

PRESS RELATIONS GRIPES  
SHOW NEED TO EDUCATE MEDIA

Each year, dozens of public relations conferences, workshops & luncheons invite media reps to give practitioners helpful how-to's on working with the press.

But how often do practitioners reverse the tables and educate press on working with them? Michael Jablonski, dpr, TRW (Cleveland) listed these irritants for aspiring communicators at U. Missouri's School of Journalism:

1. Editors who call for first time, attempt to reach an operating executive and, when directed to pr dep't say, "Oh, I didn't want pr. I guess I won't get anything from you."
2. Reporters who want to speak only to the chairman of the board or president.
3. Journalists unprepared on subject who resist briefing. Or briefed, proceed to waste key executive's time double-checking everything they were told by the pr person.
4. Reporters who call almost weekly with a roundup. Later, taking quotes of your people and putting them in mouths of execs from other companies.

¶How best to educate press to work more effectively with pr? Have you developed techniques to remedy situations like these? Share views ... experiences ... with prr for symposium on ticklish area of media rels.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶High school seniors are changing attitudes toward traditional male/female roles. Survey Research Center (Ann Arbor, Mich.) found most '77 seniors believe wives should work, husbands help with child care & housework -- even if only husband employed. Some differences in male-female attitudes: More males (25%) than females (14%) oppose wives working full time. More females think working couple should share housework.

¶Video tape of annual meeting is way Emhart (Hartford, Conn.) brings event to shareholders worldwide. 25 min. cassette gives highlights of 2½ hr. session, includes nitty gritty Q & A's on chmn's expense account, why wife accompanies on overseas trips. Cassettes cost Emhart \$30 each. Mailed upon request with prepaid return postage. Shareholder critique invited.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

APPOINTED. Search committee to seek head of staff for PRSA: Pres. Kerryn King, Pres-elect, Patrick Jackson, directors, Judith Bogart, Stephen Baer and leading counselor, Harold Burson.

PEOPLE. Ronald L. Mau becomes mgr, adv & promo including pr, Allied Chem Ag div (Houston)...William V. Haney named dir, corp comms, Bendix (Southfield, MI.)... GenRad (Concord, MA) appoints Raymond F. McNulty mpr...1st Nat'l Bank of Boston

names Lloyd Earl Wheeler Jr. asst vp, corp comms...Burke M. Walker promoted to mgr special projects, corp comms, McCormick & Co (Hunt Valley, MD)...American Mgmt Assn (NYC) promotes Alfred Pearce Ilch to sr pr assoc ...Michael DeMita becomes staff vp-Wash. rels in D.C.; John McAuley named asst dir-corp & fin'l rels, and George L. Knox III mgr fin'l rels, Philip Morris (NYC)... International Harvester (Chi.) appoints Lawrence V. Jagnow mgr, comms srvs for Agricultural Equip Group.

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WHIRLPOOL USES PERSONAL MEDIA  
FOR ECONOMIC ED PROGRAM;  
FEEDBACK HELPS AVERT STRIKE

Recent articles in biz & communications publications chart tv as hot new employee communications tool. But hottest story may lie in continuing rise of personal media. Whirlpool Corp. (Benton Harbor, Mich.) found its face-to-face employee economic information program helped avert a plant strike this spring, according to Robert Wilson, mgr. salaried personnel. Division in question had two strikes, one lockout in past 9 years. Feedback gathered during economic discussion sessions provided framework for communications strategy -- something tv programs cannot do.

"Whirlpool has been big on using small group discussions for a number of years," Wilson told pr reporter. Company has more than 23,000 employees nationwide. Econ ed program -- known as one of the best in the nation since it began in '74 -- has provided over 20,000 hours of training. The small group discussions aren't new, using technique to communicate to large numbers is. Other ways Whirlpool uses personal media:

- Alphabetical meetings. Held by general mgrs, vps, dirs, or other top mgmt. Every nth name invited; groups kept to 10-15 people. General "chew the fat." Communications person often sits in, writes up for employee publication.

- Focus groups. Monthly meetings held by divisional pr people to get feedback on employee communications & activities. Groups of 12.

- Mass meetings of 150 employees, held twice a year. More formalized one-way information sessions. Cover state of business. May bring people in from other parts of organization; use video, film.

Employee Participation  
Is Key to Success

Whirlpool's successful econ ed formula has been a mix of short 15-25 min. films with discussions led by peers. "Employee involvement -- letting them make it their program -- was one of the key things we found we were right on. It was also one of the most difficult to sell management on," Wilson said.

ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND  
WHIRLPOOL'S ECON ED PROGRAM

- Most workers understand basic concepts of free enterprise system.
  - They don't want to be "preached" to.
  - They tend to suspect that any communication from management is an attempt at brainwashing.
  - Info won't be retained unless related to everyday realities.
  - Authority figures inhibit group discussion.
  - Employees won't reach same conclusions as management without same facts.
- from Private Enterprise, Ctr. for Study of Private Enterprise, USC, L.A.



