

FORMAL GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING
INFORMATION FILMS OR VIDEOTAPES:
SCIENTIFIC APPROACH REPLACES HUNCHES

Most of us think we're expert film reviewers. But do we use a written set of evaluation guidelines, or merely shoot from the hip? Rising science of public relations evaluation states formal criteria are essential. Howard Back of National Television News (Woodland Hills, Ca.) prepared these for a professional ass'n to use in critiquing info films & videotapes:

Before looking at the film, be sure you know its subject, purpose, and the nature of the audience it purports to reach. Only then can you judge whether it meets its goals, or is suitable.

As you look at the film, rate it on each of these ten points:

1. Attention span. Is the film "gripping," or "interesting," or just plain able to hold the audience's attention throughout? This is critical: if the film is boring, nothing else really matters!
2. Subject. Does the film adequately cover the subject in a clear way, and fulfill its expressed purpose? Is the film too long? Or (seldom) not long enough?
3. Audience suitability. Does it clearly address the audience it's aimed at...or the group you plan to show it to?
4. Visuals. Are the pictures in focus? Properly exposed? Are the colors true? If there are graphics, do they help to clarify and explain, or are they just there for effect?
5. Timeliness. Are the visuals up to date? (Nothing turns off an audience faster than an old-fashioned haircut or clothing style, or any printed matter on screen that shows the age of the film.)
6. Talent. Are the participants or actors real, and natural? Do you believe them? Can you hear and clearly understand what they're saying?
7. Sound. Are the sound effects and/or music appropriate to the action? Is there proper balance among words, sound effects and music, so that the message gets across in the most effective way?
8. Editing. Does the story flow naturally? Is the editing pace good, so the story neither drags, nor moves too fast? Are you jolted by unusual angles, jumps in action, scenes that are too short or too long, or by bad sound?
9. Script content. Someone once said (or wrote) that the best script for a film is one with the fewest possible words. A well-done informational film should rely heavily on visuals to tell the story. Words should fill in, adding information that cannot be seen. Most films have too many words. And words should be simple. Long words or cumbersome phrases are distracting.
10. Believability. Is the film "professional," in the sense that it moves along smoothly, in a logical fashion, and you're not distracted by the mechanics of the medium? In summary, did you find the film or tape honest and believable?

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

PEOPLE. Dow Jones & Co. (NYC) appoints Lawrence Armour dir corp rels.

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TAKING THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST "TRIAL BY TELEVISION";
ABC RENEGES ON TOUTED OFFER OF RESPONSE TIME FOR KAISER,
COMPANY SUES TO PROTECT ITSELF AND FREE PRESS IDEAL

When Kaiser Aluminum was accused on "20/20," ABC's news magazine answer to "60 Minutes," of intentionally selling unsafe house wiring & hiding information about its dangers, the company went on the offensive. It ran an advertising, publicity, speech & political campaign against what it terms "trial by television." Network issued a statement in October saying it would give Kaiser an unprecedented 4 mins of unedited rebuttal. Last week the network reneged. Kaiser has filed formal complaint with FCC to order ABC to give 10 mins of response time.

Ron Rhody, corp vp-adv & pr, sums up case against such media practices in talk to Nat'l Ass'n of Mfrs pub afrs conf: adversarial interviews & one-sided reporting are damaging the concept of a free press. He cites 3 points in evidence. Public Agenda Foundation in Nov poll found majority of respondents favored laws requiring fairness by newspapers & tv. First Amendment Congress survey by Gallup (pr 9/15/80) reported, "The press in America is operating in an environment of public opinion that is increasingly indifferent -- and to some extent hostile -- to the cause of a free press in America." Chrm Norman Isaacs of Nat'l News Council observed in recent speech, "The core of most of this hostility is the much too prevalent refusal to correct obvious errors -- to straighten the record."

Rhody defines "trial by television" as situation in which tv production teams "become the accuser, judge and jury of people, actions and institutions -- with no real recourse for the accused to get a fair hearing in the court of public opinion. Since the producer edits the tape or film, all the taped or filmed interview does is put the producer (that is, the accuser) in full control of deciding what portions, and how much, of the accused's defense the public will be allowed to see. The viewing public is led to believe that what it's seeing represents the accused's best arguments." (For copy of speech and packet of materials, write Rhody at Kaiser Center, 300 Lakeside Dr, Oakland, Ca. 94643.)

WHAT SEEMS SO NEW OFTEN REALLY ISN'T

"Television is a highly institutionalized medium, ritualistic with little specialization. It is akin to the storytelling days before the print revolution took hold. Formerly, people were the captive audience of the storyteller; today, everyone is the captive of the television programmer. Cable tv and video tape recorders are like the recussitation of the printing press, providing specialization to discerning viewers. Cable and VTR tools will be used as an added educational tool by those who already read many books and watch television selectively. Cable will not attract much more than 10% of the market."

-- Dean George Gerbner, Annenberg School of Communications, to Phila PRSA Chapter's "Media in 1984" seminar.

