PERSONAL METHODS STILL VITAL**

For alerting employees & managers about policies, benefits & the like, most human resources departments say they rely most heavily on Intranets. That is the key finding of a study by Watson Wyatt Worldwide (Bethesda, Md). But when asked which methods are best for 6 specific purposes, personal methods like call centers & interactive voice response systems ranked highest on 4 of the 6.

The consultancy polled hr execs from 295 companies to find out how they deliver services, benefits, insurance info, etc. to employees. Findings show a heavy reliance on Web technology, with Intranet in the lead. **Would this finding be the same for pr dep’ts – since they are, in most org’ns, responsible for employee com’ns & engagement?**

- “Web-based technology is quickly becoming the preferred service delivery vehicle,” says WWW’s Steve McCormick. “With the evolution of the Web, the era of e-hr has finally arrived in the workplace.” This frees hr dep’ts for more strategic activities, e.g., acquisition, retention, & growth of high-performance workers

INTRANET & INTERNET SEEN AS RELIABLE, ESPECIALLY FOR INFO TRANSFER

Execs were asked which technology – Intranet, Internet, interactive voice response systems (IVR), or call centers – best achieved certain goals. Altho Web tech dominates, they continue to mix strategies & technologies. And when engaging workers is key, personal techniques take the lead. Percentages of respondents’ usage are:

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Intranet</u>	<u>Internet</u>	<u>IVR</u>	<u>Call Center</u>
Enhance employee communication:	73%	53%	30%	43%
Improve service to employees/mgrs:	59	56	66	68
Promote common corporate culture:	45	31	6	15
Refocus hr on strategic activities:	29	22	43	44
Improve transaction accuracy, integrity:	26	25	49	32
Reduce costs:	28	23	40	31

“Web technology is commonly used for document access while IVR & call centers, both non-visual technologies, tend to be used primarily for benefits enrollment & personal data changes. The key is to find the right tools for the right jobs & integrate those services.” Yet, hr execs with IVR systems reported the *highest* level of satisfaction (36%) in achieving their objectives. 80% reported a *high* level of satisfaction with Intranets.

The execs find employees are still skittish about privacy issues, a problem that can hamper communication. “Some **employees** are still concerned about info security with the Web, more so than



IVR. Higher expectations of Web technology may also be a factor in the lower satisfaction rate with the Web.”

Still, these hr execs are relying on Net technologies more. Use of IVR has declined from 71% in '98 to 46% today. (More from Gretchen Ace at 301/581-4538.)

TOP WORKERS CARE MORE ABOUT REPUTATION THAN PAY

Watson Wyatt (see previous article) has become a major research library on employee relations, with studies coming out at least monthly. Its new study of top-performing employees – as identified by their employers – proves again the timelessness of Herzberg's "hygiene" vs. "motivation" differentiation:

<u>Motivations of Top Employees</u>	<u>% Saying "Very Significant"</u>
◆ Desire to maintain good work reputation	81%
◆ Importance of the work	76
◆ Appreciation by others	66
◆ Interesting work	51
◆ Personal desire to please superior	20
◆ Expectation of financial reward	15

All but the last item are motivation factors – the way to engage workers. Good pay is a hygiene factor – important but only the "price of admission" to be able to engage them. Granted, top employees are probably well paid, but in this era of entrepreneurial greed & get-rich-quick schemes, it's well to remember there is still a basic core of fundamentally decent workers who just want to do good work for their own self-fulfillment.

Survey covered 551 large employers. (More from Ed Emerman at 609/452-567, or eaglpr@aol.com)

"BUILT TO LAST" OR "BUILT TO FLIP"? TEMPORARY COMPANIES THAT CASH OUT QUICKLY INCREASE PUBLIC DISTRUST OF ORG'NS

In the greedy 80s, people were buying up run-down houses, fixing them up & flipping them for a huge profit. Today, the same idea seems to have infected organizational culture. While some companies continue to train managers on how to build a durable, lasting org'n that will thrive in the face of change, a different theory seems to be taking root, spawning a rash of companies whose motto seems to be "get rich & get out."

In this culture, companies are formed for the purpose of being siphoned financially. "In extreme form, these companies include people who are just trying to make as much money as possible for the founders & cash out quickly with a buyout or IPO," author & management theorist Jim Collins (Boulder) told prr.

- **"It's not compatible with doing anything worthwhile** – not for employees, not for customers, not for society"
- **But the downside is a negative impact on trust in all org'ns** – especially when coupled with merger mania & the resulting downsizing, still a very active practice in all types of org'ns

BUILT TO LAST BASED ON TIME HONORED TRUISMS

Collins co-wrote the '94 bestseller, *Born to Last*, which profiled 20th C. icons such as GE, Wal-Mart, Disney & IBM. He says what made these companies outstanding was their adherence to core values including hard work, and the commitment to greatness. "BTL was not about building something that would simply last. It was about building something *worthy* of lasting – about building a company of such intrinsic excellence the world would lose something important if that organization ceased to exist."

Has this notion become passe? Collins likens the current climate to a gold rush in which an "I deserve that, too" attitude abounds. "Companies with no significant products, profits or prospects scramble to position themselves in the Internet space," Collins told *Fast Company* mag. "If you have a flippable idea, you won't have much trouble today finding capital." It doesn't even matter whether or not the idea is a good one as long as you can get out before the bubble bursts. Ironically, he says, less than 20% of the top 133 flip IPOs showed any profits as of mid-'99.

"The fundamentals will win out in the end. Keep in mind that those who focus on providing a significant & valuable contribution to their customers, and do so at a price that generates consistent & positive cash flow, will still prevail in the end," Collins told prr. "And those who create a place where the best people want to work, will prevail even more."

HOW GAIN TRUST FOR ORG'NS? BUILT TO WORK IS THE NEW BEST WAY

The BTF philosophy is bound to burn out, as the recent turbulence of tech stocks harbingers. Indeed, *Wall Street Journal* alluded to the fact that Internet insiders, those best informed about a company, collectively went on a selling spree in Feb & March, just weeks before the plunge – another symptom of this selfish philosophy. The richest & most savvy get out, leaving others holding the empty bag. Collins says for the new economy to regain its soul, people have to recommit to excellence, no matter how arduous the task.

"The real question, the essential question is this: Is your org'n built to work?" This requires working hard to: a) create a **superb management team**; b) develop a **sustainable economic engine**; c) **cultivate a culture** that can withstand adversity & change, d) **be the best** in the world at what you do. (More from Collins at 303/473-9898)

CASE: L.L. BEAN'S QUEST TO DISCERN, SATISFY CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

A harried parent puts a child's snowsuit in the dryer, forgetting to read the label, which warns against excessive heat. The zipper melts, and the parent contacts L.L. Bean – "I never thought a dryer set too high would ruin the coat," the parent complains. "**Would you like a refund or a replacement?**" is the cheerful reply. That scenario is typical, as the outdoor outfitter seeks to discern customers' expectations and then tries to meet them.

"Our premise is simple," says Elizabeth Spaulding, vp customer satisfaction. "If a product doesn't meet a customer's expectations – whatever they may be – we will replace it, repair it, or refund the customer's money." Policy dates to 1912, when founder Leon Leonwood Bean issued his first 100 pairs of the Maine Hunting Shoe, with a money back guarantee if customers weren't fully satisfied. When 90 pairs came back, he sent refunds for all.