

A PRACTITIONER'S CHECKLIST FOR INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

David Blackmere formerly handled public relations for a city (Indianapolis, see prr 3/29/82). Now he's concerned with the world as dpr, Kiwanis International. The service club held its convention in Vienna and Blackmere's overseas venture reinforced what others have learned about functioning effectively outside North America. He offers these tips:

1. Do an indepth study of the country's customs & media. World Press Encyclopedia by George Kurian is an invaluable source.

2. Plan a localization of story angles and an effective flow of info to the media.

3. Find an interpreter. Translate everything. It's a courtesy. We even translated a documentary film on Kiwanis International using a firm called Global Video (Orlando) to convert it to Austria's standard. Film was shown on Austrian tv stations and on the in-house cable tv systems at the two hotel headquarters.

4. Explore using satellites for simultaneous coverage in the US.

5. Learn the local political situation. For example, the Austrian government is considering taxing all charitable contributions. Learning this, we elected not to mention our \$35 million community service contribution in Austria this year.

6. Remember you are a visitor. Let your performance reflect this.

7. Some tidbits to prepare for:

- a) typewriters that don't type in English;
- b) duplicating paper is much larger overseas;
- c) billboards are about two-thirds the size of ours;
- d) answer correspondence in the language of the country to create good relations.

HAVE A PROBLEM THAT DEFIES SOLUTIONS? FEEL CREATIVELY BLOCKED? HERE'S A BOOK FOR YOU

Want to learn how to think more creatively? 108 Ways to Get a Bright Idea and Increase Your Creative Potential by Arthur VanGundy explains how. Book's central thesis is

that everyone is capable of generating bright ideas. With proper motivation, creative climate (both internal & external), use of idea prompters, and a little practice, every mentally healthy person can be creative. "Once you are aware of what you can do and receive a little assistance in doing it, you can turn on the idea machine inside your head and use it to solve many of your most difficult problems," writes Van Gundy in the preface.

Book defines what a bright idea is, suggests stimulators which work like access codes in a computer, & discusses how to recognize a bright idea. It presents 20 ingredients essential for an internal creative climate & suggestions for using the techniques to develop a personal creative-thinking program. Lists 50 questions organized into categories of who, what, where, when & why. They're designed to help you become more involved with the problem, develop new perspectives & generate some potential solutions. Also includes 19 hints & guidelines for producing bright ideas & 39 techniques most commonly associated with creative problem solving. (From Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. \$6.95; 186 pgs.)

"Why do so many of us insist that there always is a right way and a wrong way of doing something? Our fascination with the correct probably does more to prevent us from getting bright ideas than anything else."

ROLE OF PERCEPTION (& THUS PUBLIC RELATIONS) IN ECONOMICS GETTING POWERFUL SUPPORT; CHANGE IN THEORY LOOMS

Economics is changing -- or at least being seriously challenged. What you learned in college won't do any longer, even if you graduated last year. Economists are academics, whether they teach or practice, so they insist on dealing with "facts" rather than perceptions. prr has tracked growing evidence it is public relations techniques emphasizing human nature, rather than econometric techniques emphasizing mathematics, that must determine economic policy -- and have a voice in economic forecasting.

Sudden switch from Keynes to Supply Side is a probable cause. There's an O.D. principle that one change opens the way for another. Meanwhile, economists have done a great pr job and managed our perceptions. It behooves practitioners not only to know the new challenges but the challengers. Are they pinko revolutionaries? No, MIT & UCal profs, Ford Foundation, Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies, et al.

Among Thurow's ideas: 1) corporate managers are right when they stress motivation on the job, even tho this has no place in supply-demand theory; 2) social scientists are right when they say that the economist's assumptions about human behavior are simple-minded and hopelessly dated.

Peruse this report from Ford on the Institute's year-long seminar entitled "Toward A Broader Economics," for which the foundation granted \$100,000. George Akerlof of UCal-Berkley is showing "how standard economic analysis is altered by ideas borrowed from anthropology, sociology, psychology. One example is 'cognitive dissonance' -- the notion from psychology that people sometimes hold beliefs that are contradictory." He cites workers in hazardous jobs who gradually become oblivious to the dangers because they do not want to believe they are at risk.

Akerlof argues that cognitive dissonance "may be responsible for other eccentricities. Among them that technological innovation tends to emanate from outsiders or recent entrants into an industry because insiders tend to resist new information that contradicts their established beliefs; and that 'image' advertising that appeals to people's fantasies is effective in selling goods because people need to feel they are attractive and socially adept." (Editor's note: Where have these people been?)

MIT's Lester Thurow, in his new book Dangerous Currents: The State of Economics, says the concepts governing economic policy making are naive & deficient. "I am convinced that acceptance of the traditional model, whose mathematical elaboration can now exasperate the most diligent of academics, is rather like believing that the world is flat.... Economists have been able to cow the public, press, policy makers & politicians in ways not usually open to technical people & academics."



A CREATIVE WAY TO OVERCOME  
A MAJOR COMMUNICATION PROBLEM:  
THE DANGERS OF TELEPHONITIS

What best represents your organization? Its people. What do people best relate to? Other people. How do most contacts take place? On the telephone, so that some individuals rarely

see one another. That's what the Maine printing company, Knowlton & McLeary, decided when they designed their identity brochure.

