

AMERICANS MORE ALIENATED TODAY THAN AT ANY TIME IN LAST 15 YRS

American alienation is at its highest point since 1966, when ABC News - Harris compiled first alienation index. 62% of American adults are judged by the researchers to feel alienated in their relations with the power structure. Alienation was measured thru public responses to a battery of questions. Here's the breakdown:

Statement	% Agree	% Disagree
"Most poeple in power take advantage of people like yourself."	68	29
"What you think doesn't count very much anymore."	64	30
You are "left out of things going on around you."	48	49
"The people running the country don't really care what happens to you."	50	45
"The people in D.C. are out of touch with the rest of the country."	70	24

NADER WANTS PUBLIC TO HAVE ACCESS TO EVERY BROADCAST STATION TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

launched a campaign to give ordinary citizens access to electronic communications channels. Nader charges growing centralization in ownership of broadcast media.

He proposes a national institute of viewers & listeners be formed to act as "watchdog" to the communications industry. He proposes Congress grant this group 60 minutes of prime time on every radio & tv station daily. Nader also sees possibility of a citizen cooperative running a radio or cable tv station.

"Access is the great democratizer," Nader says. "It lets citizens reach audiences with their ideas, to share and compare their ideas with one another."

He lists these principles in his "citizens communications agenda":

1. Every electronic communications technology must be operated in the interest of all citizens.
2. The literacy that is the people's birthright must also include media literacy.
3. Every citizen has the right to an opportunity to reach an audience.
4. Every citizen has the right to all the information necessary to make rational choices as a voter and as a consumer.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO OUR READERS

Following our tradition, pr reporter will not be published next week -- to celebrate July 4th and Dominion Day. Officially our office will be closed from June 30 thru July 7 -- but you may well find someone there for inquiries, reader service & other business.

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HOW TO BURN THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS WITHOUT GETTING SCORCHED IS DILEMMA OF COMPANIES INDICTED AS VILLAINS IN SOCIAL CRISES; SIMON PROPOSES SETTING UP PR/LEGAL TEAM

Often, concern over legal liability shrouds importance of gaining favor in court of public opinion. Lawyers advise that sympathy is tantamount to confession, so companies play their hand close to their vest. Result is callous, monolithic image.

Why do organizations cling to legalistic response? Part of answer is practitioners' generally subordinate position: "Often the lawyer is on the board of directors, while the pr man is considered staff," says Morton Simon, a Philadelphia lawyer who has written extensively on the relationship between pr & law. William Ouchi, professor of management at UCLA, however, says the reason lies deeper than that.

He traces problem to isolated, uprooted CEO & far-flung corporate structure. "It's becoming more and more common that companies face a more distant public.... Senior executives, therefore, feel they cannot trust them so they decide to deal with these constituencies in a fundamentally adversarial position," Ouchi says.

Simon suggests forming "pr/legal team." Team should be composed equally of practitioners & lawyers & should have clout. Objective is mutual understanding: "What you want to avoid is the lawyer who says 'Ah, the hell with the public, all I'm interested in is winning this case,'" and the public relations exec who "says the wrong thing and gets the company into a second legal mess."

Pr/legal team should be ongoing function, not group formed under "the pressure of crisis communications -- there's no substitute for doing your homework well in

LAWYER'S VIEW

OF HOW TO ACT IN A CRISIS

1. "The lawyer would die if the pr man publicly admitted his company's guilt."
2. "But 'No comment' is murder -- it makes you guilty right off the bat in the public view."
3. "If you say 'Oh, it's terribly complicated, you dumb jerks out there wouldn't understand it,' no matter how pretty your language, you're in trouble."
4. "Try to avoid a callous image. Go out and start punching, affirmatively & helpfully. When a company spends a million dollars to help the people, whether they have to or not, then they have something to talk about. If it's voluntary -- make that clear."
5. "Don't hide behind stalls like 'We have to wait for a year until the final tests come out.' Affirmative, hard-nosed facts get better press pickup anyway than a lot of defensive 'I don't know's' and 'Let's wait and see's.'"

-- Morton Simon

advance," Simon told prr. Group should meet regularly, "become almost intimate -- build mutual respect, indoctrinate each other, lunch together, commune on the golf course."

How to start a pr/legal team? "Go to top management," he says. "Tell your CEO you know there aren't any problems right now, but with the anti-business atmosphere, you never know when lightning's going to strike."

