

The stories make concepts visible – like using projective scenarios to explain strategic options. Topics covered are the ones critical to being a true leader, such as:

1. **Rewards & risks of shared leadership** – participation, engagement, involvement. Checklists candidly cover the real challenges, e.g. a) why staff may resist shared decisionmaking, b) overcoming such resistance, c) behaviors that promote conflict, d) skills for managing conflict & e) a shared decisionmaking model
2. **Colleagues as coaches & evaluators** – plus portrait of a valuable coach, described as “a leader with a heart.” Guideline charts include: a) coaching strategies, b) behaviors of a valuable coach

An especially timely chapter covers managing racial tensions – a topic on which everyone can learn from school experience. Co-author Marilyn Saltzman (mpr, Jefferson County Schools) has 2 decades of hard won school pr experience – including responsibility with Rick Kaufmann for dealing with the Columbine tragedy. (166 pgs, \$18.95, Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colo)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **Semantics Does Make a Difference. Example 1:** Many org’s like to show their enviro sensitivity by running the “printed on recycled paper” line. A new twist is to note “printed on *recyclable* paper.” Since nearly all paper can be recycled, this apparently frees the user to ignore the enviro factor. **Example 2:** Advocates for children are urging a change from “day care” to “child care” to reinforce understanding that child care is far more than baby-sitting. This also helps repositions day care programs as educational – prompted by studies that now show kids should start formal schooling at some level at age 3, not 5 or 6.

¶ **The Concern That Technology Can Make Photos & Documents Lie** – now easy with digitized cameras & “development” capabilities on computers (pr 4/10/95) – isn’t new. Airbrushing was available, and it worked for copies & publishing photos even if it could be easily detected on originals. New photo tech, of course, has no original/copy distinction. To see dishonest photos at their zenith, buy or find a copy of *The Commissar Vanishes* by David King. Subtitled “The Falsification of Photography & Art in Stalin’s Russia,” artbook-sized volume documents how officials disappeared from photographic records of meetings, parades etc as the paranoid dictator & his inhuman KGB erased them in life. A 1919 shot of Stalin & others sitting around Lenin became one of just Stalin with Lenin. Later, when his cult of personality was growing, it became a portrait of Stalin alone. Similarly, many crowd scenes are retouched to hold 1 or 2 persons as the others are branded traitors after show trials, or just executed without trial. Shows the importance the former USSR put on propaganda, and justifies US military’s concern for strict policies to outlaw photo manipulation.

¶ **Longtime Political Leader Harold Stassen**, who died this month, refused to hire the typical campaign “image staff,” as he termed them. And felt using polls to determine positions on issues meant letting “an uninformed public” dictate. That, he declaimed, was following, not leading.

WHO’S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. Katie Paine (Delahaye Medialink) named chair, Commission on PR Measurement & Evaluation of the Institute for PR, succeeding

Bruce Jeffries-Fox (who has left AT&T, is now with The Insight Farm)

IF NEGATIVE TALK FUELS RECESSION, EMPLOYERS CAN HELP AVOID ONE BY USING INTERNAL COM’NS TO GIVE THE FACTS

Classical economic theory is simply wrong, as any pr student or astute citizen can attest. It isn’t econometric models, interest rates, stock prices – or even earnings reports & consumer confidence studies – that cause recessions or downturns. The causal factor is psychology – *how people respond*, & especially (since few of us truly understand these statistics, & many are frequently faulty) *how people are preconditioned to respond* by opinion leaders & trusted org’s.

Economics is pr, pure & simple. Or at least *economic behavior* is. Therefore, employers can help avoid a psychologically induced recession or hard landing by using a basic pr tactic.

1. **Provide employees with a balanced perspective** of what’s really happening on a regular, almost daily, basis
 - When interest rates are raised or lowered, have the CFO, an economist or other acknowledged expert explain what it means – why was it done, & how will it likely impact the employer & the employee
 - Ditto when the stock market falls or is turbulent, consumer confidence studies show a decline, some economic or political observers make statements suggesting disaster ahead or everything’s rosy

2. **Urge them to pass along this data** to family, relatives, friends, the church choir, the bridge club etc

Make them messengers of hope amidst a politico-media environment of fear & impending disaster. It is, of course, as unethical to overhype how good things really are as it was to claim the e-world meant never-ending boom times. The objective is to be objective, but a cup-half-full perspective is ok.

PRECEDENT 20 years ago Coors Brewing Co. found that a valuable win-win program an employer can offer workers is economic education. Thru a series of courses & publications, employees got Economics 101 in a way that 2 objectives were achieved:

1. **Employees were better able to manage their personal finances**, thus making them more aware of job benefits but especially helping them concentrate on their work by alleviating financial worries
2. **The company could gain understanding of its decisions & policies more readily** from a workforce that had a grasp of the economics of running a highly competitive business

In an industry as hard fought as brewing, with a flat market & powerful domestic & import competitors, tough decisions must be made – regularly. Keeping the org’s family motivated even when things aren’t rosy is vital to competing successfully. But if workers have unrealistic notions of how much profit or surplus an org’n makes & what margins are, don’t realize how waste & errors can be crippling, why



financial markets must be served & why customers must come first in any circumstance – the org'n is at a huge competitive disadvantage.

