

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶1982 Volunteer Recognition Kits are ready to honor those appreciated, coveted volunteers. Kit supplies samples of recognition materials, recognition tips, 14 camera-ready "repro sheets" to use in preparing community awareness ads on flyers. New materials include posters with '82 theme, "Volunteers: Our Greatest Natural Resource"; display sign; window decal; certificates; bookmarks; buttons; notecards with envelopes; placemats & napkins. National Volunteer Week is April 18-24. (For sample kit, send \$9.95 to Volunteer, The National Center for Citizen Involvement, P.O. Box 1807, Boulder, Colo. 80306.)

¶Express Mail can now be forwarded at no extra charge to the mailer. Previously express mail which was undeliverable as addressed could be forwarded locally, but not to another post office. If unclaimed, package was returned to sender. If delivery does not meet guaranteed deadline due to forwarding or return service, there are no refunds, however.

¶Post Office has yet more bad news for mailers. Nonprofit rate increases are not the last changes. Plans are being refined for standardized procedure to inspect all bulk mailings to meet national conformance standards. 6-page "Advance Alert Infosheet" is offered by Daly Associates, DC counseling firm & postal experts. Describes what's happening via an exclusive interview with top policy-making officials. (Send your label & \$1.39 postage to Daly at 702 World Center Bldg, 918 Sixteenth St. NW, Wash DC 20006-2993.)

¶The message itself, specifically its possible impact on the individual receiving it, is replacing product or corporate image as the essence of public communication, reports the initial bulletin of Int'l Centre for Societal Advertising (pr 3/2/81). This change "causes an ethics problem: Can we help battered children while, at the same time, permitting the repeated onslaughts of advertising which aims to have them go thru more toys, bicycles & food?" Not to worry, concludes Michel Gailloux. "Until now, advertising (& public relations) have never been able to force a systematic behavior on anyone. Society is not, realistically, a Skinner box where positive behavior is rewarded and the inverse penalized." (Copy from 666 Sherbrooke St. W., Montreal, Que. H3A 1E7)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. Nat'l Investor Relations Institute (DC) officers: pres, James Mabry (vp & mgr investor rels, Wachovia Corp, Winston-Salem, NC); vp-educ, Carol Ruth (sr vp, Hill & Knowlton, NYC); vp-manpower, Deborah Kelly (vp, corp comms, Quaker Oats, Chi); vp-finance/treas, John Fuller (mgr, treasury staff, Foxboro Co, Boston); vp-mbr svcs/gov't aftrs, James Powers (dir, investor rels, Lone Star Industries, Greenwich, Ct); vp-membership, Larry Bishop (vp-corp comms, Frontier Airlines, Denver); vp-planning, Winthrop Neilson (pres, Neilson & Co,

NYC); sec'y, Lee Parker (vp, investor rels, American Family Corp, Columbus, Ga.).

HONORS. Religious PR Council renames awards for best programs after long time exec sec'y Marvin Wilbur. '82 "Wilbur" Awards contest adds categories in cable, video, corporate communications, children's communication... John Turner, active in Phoenix professional & civic affairs since '49, wins local PRSA chapter's Percy Award.

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COMMUNICATING PRODUCTIVITY PROGRAMS TO EMPLOYEES:
ABSOLUTE CANDOR, NO HYPE, ARE THE RULES

Quality of Working Life & similar programs are not liberal, soft or socialistic. They are hard-nosed assessments of the nature of humans, and a practical application of this realization to the workplace. They are in the best tradition of business management pragmatism.

As with all good relationships, QWL is based on quid pro quo: the organization benefits from increased morale, productivity & quality consciousness while employees get more satisfying, challenging jobs. To make such a deal work, frankness is required on both sides. For practitioners, this implies 1) that employees as well as managers have the opportunity to express their opinions & feelings, and 2) that the hype stops.

Strategies that work for line supervisors suggest the candor required in internal communications, meetings, motivation films, etc. A recent issue of Bureau of Business Practice's Productivity and Performance newsletter shares these guidelines:

1. If workers aren't doing their jobs properly, say so. "People prefer negative recognition over no recognition," advises consultant David Hizer. If workers are provably responsible for reduced productivity, don't duck the issue.

2. But keep critical comments as neutral as possible. A supervisory example suggests that if a worker comes in late, don't jump on him. Ask "I noticed you came in 10 minutes late. Is everything okay?"

3. When praising workers, use names & be specific about accomplishments.

Generalized pats on the back come across as insincere, suggest management isn't really familiar with what was done that deserves praise. In addition, praising specifics tells other workers it is possible to do better in those areas.

Just when productivity has everyone's attention, basic research on the subject is being debunked. Recent articles in American Psychologist & Psychology Today claim that the famous Hawthorne studies by pioneer management scholar Elton Mayo (1880-1949) arrived at faulty conclusions because of questionable research methods. The "Hawthorne Effect" as postulated by Mayo states that "people who are singled out for study of any kind may improve their performance or behavior not because of any specific condition being tested, but simply because of all the attention they receive." From this research came the management dictum which emphasizes personal attention to workers, giving recognition, allowing participation. Now some scholars say there is no basis for the Hawthorne Effect either in the original studies at Western Electric's Hawthorne, Ill. plant or in subsequent research. The only evidence seems to be common sense. (For copy of Psychology Today article, write prr.)

4. When employees ask questions, don't fix the problem for them. Build their independence by replying, "What do you think you should do?" Letters to the in-house publication posing questions can best be answered by the questioner.

