

EMPHASIZING THE BENEFITS
WORKS IN DIRECT MAIL
AS WELL AS DOOMSDAY PITCHES

The now-conventional doomsday theme is not appropriate for this organization's direct mail. Tho it competes with all the causes that warn of things being "dismantled," "cut off" or "ruined," this organization is prospering -- yet wants to do more. So Colonial Williamsburg, the old master at fundraising, takes the approach of thanking donors before they contribute. The headline reads "In Gratitude For Your Support," resembling a welcome thank you for past contributions. Copy goes on to say they will receive the quarterly magazine, seasonal calendars, annual report, cookbook or pewter cup if they donate. Instead of doomsday, it's a pleasant "What's in it for you" tactic.

Also effective is the letter from David Brinkley. It gives credibility to the need for funds -- not because of his fame but because he is a bona fide board member. He makes the point that this is the only board on which he serves. This folksy technique puts Brinkley into a familiar, old-friend situation with the recipient. (For photocopy of mailing package, write pr.)

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶Need to convince a client or your boss about the rationale for starting an external publication? Webb Company's "An Inside Look At Producing Company-Sponsored Magazines" will help. 38-page booklet looks at "why" and "what to consider" with insightful details. Covers format, content, budget, staff time, advertising sales & circulation. Also includes glossary of publishing terms; a reprint from the WSJ about one of this country's oldest house organs, Deere & Co's The Furrow; time schedule for producing pub'ns; results from a survey of company sponsored mag editors; and a scale showing price/copy for 50,000 to 300,000 runs. (Free from Neal Fosshage, Webb Co, 1999 Shepard Rd, St.Paul, Minn. 55116)

¶Everything you need to know to produce a successful newsletter is in Howard Penn Hudson's Publishing Newsletters. Finding your audience, defining & managing your editorial content, writing in newsletter style, designing, producing & printing your newsletter, and future trends are some of the topics discussed. Includes glossary, bibliography & source list, and illustrations of 64 newsletters showing how different graphic styles are used. (\$16.95 from Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 5th Ave, NYC 10017)

¶Improving productivity thru creative management is an opportunity for public relations professionals. William Marsteller's Creative Management, published last year, gets more useful as time passes. He discusses communication, an essential tool in the management process. "Communication is not just words, paint on canvas, math symbols or the equations and models of scientists; it is the inter-relation of human beings trying to escape loneliness, trying to share experience, trying to implant ideas." And Marsteller does it artfully. Book is based on his personal experiences, individual memos he wrote to employees and numerous articles he has written over the years. A potpourri of thoughts on how to manage, motivate, nurture creativity in oneself & others, hire, fire, retire, understand people, and lots of personal reflections "discovered in the course of mingling." (\$19.95 from Crain Books, 740 Rush St, Chi 60611)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

PEOPLE. William Lawrence named vp, Hill & Knowlton (Dallas)...Colorado

Interstate Gas Co. (Colorado Springs) names John Chandler vp-pa.

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UPHEAVAL IN THE MARKETPLACE: CHANGING CONSUMER ATTITUDES
REBOUND ON MANUFACTURERS & RETAILERS, ARE REFLECTED IN ISSUES;
GENERIC INVADERS SUPERMARKETS WHILE LABELS SHOW OUTSIDE ON JEANS

Is traditional faith in brands inexorably gaining strength -- witness the labels & trademarks we overtly wear on the outside of our clothing? Tired of being at the mercy of retailers, jeans makers & name designers took their message directly to the consumer -- most notably via tv ads.

The result is a new phenomenon in the garment trade. The same name brands are sold in department stores, boutiques & discount houses. This in turn is pushing upscale stores to re-examine their ambivalence toward house labels, brands they can control (including discounting them in their own "basement," "bargain" or "off price" departments).

But in the grocery field -- where the move to brands originated around the turn of the century -- exactly the opposite is occurring. These products are swinging from "a manufacturer driven market to a retailer driven market," says research chief Sonia Yuspeh of J. Walter Thompson.

The best evidence is generic products. In her presentation to the Advertising Research Foundation, "Troubled Times For Branded Products," she describes studies undertaken in Jewel supermarkets (Chi) which show:

1. Nearly all shoppers have tried generics.
2. They have become the regular brand for about half the shoppers in 3 or more product lines.
3. High income families buy them at about the same rate as low income.
4. People perceive their quality to be equal with store & national brands.
5. Generics are viewed as a better buy for the money.

¶The nearer a product is to a commodity, the lower the degree of loyalty.

¶The higher the perceived risk, the more reluctant consumers are to switch brands.

¶Brands vary widely in loyalty within product categories.

¶The leading brands are especially vulnerable to switching.

¶Smaller, differentiated brands enjoy more intense loyalty (why regional brands are on the rise again).

-- Sonia Yuspeh

This schizophrenia over brands is producing a number of effects. Some have implications for the long term perceptions of the public. In food marketing, for instance, coupons now comprise 11% of all promotion dollars. 80% of US households redeem them,



says the USDA study "Couponing Growth In Food Marketing." A major goal is to lure customers to try a brand (and thus away from another brand). Coupons are so wide spread that non-users are subsidizing users, says USDA.