Coors' program was extremely successful. Other employers asked to import it & eventually it was spun off as a profit center. Phillips Petroleum had a similar program, as did others.

- **It's time to bring economic education back to the workplace.** A majority of today's workforce has never experienced a downturn. Despite higher education levels today, understanding of economic forces is not common. Yes, a campaign may cost money, or temporarily overshadow another effort – but with a nation riveted on the economic roller coaster, with lunchroom & water cooler conversations featuring it, mgmt ignores this macro-societal influence at its peril. One can make a long list of ways it can debilitate the org'n

FDR was right: We have nothing to fear but fear itself. His speech & follow-up campaign on this theme were milestones in pr history, & a major element in turning around the Great Depression. Now, pr in the workplace can save the greatest boom economy in history.

A few public statements from CEOs, CFOs & org'l economists giving a reasoned & balanced view wouldn't hurt, either. (For a packet of case studies & related info, contact [pr](#))

IF IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, DON'T DO IT

Canny investor Warren Buffett refused to buy into the tech craze, sticking with stocks & subsidiaries with proven businesses & long term success potential. Last year he was criticized for his stance, & stock in his investment conglomerate, Berkshire Hathaway, actually fell a little as a result (for the first time). He stuck to his guns saying that companies with little or no actual sales income simply couldn't be worth several billion dollars, as the hyped market valued them at the time.

Result: BH reported its 2000 results last week, as follows – earnings doubled, net profit rising 114%. Stock price is up 74%, while the Nasdaq index, mainly tech stocks, has fallen 60%. Most of the companies BH owns or holds investments in are definitely Old Economy, often basic industries.

GUIDE FOR BALANCING USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN PR?

Dave Therkelsen (Red Cross Blood Svcs, St. Paul), a rare practitioner who also investigates new theoretical concepts for the profession, writes the following in the current issue

of *Journal of Communication Management*:

“So make your Website a great one. Make certain you can target key publics down to the well-profiled individual. Exploit the vast power of data mining. Be sure your disaster plan includes response to cyber-activist tactics. Do online secondary research, & online surveys. Be a better professional by doing these things.

“But never forget that public relations is ultimately about relationships. The public relations executive who develops, maintains & manages relationships superbly will bring far more value to a CEO & top management than a counterpart who is the high priest of the Website & the listserv.”

UNDERSTANDING THE NARROW REALM OF DIGITAL TOOLS

Just as manufacturers produce a wide range of products using a few tools, such as lathes, drill presses & molds, so a wide array of business designs are being devised from 6 basic computer & Internet tools, called “*bit engines*.” To “understand the business” in today's terms, practitioners must be familiar with these tools. Brief descriptions:

1. **Choiceboards** are interactive online ordering systems that let customers *design their own products* from a menu of choices. However, customers need solid knowledge of the items & how they want to use them – so choiceboards work for standard products like cars or appliances. They were described in detail in a [t&t](#) (3/12)
2. **Recommendation engines** help customers *make choices* from a product line or array of services. Customers state their needs & the engine advises on choices. Amazon.com, e.g., suggests books on subjects of interest. Since this is a service to customers, good possibilities for starting a relationship & retaining loyalty exist – provided the tone & ease-of-use are designed with these goals in mind
3. **Customer productivity engines** connect directly to the *vendor's computer programs*. Charles Schwab, e.g., lets investors use its financial planning & investment tools that give real-time data on market conditions & other data. Customers may come to depend on these engines, a loyalty link
4. **Learning engines** provide *online training* & give customers rapid understanding of new technologies, products & services. Some offer virtual classrooms & online libraries. This can be particularly useful after the sale by training purchasers to use products or new technologies. Frequently utilized by software producers to train a company's staff on new applications. Distance learning is a rising use – including college degrees by interactive learning engine
5. **Community engines** organize open-ended *online conversations* – chatrooms & similar. Or user groups for a product where questions can be asked & answers given by others in the “community”
6. **Marketplace engines** construct B2B marketplaces, *exchanges & auctions* of a short term nature, where a more sophisticated engine that can build relationships or provide data is not needed. A company buying electronic parts online, e.g., is merely looking for the best deal in a commodity. Part of the “best deal” is the cost reduction made possible by this efficient mode of buying & selling

Organizational efficiency, even competitiveness, is now gauged by use of these “invisible” tools – as opposed to drill presses which sit on the factory floor. The challenge is to integrate the various engines for absolutely smooth interactions with customers & others who use them. And – one of pr's roles – constantly promoting their use while also checking them for customer friendliness.

GUIDE TO BEING AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL TURNS OUT TO BE A MOST PRACTICAL LEARNING TOOL FOR ANY MANAGER

This should be no surprise, since principalship is among the most difficult jobs. Corporate, gov't, NPO & other execs – including pr staff mgrs – will find *Building School Communities: Strategies for Leaders* far more direct in its application to the job of leadership than most management volumes – which tend to overemphasize some guru's latest theory. Just overlook any school particulars.

- This book uses the most effective com'n method – storytelling – followed by information-mapped checklists for easy use in applying the learning