

## COMING SOON TO AN ORG'N NEAR YOU – PROBABLY YOUR OWN

them – are real, & will become the performance measurement tool for all org'ns.

These studies, added to the many done previously, leave little doubt nonfinancial indicators – & pr's key role in achieving

- **The task for the profession** is to get out ahead in helping to shape, first, *what* exactly is measured &, second, *how* the evaluation is done. If pr doesn't, the accounting profession will shove its version down our throats

This is the group whose major firms have been fined heavily for malfeasance in basic practices over the past few years, starting with the S&L scandal. Now they're fighting with the SEC about conflicts of interest, e.g. accountants owning shares of companies they audit. Technically, this is referred to as the independence of auditors. Tho they've been ordered to hive off their consulting arms into separate companies, can pr rely on these consulting competitors to design evaluation systems for pr? (Copies of studies: Conference Board research report 1261-99-RR from 212/759-0900; E&Y from Jill Therrien @ 617/761-4008)

## ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **The Case For Sending Charitable Dollars To College.** Curt Weeden, head of Corporate Contributions Academy, recently excoriated colleges & universities for hogging charitable dollars (pr 3/27) that could otherwise be used to help the poor & needy. His remarks drew these comments from a reader who works in fundraising for an Ivy League school. "At universities, you can address the root causes of poverty & homelessness. Furthermore, the universities in this nation set us apart from the rest of the world. Imagine the impact of a Harvard Business School, Law School, College of Arts & Sciences, in the middle of St. Petersburg. Universities are enormously successful in terms of basic research – research that is driving the world economy." Moreover, many of them teach courses on feeding the homeless. "Some of these kids have started fabulous programs in Los Angeles, New York & other places to house, feed & clothe the poor. Hundreds of the students here are involved in a variety of public service programs with the local area & beyond.... Not everyone here is setting up Internet companies. So, I think universities have an interest in supporting causes that concern all of us and they do it very well."

¶ **Boulder PR Firm Only One Of Many Employers Offering Sabbaticals.** Metzger Assocs (pr 5/1) isn't alone in its unusual "lifestyle" benefits package, which includes 60-day sabbaticals. Others are finding too many employees are burning out in this booming economy, so they're giving them breaks – long ones. Slowly but surely, an increasing number of law firms, computer companies, investment banking firms etc. are massaging their employees in this way, reports *Wall Street Journal*. Microsoft awards vps 8 weeks after a 7-year tenure; Ivillage, Inc., a women's Internet site, gives month-long sabbaticals after 2-1/2 years. The firms see the sabbaticals as insurance against burn out & a way to shore up waning company loyalty. After all, replacing an employee can cost as much as 3-1/2 times that person's salary. Downside for the company: scrambling to cover in the employee's absence. For the employee, there are often real concerns about career growth. Both the new-on-board & veteran workers fear that if the firm runs well without them, then they could be viewed as dispensable, especially when the boom goes bust. Will it happen where *you* work?

## POWERPOINT: ANOTHER COMMUNICATION "IMPROVEMENT" THAT IS OFTEN THE OPPOSITE – A DISTANCING & OBFUSCATION DEVICE

"How did a piece of technology that was supposed to improve communication become a barrier to it?" asks *The Wall Street Journal*. Easy. Transferring info is only part of a presentation. Connecting with the audience, plus engaging them in the ideas, is more persuasive. PowerPoint – like the endless streams of overheads that preceded it – is canned, cold & usually carries far more detail than the audience wants – or than will get the message across. Besides, usually the lights get turned down – & we all know what effect that has!

- **Remember the trial lawyers' rule:** Never make more than 3 points to a jury; every additional point erodes the impact & understanding of your case.

*WSJ* article reported U.S. military is finally catching on to the waste of time & loss of com'n caused by the endless, overly detailed briefings that are so much a part of military & gov't life – & are infecting all types of org'ns. Give managers or practitioners a new toy ...

### WHAT MAKES BETTER PRESENTATIONS?

#### 1. Above all, the speaker must connect.

Here as elsewhere, establishing trust & expertise (or call it credibility & knowledge) underlies any sharing of ideas or even data. Have you ever presented research findings to a group which didn't want to believe them? Or strategy proposals to managers or clients who were looking for a silver bullet? Canned slides in a darkened room defeat connecting

2. **Talking to the audience**, of whatever size, making eye contact, looking at all corners of the group – these personalize the interchange. Also permit audience members to do what they're psychologically going to do anyway, consciously or subconsciously – form their perceptions of you. Paying this kind of attention – call it respect – to the audience augurs a positive perception, whether or not you're an accomplished speaker. How many presenters do we all know who are not the smoothest, yet everyone listens & gets their messages – because they speak *with* us, not to us or at us

**Overheard in a graduate business school elevator:** "What happened?" says one student to another. "When we reviewed our PowerPoint on the computer last night, the presentation seemed great. But on the large screen in that room just now, the green background made it impossible to read. And the jazzy artwork we thought made the visuals so cool just got in the way. The panel (apparently of professors) is going to mark us way down!"

