

BOOKS FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶Some good news & some bad news about Matthew Culligan & Dolph Greene's book, Getting Back to the Basics of Public Relations & Publicity: The good news is that the book has some reasonably helpful "how to do it" information for the communicator. The bad news is that the book has little to do with public relations as professionals teach & practice it in today's complex world.

It is a somewhat useful book about publicity & public information. It contains reasonable-to-good chapters about news releases, pitch letters, emergency operations, speakers bureaus & special events. If you're looking for some "how to do it" help in these areas, then a reading of the book is in order.

On the other hand, the book's cover flap says, "Cutting right through the complex theories and practices that have made modern business communications unnecessarily complicated and impersonal, this thoroughly practical book reveals the fundamental techniques that will serve anyone who has to get an idea across to a particular public." That line of copy sounds like the CEO of a now defunct business who once said, "Forget all that research & planning stuff and get out there and improve our image!"

Book does not deal with the theory and practices which differentiate professional public relations from earlier practices many of us remember, and are trying to forget. For example, the topical index does not include the words "research," "fact-finding," "planning" or "evaluation." If you read the same texts and references as we do, you know public relations is an orderly process that includes these subjects as being equally important as "do it." And, you know that the difference between public relations and the less professional things that go on in the information & communications milieu is the attention paid to research, planning & evaluation. This book ignores these three steps of the public relations process. (\$10.95 from Crown Publishers, 1 Park Ave, NYC 10016; 128 pgs.)

¶Source book of 6000 public affairs employees at 1000 leading corporations is in its first edition. Section 1 of the National Directory of Corporate Public Affairs lists each corporation & its 1) Washington area office, 2) political action committee, d) foundation, and 4) public affairs personnel. It also identifies 1) political action committee pub'ns, receipts & contributions and 2) grants made by each foundation. Section 2 is an alphabetical listing of all the public affairs people named in the book giving title, duties, address, phone number & identification of those registered as lobbyists at the nat'l & state gov't levels. Introductory comments titled "Corporate Citizenship" cites alarming fact: three-fourths of America's two million companies make no philanthropic contribution. (\$45 from Columbia Books, 777 14th St. NW, Wash DC 20005; 378 pgs.)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. 2 of PRSA's highest individual awards received by: Douglas Ann Newsom (assoc prof journalism, AddRan College of Arts & Sciences, Texas Christian Univ, Fort Worth) receives Distinguished Service In Teaching Award for advancing public relations education; William Ramsey (pres, Bill Ramsey Assocs, Omaha) receives Paul M. Lund Award for his contribution to public service.

ELECTED. PRSA directors-at-large serving 2-yr terms are: John Felton (vp corp comms, McCormick & Co, Baltimore); Mary Ann Pires (cons afms mgr, Texaco, White Plains, NY); Jacqueline Schaar (pres, Jacqueline Schaar Assocs, Costa Mesa, Calif); Gordon Strayer (dir, health ctr info & comm, Univ of Iowa, Iowa City); serving 1-yr term is John Rodgers (dpr, Blue Shield of Calif, San Francisco).

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MEDIATION IS KEY TO RESOLVING CRISES -- AND ISSUES BEFORE THEY BECOME CRISES; "COOPERATIVE CONFRONTATION" REQUIRES PREPARATION & A PLAN

Since a crisis is "merely the acceleration of the normal process of change," it can be planned for -- and should be, feels Grant Horne, vp-pr, Pacific Gas & Electric. He offers this framework for establishing a crisis plan:

1. Define what a crisis is for your organization. Ingredients are: a) a turning point, b) potentially damaging, c) struggle & conflict, d) sense of anxiety & dread, e) adversarial atmosphere, f) opposing forces.

2. Remember that "a crisis by its very nature seeks resolution." In practice, this means tensions need to be released.

3. Resolution involves mediation... which "means looking to the middle ground, examining 'my' position in relation to 'yours.'" This requires understanding "your" position so five questions can be answered:

- a) Can I persuade you to change your mind?
- b) Are there points on which I am willing to change my mind?
- c) Are there points that can be dismissed?
- d) Are there points on which we can all agree?
- e) Are there points on which we are in total & apparently unalterable disagreement?

"It is wise to operate on the theory that if the sky isn't falling right now, it will do so at any moment," Horne feels. His answer is "a fully developed plan for crisis management, including a well-conceived & agreed upon organizational arrangement for carrying it out in the public relations department." He argues that it won't do to say, "let's get together & talk about it when things calm down." Things are about as calm right now as they are going to get, so practitioners had better talk about it -- whatever it is -- now. That period of hoped-for calm in the future probably will never come.

4. Key is finding "those points on which the disputants are willing to agree or to concede -- which requires communication." So, first must get agreement that the parties will cooperate strictly for the purpose of communicating. Ironically, "agreeing to cooperate leads to confrontation -- in person, in writing, on tape, by telephone or by intermediary. This process is what I call 'cooperative confrontation' or dialogue among adversaries."

Horne differentiates an issue from a crisis. "An issue may be a crisis waiting to be born; and in that sense is a crisis an organization can foresee & perhaps forestall." But this, too, is done by mediation. Only the time frame is different.