Lawyers & public relations execs work closely at Monsanto (St. Louis), according to dpr James McKee. After people had to be evacuated from their homes near a company plant because of a chemical spill, the pr dep't took out apologetic ad in the local newspaper. "The legal people thought it would be unwise, but we prevailed. We've received many kudos and no lawsuit as a result of admitting we created a problem."

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEES SHED "FRILL" STIGMA, OPERATING IN 103 COMPANIES AFTER MERE DECADE; MAKE POLICY ON MULTITUDE OF EXT AFRS ISSUES

103 companies have public policy committees of their boards of directors, new research by The Conference Board finds. But they

aren't always called by that name. Among 24 other titles, "corporate responsibility," "social responsibility" & "public responsibility" are most popular when "public policy" is not the designated term.

GM set up first committee in 1970. Company's then-chairman emphasized its purpose was to consider matters of broad national concern "at the highest level of management." By '75, 41 others had established committees.

Researcher Phyllis McGrath writes that "While directors serving on committees think they're important, many old-line directors still consider them window-dressing," especially when compared to audit or finance committees. Among the issues dealt with are corporate contributions, equal employment practices, employee safety & health, environment, gov't relations, consumerism & customer service, ethics, urban affairs, and multinational issues. Most often, outside directors end up on public policy committees.

(Report No. 775 available for \$15 to non-members from The Conference Board, 845 3rd Ave., NYC 10022. 38 - pg. text includes several case studies.)

REASONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEES

1. To recognize the importance of public issues and social issues.
2. To provide additional input for public affairs executives.
3. To be publicly perceived as socially responsive.
4. As a response to public pressure.
5. CEO wants one ... "The most frequently mentioned reason."

Reasons not to have a public policy committee center on company size, preference for leaving the subject to management, and boards which deal with all subjects as "full board" matters.

Telephone answering machines will soon be upstaged by new impersonal communications scourge -- a machine that makes calls itself. Designed by Computer Dialing Systems in Princeton, N.J., machine automatically dials number, delivers taped message, records an answer, hangs up, proceeds with next call. Developers anticipate machine will be used for market & opinion research, political campaigns & direct selling.

DOES PUBLIC RELATIONS NEED A MYSTIQUE? 6 PRACTITIONERS SAY "NO!"

Two weeks ago, we asked readers to respond to Jack Felton's question whether public relations needs a special language to create "mystique." "The doctor sounds like a doctor, the lawyer gives opinions like a lawyer, but the pr person has to steal phrases from the others or use words left over from the newsroom, marketing or advertising. Such leftovers often hamper authority more than they help," he says. Several practitioners responded strongly in the negative:

"Hell no! That's the last thing we need now.... At a time when the public's attitude toward business is all too frequently confused, if not downright hostile, we certainly don't need to try and dazzle them with our brilliance. The end result would merely be to baffle them with bullshit."

-- Dennis M. Hetherington, mgr corp comms, Southwest Gas Corp. (Las Vegas)

"When public relations achieves the status of discipline, as well as that of a visceral art, the special language will have been developed in response to an intrinsic need for it.... The new language is already available, but it is phony unless backed by the discipline required to validate it."

-- W. Howard Chase, pres. Howard Chase Enterprises, Inc. (Stamford, Ct.)

"Our business is clear communications, and jargon by definition is just the opposite.... In my 15 previous years in corporate pr, I found that many other practitioners in that realm use jargon to impress their superiors, but it is much less common outside the bureaucracy of big business. It seems to me that's the key difference."

-- Richard M. Wieland, CEO Creative Communications (North Brunswick, N.J.)

"One of the great travails of public relations is the necessity of decoding the jargon of other specialties. If pr in turn becomes jargon-happy, who's going to translate for us?"

-- F. Gordon Davis, counselor (Roscommon, Mich.)

"In setting out to create a new language, one runs the risk of coming up with a new Esperanto.... If public relations professionals truly need 'a certain mystique,' they might just as soon wear funny hats as fiddle around with new jargons. The end results would be the same: ridicule of a still-young profession that scarcely needs to be taken less seriously."

-- John Catlin, writer/acct mgr Harley Wagner Assocs. (Grand Rapids, Mich.)

"Apart from the influences of the 'Hippie' rebellion, [jargon] has done more to destroy the language in the last generation than any other influence.... Whatever benefit might accrue to practitioners personally would be paid for again and again in the curse of obfuscation blurring their messages."

-- Don Lynch, director, school/comty rels, Washoe County School District (Reno, Nev.)

What do you think? If you have a differing opinion, write prr.