3. **Think of slides, overheads, PowerPoint pages – whatever you call them – as illustrations** to your talk. They symbolize visually the ideas

or data you’re presenting. Remember a few years back when multimedia presentations were the rage? Research showed the flashing images & loud music actually stopped audiences from getting the messages. It found that, at that stage of technology, the most powerful presentation was a slide projector, with just a few slides, & a live speaker who spent most of the time talking with – &, if the venue or subject allowed, involving – the audience

**We must come out from behind PowerPoint & our computers & converse with our audiences.** Which raises the issue: do some practitioners like PowerPoint for precisely the reason they can sit at keyboards & craft messages without having to personally interact with people – a longing to return to the “good old days” when pr basically meant writing? Understandable nostalgia, but ...

**DANGEROUS WHEN DISCUSSING ISSUES** Well-known risk com’n specialist Vince Covello calls PowerPoint “a tool not to use when communicating to a highly concerned audience.” He points out that PowerPoint communicates a non-verbal message of linearity, i.e., the audience does not count. Their perception of you as caring & empathetic decreases – & caring/empathy perception counts heavily in the trust factor. Conclusion: **PowerPoint presentation to an audience highly concerned about your issue is a no-win situation.**

**DEFINITIVE STATEMENT CONCERNING WHETHER HOMOSEXUALITY IS A CIVIL RIGHT MAY BE THE ONE ISSUED LAST WEEK**

Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, rebuking the U.S.’ “Dr. Laura” Schlesinger for virulent attacks against gays & lesbians on her call-in radio show, stated:

*The sexual practices of gays & lesbians are as much a part of their being as the color of one’s skin or the gender, religion, age or ethnicity of an individual*

Practitioners caught in homophobia issues may find the statement a useful reference. Southern Baptist Conference prediction that this would be the major issue of the 90s & beyond seems to have been prescient. In the past 2 weeks, Vermont approved gay & lesbian civil unions short of “marriage” & the Methodist church voted that its ministers may not perform union ceremonies, use the church for such ceremonies & other prohibitions.

**U.S., CANADA DIFFER ON THE EXTENT OF FREE SPEECH** The balance of the Council’s statement illustrates a major cultural difference between U.S. & Canada: “In Canada, we respect freedom of speech but do not worship it.... To use such brutal language as (Dr. Laura) does about such an essential characteristic flies in the face of Canadian provisions relating to human rights.” It’s a criminal act to “willfully promote hatred” against any group. Stations carrying the show must now censor it – as the Council ordered in an earlier case involving Howard Stern’s belittling of French-Canadians as “scumbags” who ought to learn English.

Most Canadian radio & tv broadcasters belong to the voluntary, self-policing organization.

**2 NEW MAJOR REPORTS BY IMPORTANT ORGANIZATIONS ILLUMINATE THE SHAPE NON-FINANCIAL INDICATORS MAY TAKE**

SPMs are the newest initials practitioners working on evaluation & measurement need to learn – Strategic Performance Measures. They’re vital because of several findings in a study done for The Conference Board by A.T. Kearney: companies whose stock price outperforms competitors are likely to have a formal SPM system. Since publicly held corporations set the tone for all org’ns, count on SPMs coming to yours.

- **More to the point, those using SPMs are communicating about them** with the financial community, employees & others – including report cards on them in annual reports – making them already *de facto* nonfinancial indicators
- **A critical reason for using SPMs** is “org’n lacks focus” (44%), followed by “employees confused about strategy actions” (28%)

**TOP 3 MEASURES ALL PR-RELATED** Customer satisfaction is #1 for 30% of respondents & among the top 3 for 50%. Market share is #2 with 14% & 35% respectively, followed by **innovation/new product development** at 7% & 32%. (See prr 3/20 for pr’s principal role here)

- **One barrier is that 64% still use SPMs primarily to focus on performance against budget**, illustrating the need for a Balanced Scorecard approach (another term rapidly becoming familiar) which also looks at customers & employees etc
- **“Expect cultural resistance”** says report’s author, as 23% report it “mostly” & 54% “to some extent” – showing again how pr expertise is vital in introducing SPM systems

**ERNST & YOUNG’S VALUE CREATION INDEX** “Traditional methods of assessing orgn’l performance are no longer adequate in today’s economy. Value today is increasingly represented in intangible assets like people, ideas & brands.” The problem, says E&Y, is learning how to measure them in accounting terms. While VCI is clearly in its early stages, the list of 9 “most critical categories of nonfinancial performance” bears study – & shows **pr has a role in most:**

Innovation	Mgmt Capabilities	Brand Value
Quality	Alliances	Employee Relations
Customer Relations	Technology	Environmental & Community Issues

In “predictive market value” in E&Y’s study, “innovation” is #1 – followed by “management quality” & “employee relations.” This differs with the Conference Board findings above – but is close. And:

- **In traditional companies**, 50% of company value is based on the 9 factors
- **In e-commerce companies**, “a whopping 90% of their value is based on these factors”