UNEXPECTED RESULT OF MASSACHUSETTS' PROP. 2 1/2 IS ATTACK ON PUBLIC RELATIONS JOBS

backlash as state's residents realize Calif's Prop. 13 was insulated by huge surpluses -- which Bay State did not have. With 1100 Boston police & firefighting jobs being eliminated, other spending gets scrutiny. Boston Globe letters column on recent day contained these statements:

"In the face of deep cuts in public safety, schools, recreation & the library, it is beyond belief that Mayor White is clinging to such trappings of office as the public relations staff."

"A well-run city is its own best advertisement, but the best public relations in the world can't hide the cracks in a crumbling municipality."

"Mayor White's battalion of public relations people remind me of something the journalist Murray Kempton once wrote about former New York Mayor Robert Wagner: 'I resent having to pay taxes for press agents to protect a man whose magnificent effrontery already makes him invulnerable.'"

Norine Bacigalupo, pr coord, Whitman & Howard (Wellesley, Ma.) fears "more & more practitioners in the public sector will be perceived as 'trappings.'"

FISCAL PROBLEMS PLAGUE COLLEGE PR JUST AS COURT OF OPINION STARTS ATTACK: STUDY SHOWS OLD PRIORITIES YIELDING SLOWLY

info dir, Berry College (Mt. Berry, Ga.). With sociology prof Charles Watson he surveyed higher education nationwide to learn how the function is organized, what it actually does, and how it fits into the structure. Good response (over 50%) indicates a current shift toward fund raising & admissions -- "which usually happens during a financial crunch -- the practical response to need for money."

On other fronts, universities are taking steps to be ready for oft-cited attack from court of public opinion now that effects of post war baby boom are over. 31.4% of dpr's report directly to president; 56.2% have only one officer between them & president. Boylan concludes organizational structure is reflecting need for direct communication between information officer & CEO.

Shortage of funds seems to be the motivating factor in university news/public relations/information offices now, according to Tom Boylan, assoc

PRESENT, FUTURE EMPHASIS OF COLLEGE PR OFFICES				
Feel now are making greatest contribution to		See increasing svcs in coming yrs	Shifts	
13.6%	Admissions	25.7%	up	189%
10.9%	Development	18.2%	up	167%
30.5%	Pub Rels	16.9%	cut	45%
3.1%	Alumni	5.6%	up	181%
.5%	Academic	1.9%	up	200%
36.6%	Publicity	7.0%	cut	80%
1.9%	Mktg/Adv	14.5%	up	763%
2.2%	Internal Comms	5.8%	up	263%

Most college practitioners come from journalism training (48.7%) rather than public relations (20.8%). Reflecting this, major public relations techniques are low on the list of duties performed. News media & publicity score a perfect 300 on study's scale, while public opinion research gets 158 and speech writing 153. Also audio-visual/broadcasting scores rank far below print media. Only 16% have mission statements, 11.9% make annual reports on their activities.

Fiscally only 3.6% have budgets more than .05 of the total institutional operating budget; 7.7% get between .02 & .05 and 12.1% between .01 & .02. Balance is allocated less than .01 -- and 13.6% receive less than .001%! Surprisingly, despite these paupers' budgets 51.1% felt them "adequate for the job." (For copy write Boylan, Berry College, Mt. Berry, Ga. 30149.)

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH HISPANIC MEDIA: AVOID TRANSLATION TRAPS, BE PREPARED FOR OLD ADS-BUY-EDITORIAL ETHIC, USE MORE PIX

Lucy Fuentes, editor of El Observador (Hartford) warns of possible problems in Hispanic translations. Classical Spanish is used for formal writing by all Hispanic groups whether Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans. However, each has colloquial spoken phrases that differ. So for ads, story headlines, direct quotations or public service announcements be sure to check with each group. Case in point: public service announcement urging people to use the bus worked fine for Mexicans, had x-rated connotation for Puerto Rican community.

Before hiring bilingual translator, find out his or her level of schooling in non-English languages. Example: Cuban employee may have had education in Spanish until 6th grade in Cuba, then come to U.S. with family and completed education in English. Tho remaining a fluent Cuban speaker, his or her grasp of written language may not be above 6th grade level.

Interviews with several minority newspapers reveal that financial problems put great pressure on editors to favor news stories from advertisers or "sponsors" of features. Common method of sponsorship: corporation buys half a page to feature "Outstanding Black/Hispanic/Student/Community Leader of the Week." Painless and inexpensive form of community relations -- but may not be helpful, credible or community service to anyone save hard-pushed publisher.

Other pointers: a) If paper has to translate even a good news item editor may decide "no ads, no free translations." b) Most minority groups want photojournalism. Readers prefer more pix, less print because of level of reading skills.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

If you seek support for business-oriented issues, look to metropolitan areas, suggests study by New York Stock Exchange. 52% of all individual shareholders live in cities of 1 million -- up from 47% in '75. In D.C. 1 in every 4 residents owns stock. In San Francisco-Oakland, Chicago, Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove, & San Jose 1 in 5 residents does. (For data on top 25 cities write Evan Cooper, mgr news bureau, NYSE, 11 Wall St, NY 10005.)

Is the Wall Street Journal quoting more public relations people and covering the profession more thoroughly? Since it added the gossipy, fun-to-read second section, several articles have been written on these subjects. Recent issue had 2 stories on that page about dpr assignments, 2 others in which dpr & pr firm were quoted as primary sources.