Titled "The Voice On The Other End..." cover carries two pictures of company's receptionists -- both talking on the phone. Inside are individual photos of nine employees & CEO -- all talking on phones. Beside each photo is person's name, title and a short description of their responsibilities. Each picture captures the employee in the middle of a conversation. They look alive, warm & approachable. And so, therefore, is the company.

In addition to personalizing the company to its publics, the technique motivates proper telephone usage among staff -- since they are no longer faceless voices. (For copy, write prr.)

CURRENT CREDIBILITY PROBLEMS OF NUCLEAR INDUSTRY  
REQUIRE A RARE INGREDIENT: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

"Atoms for Peace" is the slogan reflecting the goals of those involved in nuclear

energy. It portrays their desire to transcend the atom's destructive uses to bring unlimited material abundance. But under the guise of Atoms for Peace, "the raw materials and technical skills needed for making bombs have proliferated," say the authors of Nukespeak: The Selling Of Nuclear Technology In America.

Secrecy became the order of the industry, emanating as it did from the original military use. Public relations techniques were stretched to a point the authors feel was unethical.

One tactic was to eliminate "objectionable words from the atomic lexicon" wanting "palatable synonyms" for "scare words." To better the image of atomic energy, they created phrases such as: "electricity too cheap to meter," "a Garden of Eden," "land of milk and honey," "limitless power," "perpetual youth," "the pot of gold," "Philosopher's stone," "clean bomb," "clean surgical strikes," "nuclear device."

While the campaign to sell nuclear energy by giving it an appealing image worked for a while, facts are surfacing that no amount of public relations or advertising can camouflage. Practitioners will find positive & negative lessons in this book. It illustrates the dangers of derivative technology -- as utilities across the country can attest. While they were not responsible for the total lack of public participation in early nuclear decisions, practitioners in utilities must now deal with the fallout. Situation is analogous to Love Canal where organizations today are held accountable for societal decisions made 30-40 years ago.

Public relations pioneer Arthur Page of AT&T foresaw in 1938 the possibility organizations would be blamed today for acts of yesterday that seemed acceptable at the time:  
  
"Whenever the public has an idea that they would like to change a large business and make it perform in a certain way, the public convicts the business of not having performed that way before it was told. The only safeguard for those of us in a large business, therefore, is to keep a pretty careful watch on the way people's minds are running, figure out the coming public attitudes, what the public decisions are likely to be -- and then be ready for them. We must try not to be in the position of being convicted of treason. We must obey the rules even before they are passed."

FILMS ARE PRIME ILLUSTRATION  
OF NEED FOR FULL PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT;  
EMOTIONAL STIMULATION SUCCEEDS, NOT FACTUAL

Not reality, but the perception of reality determines a film's effectiveness. Five types of films (information, documentary, entertain-

ment, enrichment, experimental) create auras ranging from absolute reality to complete abstraction. "Reality per se has only moderate influence on the information film's effectiveness as a communication tool," explains S. Martin Shelton, mgr, Film Projects Branch, Technical Info Dep't, Naval Weapons Center (China Lake, Calif).

His monograph, "There Are Films -- And Then There Are Information Films," explores the nature of reality in film and audience perception of it as prime functions of communication. He investigates how the nature & properties of film can evoke the perception of reality, empathy &, therefore, acceptance of messages.

Film's power lies in its ability to evoke intellectual & emotional stimulation. Audiences are often mentally numbed by a film's many messages (added to the numerous messages bombarding them throughout the day) to the point where they acquiesce. The film becomes the unquestioned authority.

Power also lies in the ability to control visual & aural stimuli -- which guide the audience's receptive behavior. Visual stimuli are the crucial elements in influencing audience behavior, say researchers. 70% of the info communicated in films comes from the visuals. Survey by National Audiovisual Ass'n concludes 1) 83% of learning comes from visual info, 2) audiences remember (longterm) 30% of what they see and 50% of what they see & hear.

With the "right" mix of sight & sound, film stimulates viewers' senses and provides maximum opportunity for creating empathy in the audience. The more intense the empathy, the more powerful the effect is on audience comprehension, assimilation, retention & persuasion. If a film doesn't generate empathy, communication usually will fail, states Shelton.

He defines five theories of film reality (absolute reality, creative actuality, fiction, minimum reality, complete abstraction). His paper constructs a film reality scale and plots the five film types on it. He shows that film with a high reality factor (actual, not perceived) has communication appeal & effectiveness only for pre-interested audiences. Films that fall at the center of the film reality scale tend to be more effective in communicating messages. A faithfully real film probably is not as effective a communication tool as it could be because the advantages of the medium aren't utilized -- time, space & image manipulation, for example.

"By artistically exploiting film's compelling and unique technological & psychological factors in terms of audience needs & understanding, film's inherent persuasive power can be fully utilized to evoke intellectual stimulation & emotional commitment, generating empathy -- and, thus, communication." (For a copy of his monograph or other related research, write him at 332 Iowa Court, Ridgecrest, Calif. 93555)

Film is an effective communication tool because of its: 1) Strength -- ability to quickly transmit multiple messages over a geographic area. The larger the area, the more intense the strength. 2) Accessibility -- availability of a channel to be used & the frequency it is used. 3) Reinforcement -- potential to augment other channels of communication. 4) Credibility -- received perception of the expertise & honesty of the sender. This dimension is usually very high in film, regardless of the reality or fiction of its messages.