Volunteer leaders are trained in small groups of 10-15. Sessions run about 4 hrs., cover economic material plus how to conduct meetings, get discussions started, handle critical remarks in non-defensive, counseling manner. Leaders provide input; material may be reworked on spot as result. After each program, debriefing provides feedback on employee reactions, sometimes unsuspected mgmt problems.

"All our leaders have come back for at least a second shot even when they've had a real rocky session," Wilson said. "They like it. It's an opportunity to grow, learn new skills, take on responsibilities that no one has ever asked them to do before."

He feels company can take anything to employees now. Asked by divisional management whether that included anti-union film in non-union division, Wilson said yes with one provision: The film would have to be "clearly publicized as an anti-union propaganda piece."

LOBBYING REFORM EASES  
GRASSROOTS RESTRICTIONS;  
DUES DISCLOSURE STILL ITEM

Lobbying reform legislation has started to move in the House again. Subcommittee on Administration & Governmental Relations has finished hearings, ordered report to full Judiciary Committee. New

bill, H.R. 4395, will probably be taken up after July 4 recess, "has been modified substantially from H.R. 1917 which passed the House last Congress," according to Jim Morrissey, dir comms, American Textile Manufacturers Assn (D.C.).

Major change is in area of grassroots lobbying. Tho still covered, new bill exempts communications including advertising made to "general distribution media" such as radio, tv & newspapers. Also excludes communications in internal publications if latter published "in substantial part" for purposes other than advocating or opposing legislation. New home district/home state exemption allows complete freedom of communication with congressman & senator. Reporting requirements now cover:

¶For trade & special assns, disclosure of members' names & dues over \$3,000. To mask actual sales or market position of member cos., contributions now grouped into categories: \$3-10,000, \$10-25,000, etc.

¶Expenditures over \$35 made for benefit of federal employee involved in legislation. Dinner or reception over \$500.

¶Organization or individual spending all or part of 13 days a qtr. lobbying. Two or more employees lobbying for total of more than 14 days.

¶Organization paying outside lobbyist more than \$5,000 a qtr.

Morrissey predicts that, despite improvements, bill may meet with strong resistance from organized labor, National Association of Manufacturers, Chamber of Commerce, Ralph Nader, and many business & non-profit groups. Its fate is "really a question of how much support Common Cause can muster and whether Carter decides to get behind it because he pledged lobbying reform."

U.S. & CANADIAN PRACTITIONERS  
FACE SIMILAR PROBLEMS; SET  
EXAMPLE FOR BUSINESS, GOV'TS

Some top issues facing Canadian business in '80s show marked similarity with U.S. socio-political trends. Others may serve as early warning device. Kristin Shannon, who heads Trans Canada Social

Policy Research (Montreal) & Shannon Assocs (S.F.), forecast this list at CPRS convention:

1. Loss of consensus, growth of issue-based pressure groups. Canada is losing its middle-of-the road people. Ability of small groups to talk with one another has greatly decreased.
2. Falling expectations in wages & profits.
3. Rising expectations & demands for security, equity, social justice. In case of women, emphasis has switched from employment to promotion into more middle & higher management jobs.
4. Concern about fair sharing, accountability & efficiency of business.

To get accurate profile of public concerns, Shannon's firm reads and analyzes every line of every newspaper in Canada. Tracking system keeps from 3 mos. to 2 years ahead of public policy, she estimates.

Canadian National Railroad used one public concern to strategize successful pr campaign, according to dpr Jean Cormier. Crown co. wanted to refinance existing debt, needed Parliament to pass legislation. PR dep't arranged media appearances for CEO; used argument of greater financial accountability as sole reason for refinancing.

Within 6 mos. CN had legislation which had taken Air Canada year to achieve. Cormier estimated early success saved company \$32 million -- example of how pr can contribute to bottom line.

¶Of Related Interest. Frank Malley, exec. vp, Doremus & Co. (NYC), sees the close working relationship between Canadian and U.S. pr professionals as helping to bridge the gap between the two countries. "If business and government would increase their interchange in a similar way, then both countries would stand to gain from developments in the areas of trade, tourism and overall public awareness and understanding."

QUOTE

Corporations are becoming a lot more conscious that their bottom line is, to an increasing degree, a reflection of how they are regarded by their publics. These public attitudes and their important implications are of necessity moving up on the agendas of boards of directors and being discussed in greater depth and at greater lengths.

With such trends intensifying, why then are there not more public relations people on the boards of corporations -- particularly when we all know that public relations people are presently making substantial contributions to the boards of most public service organizations?

-- John Aird, lawyer & partner,  
Aird & Berliss (Toronto).  
Bd. of Dirs, Bank of Nova Scotia,  
Molson Cos., National Life Assurance Co. of Canada & others