

4. ASSIGN GREATER IMPORTANCE TO SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Among the milestones cited by PRSA's highest award winners during the "Listening To The Legends" Luncheon, **John Graham** (chrm & CEO, Fleishman-Hillard) named "getting companies to take socially responsive initiatives." A related milestone was "putting ethics to work more vigorously." (Other milestones included: "getting CEOs to speak out publicly" and "getting companies to shape legislative issues.") He reminded the audience that social expectations have been changing. Responding to change back in the 60s and 70s, Citibank helped finance inner city businesses and provide training programs.

"Business is moving closer to accepting social responsibility," **Matthew Gonring** (Baxter International) noted in a session on "Public Relations' Role in Helping Organizations Learn." But when questioned about **which companies are most likely to embrace social responsibility, he cited three enabling conditions:** 1) beliefs of the CEO and top management; 2) "how much pressure they're getting from Wall St."; and 3) the public nature of the firm. He observed that European businesses are supporting the social responsibility concept of *sustainable development* much more than U.S. firms. He recommends a triple bottom line: profits, environment, and social responsibility.

Coretta Scott King strongly advocated corporate social responsibility and identified next **January 21, the Martin Luther King holiday, as an appropriate time** for humanitarian service. **John Paluszek**, (pres. of Ketchum Public Affairs) promoted a newly formed PRSA group, Strategic Social Responsibility Committee, to explore the subject.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORED. Patrick Jackson during the "Legends" Luncheon for his lifetime service to the profession and to PRSA. A 15-minute video of Otto Lerbinger interviewing Pat regarding Pat's philosophy of the profession was a moving tribute – Pat's own words defining the legacy he leaves for those who follow in his footsteps. Known about in advance by only a select few, the *new* Patrick Jackson Lifetime Service to PRSA Award was given to Betsy Ann Plank – PRSA's first woman pres, co-founder & co-chair of PRSSA, founding member of PRSA's College of Fellows, and member of numerous boards & task forces.

DIED. Sammie Lynn Puett (chancellor of internet-based degrees at U of TN), October 11 when struck by a car. Longtime leader & member of PRSA's Volunteer Chapter (Knoxville); UT's PRSSA chapter bears her name.

ELECTED. PRSA 2002 officers: pres, Joann Killeen (Killeen Communications, Los Angeles); immed past pres, Kathleen Lewton (Fleishman-Hillard, NYC); pres elect, Reed Byrum (Ford/Trilogy Joint Venture, Austin); sec'y, Judith Phair (Council on Competitiveness, DC); treas, Del Galloway (Husk Jennings Advertising, Jacksonville, FL).

AWARDS. PRSA's 2001 individual award winners: Gold Anvil, PRSA's highest individual honor, to Ofield Dukes (Ofield Dukes & Assocs, DC); Professional of the Year to James Murphy (Accenture, NYC); Outstanding Educator is Laurie Wilson (Brigham Young Univ, Provo); Paul M. Lund Public Service Award to Joseph Vecchione (retired Prudential, Belleville, NJ).

PRSA CONFERENCE DRAWS LARGE NUMBERS. PR HAS BIG ROLE IN NATION'S HEALING, RECOVERY. SELF-EXAMINATION NEEDED

The 1,500 PRSA and 1,100 PRSSA members who flew or drove to Atlanta to attend the International Conference on *The Power of PR in a Changing World* were applauded by **Kathleen Lewton**, PRSA's presiding chair/CEO and sr. vp, partner of Fleishman-Hillard. She called the assemblage a "huge symbol of recovery and support for the country." **Andrew Young**, chrm of GoodWorks International and pres. of the National Council of Churches, one of the speakers at the general session, said, "Really glad to see you here in such good numbers," noting that 18 other groups had cancelled.

Patriotism and solemnity marked the beginning of the opening general session. Flag bearers carried the American and state flags; the audience sang the national anthem and said the Pledge of Allegiance.

SEPTEMBER 11 CHANGED THE WORLD BUT THE EVENT WAS NOT UNIQUE

Many speakers referred to September 11, most agreeing with **William Marks** (Coca-Cola's vp pr): "We're living in a world never seen before." Tying this thought to the conference theme, he, told attendees at the Educators Academy luncheon that we must adjust to changing times by "communicating new realities of managing change in a meaningful and effective way." He **praised pr and recognized it as "one of the main methods of education in the world today."** He discovered this as co-chair of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, when a pupil whose school was being visited by the Olympic Committee was asked why the Olympics should be held in Atlanta. The pupil yelled out, "Because it's 'a city too busy to hate.'" This was the slogan created by a local pr person.

Young carried the implications of Sept. 11 further by saying we "cannot take life for granted...that illusion was taken from us...we're being reshaped." At this time of crisis, we must try to redefine America and where we're going to remove the obstacles in the way, he said.

Sept. 11 was **not** an important *economic* event; it had negligible direct effect, according to **Lester Thurow**, (MIT management & economics prof and former dean of the Sloan School of Management). But **the event's indirect effects in changing people's attitudes from optimism to pessimism are having impact**, especially because the event occurred in the middle of early negative reports on how we were faring in the second quarter. He talked about the **"herd" mentality – one of three characteristics of capitalism.** We are genetically programmed to run as a herd. If a herd of antelope sees a lion, grass waving in the wind, or sees other antelope running, thousands run, even though only one will be eaten. This same phenomenon explains the recent drop in stock prices, especially in the dot-com businesses, he told attendees at his talk, "It's STILL the Economy: How Global Economic Forces Will Impact PR."