Two Implications For Public Relations

1. The organization is now the brand, exemplified in the move to institutional public relations & advertising. Uncertainty over the stability of product brands, coupled with factors like rapid product change/obsolescence & conglomerate parent companies, makes promotion of the organization and its capabilities the strongest appeal. Rather than selling specific items, organizations are increasingly promoting their research, design abilities or employee strengths.

2. People do not trust pricing or quality. They want to pay lower prices for higher quality. Compare this to voters' support of Reaganomics, where it was hoped there would be lower taxes & gov't spending but not reduced services. There is a clear attitude that prices & taxes are higher than they need to be, that there is slush which can be eliminated. Why might people feel this way? High profit figures have often been cited. In addition, the mere size of institutions with multi-billion dollar budgets is hard to comprehend. Corporate take-over fights make it all look like a game. Huge executive salaries and high union scales are other factors: after the UAW took pay cuts, auto workers still make far more than the average wage earner.

How to help brands survive:

1. Build in superiority -- make the product deliver a meaningful, relevant benefit more effectively than competitive brands.
2. Promotion relevance -- concentrate on this superiority in communications; don't be lured into other messages but stick to reinforcing the benefits.
3. Promotion likability -- Yuspeh's studies show people stick with brands whose advertising & publicity they like or feel comfortable with.

POLL FINDS EXECUTIVES OUT OF SYNC ON VIEWS OF THE ECONOMY

The main job for practitioners is often deflating the assumptions of management. Especially dangerous are misperceptions resulting from executive isolation. A recent Harris poll reports that executive isolation has occurred on the central issue of the day, the economy. Tho 58% of Americans believe we are in a depression (vs. 39% who don't), 58% of business execs believe we are not (vs. 41% who do). While 67% of execs believe there will not be a depression a year from now, 47% of the general public think there will be.

To further illustrate how far executive thinking differs from the public: 1) those who voted for Reagan believe by 50% (vs. 48% who do not) we're in a depression; 2) 54% of conservatives think so; 3) 49% of Republicans agree. Even those earning \$35,000 or more are evenly divided, 49% - 49%.

Isolated in their high income brackets & plush suburbs or condos, business managers need constant reminders of the condition of their publics -- via public relations research, as this study demonstrates.

SCHOOL PR & MARKETING PROGRAMS HELP DEAL WITH BASIC PUBLIC ISSUE, ALLOW SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TIE-IN

Today's stringent economy demands proactive coping by all organizations, but especially by the hard-hit public schools. Public education is a major national issue facing a tough challenge -- to do better with less -- plus its share of critics. Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) finds the solution lies in classic pr & marketing activities.

"This is not 1952," explains Bill Banach, adm dir & instrumental in putting together the pr & marketing plan. "Schools cannot continue doing business as usual because 'traditional markets' for schools are drying up. We must reassess public education's mission and go beyond the foundation we've established. That means developing a consumerism attitude -- listening to what the public needs and creating schools people want to do business with."

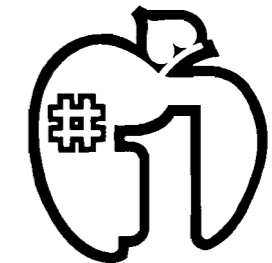
The Macomb Marketing Plan is a 3-phase program designed to "monitor what people do and don't like about their schools ... to find out what they do and don't want in their classrooms ... to analyze changes in the educational marketplace ... to bring schools into sync with the communities they serve." Offered in handbook form to others wanting to use it, program covers: Phase 1, targeted at elementary parents & focuses on the basics -- reading, writing & arithmetic. Phase 2, aimed at secondary students & parents and focuses on the basics & beyond. Includes survey of students and meetings with student leaders on which objectives are based. Phase 3, directed at adults who don't have children in school. Objectives for this phase are based on an opinion survey. Same survey assesses the progress in Phase 2 & measures the impact of Phase 1.

"Marketing Starter Kit," available from MISD for \$5, includes: 1) step-by-step directions for beginning a marketing program; 2) suggestions for involving citizens; 3) practical ideas for telling the public school success story; 4) ready-to-use graphics including Macomb's campaign logo & theme (see box).

Numerous support materials are available. Recently published booklet "News For Your Parents" contains 25 articles written for parents on subjects they want, according to market research findings: how to help with reading, writing & math at home; how to deal with an angry child; tips on discipline; talking with teenagers about drinking & driving; and more. Articles can be printed in newsletters or personalized with a note and sent home with the child. Booklet's purpose is to educate.

Organizations seeking a social responsibility project might look to their local public schools. Offering to help them implement a marketing plan like Macomb's is a good starter. "Now is the time for a national commitment to public education. Anyone who participates will be making a significant contribution to the American Dream," Banach asserts.

(\$7.50 "News For Your Parents" and \$5 "Marketing Starter Kit" from MISD, 44001 Garfield Rd, Mt. Clemens, Mich. 48044; 313/286-8800.)



Your public schools...
There's no better place to learn.