5. When Mickey Mouse questions are asked, look beyond the topic. You'll probably find workers hungry for recognition. They aren't getting sufficient feedback or information, so they ask dumb questions.

Bottom-line value of being responsive but candid about human needs of employees is proven by the Robert Half recruiting firm. Recent study of time wasted on-the-job shows a range between 30 mins & 7 1/2 hrs weekly per employee. This costs US economy \$106 billion, reports World Productivity News. By comparison, strikes cost mere \$4 billion. (Copy from Robert Half, Inc., 522 Fifth Ave, NY 10017.)

Of related interest: Employee relations & communications is now by far the topic of greatest interest to practitioners, judging from prr's reader survey. 71% want more info about it, compared to 53% who want to know more about the no. 2 topic, social/political trends. In our '78 survey employee relations & communications ranked 8th, with 35% wanting more coverage of it. Here's the list of current interests:

Rank	Subject	Want More
1	employee rels & comns	71%
2	social/political trends	53%
3	case studies in pr/pa	52%
4	monitoring/forecasting	50%
5	management/budgeting	44%
6	publicity/media rels	41%
7	marketing	40%
8	language/semantics/writing	40%
9	disclosure/privacy	37%
10	comns theory/social sciences	33%
11	gov't rels/public affairs	32%
12	consumer rels/consumerism	28%
13	advocacy/institutional adv'g	28%
14	graphics/visual comns	27%
15	ethics/professional codes	26%
16	nonprofit pr	22%
17	financial/stockholder rels	21%
18	environment/energy	20%
19	philanthropy/fundraising	17%
20	international pr	16%
21	fed'l/state/local gov't pr	15%
22	organizations in pr	13%
23	union/labor rels	12%
24	people in pr	7%
25	equal opportunity	5%

HUMAN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

One consulting group, Concern for Corporate Fitness, sees productivity gains requiring attention from 3 angles. Their "People-Performance Profile" charts 19 specific areas for action:

Personal Performance

- \$ health habits
- \$ exercise
- \$ nutrition
- \$ interpersonal support
- \$ time management
- \$ personal stress management

Work Team Performance

- \$ supervision
- \$ role clarity
- \$ communications
- \$ conflict management
- \$ problem solving
- \$ meeting effectiveness
- \$ job satisfaction
- \$ group productivity

Organization Performance

- \$ planning
- \$ management procedures
- \$ motivational climate
- \$ environmental climate
- \$ organizational stress factors

Following this plan, they claim controllable cost savings potential of \$1500/yr/employee. This is based on national yearly averages of 2 wks absenteeism, 20% job turnover, medical costs at 7.8% of payroll. (Info from 2328 E. 34th St, Spokane, Wash 99203; 509/747-8016)

START BY GETTING EXISTING COMMUNICATIONS IN SYNC; DOING YOUR OWN READERSHIP SURVEY

Achieving a high rate of return, accurate answers & useful conclusions is not a simple as it may appear. After all, what is a good return anyway? A new workbook, "How to Survey Your Readers," gives answers to these and many other questions including 1) selecting a sample, 2) framing the questions, and 3) timing the mailing or distribution.

Includes samples of 9 readership questionnaires, cover letters & reminder cards. Questionnaires use different styles & techniques, some obviously expensive productions, others not so elaborate. Good as well as bad examples are used: for instance, asking readers to rate the attractiveness & interest of covers. When readers know little of design elements, eye movement & psychological strategies for getting the reader into the publication, why ask? Compiled by Virginia Carter, ed. of CASE Currents, who boldly subjects her own latest questionnaire to scrutiny. (\$8 from CASE, Publications Order Dep't, Box 298, Alexandria, Va. 22314.)

TO SEE WHAT YOU COULD BE UP AGAINST, READ THE NUN'S REPORT ON LOVE CANAL

The old days when groups who take up cudgels for the public make emotional attacks unsupported by research are over. If you find yourself questioned by today's activists, don't shrug it off. This is the message in a report by the Sisters of St. Francis, "An American Tragedy: The Corporate Legacy of Love Canal." Nun's order provided shelter in its convents to families who had to evacuate the area.

Well researched, legally documented, heavily footnoted report covers Love Canal back to 1938. Scientific explanations of chemicals and their impact on environment & man, Hooker Chemical's responses to charges not only in NY but in Florida & California as well, and quotes of passages in legal documents show the detail of which current activists are capable.

Bias against public relations & its practices is evident, unfortunately. The paper reports a meeting of financial community representatives, held at the Waldorf-Astoria, where the company denied state evidence. Concludes the report: "This Waldorf-Astoria approach is indicative of the central premise of the company's Love Canal response to date -- public relations!"

A stab is taken at the chemical industry's attempt to mount a "national communications campaign." Chemical Mfrs Ass'n Pres. Robert Roland is quoted as saying that "a national communications campaign can achieve penetration and lasting impact only if backed by local person-on-person communication." This is blamed for Hooker's attempts to distribute information on Love Canal to the public via local newspaper ads. (For copy, send 60¢ to Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, Room 566, 475 Riverside Dr, NY 10115)

"How many men, women and children would lead normal lives today if Hooker Chemical had not clung to its protecting silence in the face of mounting evidence, if Hooker Chemical had not hidden its toxic legacy behind public relations, if Hooker Chemical had come forward with the truth."

-- Love Canal activist
Joan F. Malone, osf