Threatening events existed long before Sept. 11, observed **Jonathan Wootliff**, managing director of Stakeholder Strategies at Edelman Public Relations Worldwide in Atlanta, citing previous terrorist attacks and continuing problems like world poverty. What is different is the way the media are conveying the event.

WHY SO MANY PEOPLE HATE US

Despite the surge of patriotism, many Americans are engaging in soul-searching.

Why do so many people hate us? Here are some explanations from speakers:

- **We're cut off from everybody else – Coretta Scott King.** She notes, Americans are “born to a level of privilege that is unimaginable in the world in which we live.” Lester Thurow provided the statistic that world per capita income disparity is 140 to 1, and growing. Even with Canada, the gap with the U.S. has doubled in the last few decades.
- **We're frightening the world because we are a symbol of change – Lester Thurow.** We're willing to accept the risk of change in the U.S. In fact, we not only tolerate failure if some venture goes wrong, we lionize some entrepreneurs who go into bankruptcy because they are truly risk takers.
- **We're prime movers in globalization – Michael McDermott.** The Sept. 11 crisis will not, however, stop globalization, notes Thurow. It's not a question of “if” but “where” multinationals will move abroad. (China will look attractive because it has both investment opportunities and low risk.)
- **We are a superpower – Lester Thurow.** We can't expect to be loved by the world; all we can expect is to be respected and feared.

SOME ACTIONS PR SHOULD TAKE:

1. RECOMMITMENT TO AMERICAN IDEALS

- **Coretta Scott King**, author of *The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.* and *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.*, won applause at the final general session when she told attendees, “Americans have a special obligation not to let this anger degenerate into hatred.” We must do something positive and constructive, she implored. Carrying on the message of her husband, she called for “**international and multicultural unity of the world**” – for a sisterhood and brotherhood of all people. “The best recovery is living well...not just in material things but in becoming more loving, caring and compassionate...not only in our country but the world.”
- **Andrew Young** urged Americans to **promote their values – of freedom and fairness – and way of life.** Politicians can't do this because the media limit them to 20-second sound bites. We should try to understand other cultures. When asked whether this means *accepting* other cultures, such as inhumane treatment of women in some Muslim nations, he emphatically said no; understanding is different from accepting.
- **William Marks** said Coca-Cola learned that the way to face adversity – referring to its problems with contamination in Belgium and discrimination lawsuits by its employees – is to **reaffirm the company's “timeless values of friendship, family, and the moments of connection that bring people together.”** These values will never go out of style. One way it applied these values was to make donations to the rebuilding of New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. It didn't broadcast this decision nor spend a lot of time making it. “Just do the right thing.” In its home city of Atlanta, Coca-Cola replaced its billboards with the simple, heartfelt message, “We Live as Many – We Stand as One.”

2. EXTEND THE VALUES OF DIVERSITY AND LISTEN TO DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS

As a nation consisting of a mosaic of national backgrounds, religions and races, the United States is in a unique position to promote the doctrine of diversity. Between 80 & 100 million Americans belong to a variety of ethnic groups.

- **Recognize Growing Importance of NGOs.** Non-government organizations (NGOs) are recognized by the United Nations and, since “The Battle of Seattle,” are gaining more media coverage. They are more trusted than governments or corporations on subjects like the environment (55% believe NGOs) and human rights (60%). Some NGOs have become “superbrands,” e.g., Amnesty International and Greenpeace. They're also very effective because they: 1) take the offensive all the time, 2) simplify complex issues, 3) form unusual coalitions, 4) have a clear agenda, 5) move at Internet speed, and 6) know how to feed on the media. They hit where it hurts: a company's customers, legislators and regulators, the media, and, now becoming more important, financial markets. These are some points made by **Michael McDermott** and **Jonathan Wootliff** in a session on “Building Relationships with Non-Government Organizations.”

The term “Non-Government Organizations” (NGOs) is used to describe private, often grassroots, organizations concerned with local, regional, national or worldwide issues.

Conflict Or Cooperation. They quoted Sir John Browne, Amoco's (now British Petroleum) CEO: “Business cannot afford to fall into the trap of automatically seeing NGOs as enemies.” Don't accept the myths that they're all communists intent on destroying capitalism, that they want to stop progress, and are not interested in solutions. Speakers did acknowledge that some NGOs use terrorist tactics and hold such extreme views that negotiations are impossible. Accordingly, Wootliff advised: 1) Don't underestimate or ignore NGOs, 2) Don't rely on threats and litigation in dealing with them, 3) Don't create confrontation, and 4) Don't think of them as all the same. On the positive side, he also advised: 1) Know who's watching you (often on Internet sites), 2) Use the Internet as an advocacy tool and be prepared to move fast; 3) Develop opportunities for dialogue, and 4) Talk their language.

The long list of **NGO issues serve as a good beginning for issue identification.** The top five are: 1) environment, 2) conservation & ecology (environmentalists named President Bush for an award on who did the most to raise awareness of the issue of climate change when he turned down the Kyoto treaty!), 3) labor conditions & human rights, 4) trade policies, and 5) wages & working conditions.

3. REINVIGORATE THE ECONOMY

The need to **rebuild confidence in our economy** was mentioned by several speakers but particularly emphasized by **Lester Thurow.** In his opinion **fiscal policy is the key**, because the other options – more business investment, more consumption, more exports, and more real estate development – aren't working. But we need more than the planned \$100 billion stimulus; he recommends \$250 billion if we are to avoid the experience of Japan, which is still in recession because of its timid fiscal stimulus. Thurow also believes this is **an ideal time for “willingness to take a risk.”** He advises small- and middle-sized companies to engage in niche markets because pr people are familiar with different audiences.