With unforeseen crises -- airliner crashes, pipeline ruptures, Tylenol scares -- practitioners should anticipate three initial reactions from press & public, in his experience: 1) What happened? 2) Why didn't you tell us sooner? 3) Aren't you at fault for not preventing the disaster?

Even 2 Unforeseen Crises Can Be Handled By Good Practice

Practitioners ready to face Horne's 3 questions can handle the crisis -- as Jack Heeger found last year when his organization, Sunkist, the orange growers cooperative, faced 2 crises simultaneously. Medfly infestation & the fight over aerial spraying of pesticides was international news. But a larger challenge was the apparent dumping of oranges to rot because of a federal "marketing order." Combining 1) a coalition of affected organizations, 2) individualized letters to editors of media which commented or covered events, 3) a road show of media briefings, 4) a blitz on Washington and 5) intensive communications with member growers, Sunkist fought off attempts by huge growers to eliminate the market order -- which protects smaller farmers by making it impossible for anyone to dominate the market.

Heeger concludes: "No matter how well prepared we might be, no matter how long we've been in this business, no matter how much experience we might have, and no matter how often we may look around for the tell-tale signs of impending problems, there's always something that can catch us from behind. We can be placed in a no-win situation. Even then, we can come out OK by practicing good public relations & communication techniques to get our story told."

Surviving A State Of Seige Sums Up Love Canal

Mike Tabris of Occidental Petroleum's Hooker Chemical Unit has dealt with this well-publicized toxic waste issue for several years. He offers 4 guidelines:

- 1) Public relations must be recognized as a management aim -- the dpr must be on the management team. 2) Agreement on a communications plan by the team is crucial. 3) Avoid "state of seige" mentality. 4) Develop third party advocates. (For copies of detailed case studies presented by Horne, Heeger & Tabris at PRSA Annual Conference write prr.)

CONTENTS OF HOSPITAL PUBLICATIONS CONFLICT WITH IABC SURVEY

All of the 36 hospital publications reviewed by prr make extensive & good use of photos -- usually employees or patients in action. Readership of the pub'ns is divided -- 8 are written for staff, 8 for community, 20 for staff & community. But majority of space carries stories on employees & staff, i.e. new positions, promotions, birthdays, anniversaries, human interest features.

According to a survey by IABC (see prr 6/22/81) of what 45,662 employees in 40 US & Canadian org'ns want to read, "stories about other employees" & "personal news (birthdays, anniversaries, etc)" were at the bottom of the list -- 72.2% and 57.4% respectively. High on the list are 1) orgn's future plans, 2) personnel policies & practices, & 3) productivity improvement. While it's important to let the community know what the hospital staff

	Magazine	Newsletter	Tabloid	% of Total
4-color	3	0	0	8.3%
2-color	12	5	6	63.9%
b&w	1	2	7	27.8%
% of Total	44.5%	19.5%	36.0%	

is doing, encouraging community support, hospital staff's interest is probably limited. Determining readership interests is necessary.

Are hospital pub'ns accurately targeted to their readers' information needs & expectations? Readership surveys for pub'ns are recommended every 1-3 yrs. Results of the IABC survey suggest that many hospital pub'ns are not emphasizing subjects of importance to their readers. Each organization should periodically measure the effectiveness of its pub'n to insure that it stays "on target." In-house pub'ns get a large share of the budget and editors owe it to their organizations to make sure money is effectively spent.

Other findings include:

¶All 3 pub'ns using 4-color covers carry b&w interiors. St. Raphael's Better Health, the most extensive of the 3, accepts display advertising to offset costs (see prr 6/14). It is the only 1 of the 36 that does.

¶Pub'ns employing 2 colors did so largely on their masthead carrying second color inside thru graphics, headlines & lines separating spaces within the page.

¶Dominant format among the b&w's is large blocks of white or black space around the name. Pub'n from Children's Hospital (Phila) has 2½" of white space around its name -- "times" -- printed in lower case, black, 1" x ½" letters. Weight of black makes name pop out.

¶14 are published monthly; 9 bimonthly; 13 quarterly.

DO MEDIA GURUS MISLEAD FOR OWN PURPOSES WHEN THEY DEFINE "NEWS"?

"About 75% of the people in most western countries get all the news they ever get only from television." (Emphasis added.)

-- Pierre Salinger of ABC at PRSA Conference

News about what? About politics or world affairs? Maybe ...but most people get a lot of political information by the grapevine. As for news about the important things in their lives, such as home, job, the local hospital or church, people get news about these from word-of-mouth and, primarily, from public relations sources.

Some practitioners identify 3 types of "news" information. First is must-have information, such as data about highway construction between your home & office, a flu epidemic heading your way, etc. Next is nice-to-know. For instance, it may be useful that the legislature is planning a change in tax or real estate laws, although the effects will probably not be felt for some time. Third category is "the passing parade." This is primarily news as entertainment. Most "big" stories are of this type. Ask yourself, for instance, whether the Falklands war really touched your life, or even had the capability of doing so -- or was it merely dramatic entertainment?

The idea that "news" consists of national or global events is another media hype, based on media misunderstanding of how the world really operates. Unlike journalists, people don't feel news reports are some kind of official record to live by. They live by reality, not what's printed or screened. Most news that touches people's lives comes from public relations sources, not media.

  
-- Pat Jackson