

concern himself with these matters very much. But the world's changed."

This "political assignment" requires stronger public relations support than ever -- including helping CEOs build contacts with media, academia, regulators, legislators & "anyone who can help the corporate view prevail." It means "taking the public pulse and keeping up with the mercurial shifts in political alliances as issues develop."

The aspect of public relations that deserves the highest priority, according to Jones, is helping CEOs "develop solid, persuasive company positions on issues that affect the business -- and in developing the strategy to win public support. In other words, public issues management; the kind of work that brings public relations people into policy-making processes."

Arthur W. Page Society is a nationwide organization for senior executives & outstanding achievers in public relations & corporate communications.

The organization differs from other public relations organizations in its members' commitment to raising professional standards by encouraging their companies to follow the principles of Arthur W. Page, the founding father of public relations. Those principles are: tell the truth; prove it with action; listen to the customer; manage for tomorrow; conduct public relations as if the whole company depends on it -- it does; and remain calm, patient, good-humored.

John Kotev is prez at Room 19A, 225 West Randolph St, Chi 60606.

*Trade Prof Assn*

### ITEMS PRACTITIONERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Internship program for minorities has been developed by PRSA/Minority Affairs Committee. One of its goals is "to ensure that Blacks & other minorities are provided the training & opportunity to practice public relations in established organizations. Since minorities are fewer in number & traditionally have had lower visibility, they could be overlooked when an organization considers someone for a public relations position." Committee is identifying promising students, helping them become competent professionals. PR dep'ts & firms can become part of the program. Details from PRSA, 845 3rd Ave, NYC 10022.

For those interested in the pros & cons of licensing the public relations profession (see t&t), booklet from The Council of State Governments is useful. "Occupational Licensing: Questions a Legislator Should Ask" helps 1) define the problem, determine 2) why the profession should be regulated, 3) what efforts have been made to address the problem, 4) what are the alternatives to licensing, 5) what benefits the public will receive, 6) whether licensing will be harmful to the public, 7) how the regulatory activity will be administered, 8) who is sponsoring the program, 9) why it's being sought. Also contains guidelines for licensing, case studies illustrating approaches 3 states have taken. (\$3.50 from Council of State Governments, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, Ky. 40578; 606/252-2291)

### WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. First person named to Arthur W. Page Hall of Fame is his son, John H. Page (NYC) former vp-pr, Pacific Northwest Bell; exec vp, Free Europe Comte; prez, Inco Alloy Products &

Inco US. He retired in March as CEO of Inco US; is director of GTE, Dexter, Nat'l Westminster Bank; mbr of Council on Foreign Relations; trustee of Youth for Understanding.

*Computer*

*Tech*

*Marketing*

*Comm*

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### AS CONSUMER SKEPTICISM HITS THE OVER-PROMOTED COMPUTER BIZ, WHAT CAN PRACTITIONERS LEARN ABOUT BUILDING CREDIBILITY & TRUST? HOW WILL TOUTED "MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS" HANDLE IT?

Computer people are so transfixed by the wonders of their technology they become missionaries -- and perceivable truth & reality get lost in the hype. It's pretty easy when the product is so exciting and the market a vacuum, eager for whatever you can throw to it.

Having been lionized in the media & elsewhere for their alleged super-skills (granted, most of the laudatory copy was self-generated) hi-tech pr folks took this posture further. They claimed traditional public relations should be replaced by "marketing communications." Computer companies bought the idea. The result of these combined hyperboles is 1) overpromising & a virtual "con job" by the industry, 2) destroyed expectations & rampant confusion for the consumers & other publics, such as employees.

Now the inevitable reaction has come, resulting in faltering companies, a product glut & widespread layoffs. What lessons can the profession learn from this?

1. The concept must be sold before the product. Makers are so busy selling their models that no one successfully pitched the idea of computers -- and their limitations. If there are trade ass'ns doing that job, they haven't penetrated.

2. Product publicity & promo are only half the job, as studies in the diffusion of innovation have taught us for a quarter century. Personal media -- opinion leaders, trusted peers or even salesmen -- must verify & reinforce the impersonal message delivered by news media, advertising, etc. But -- have you talked to some computer

Here are samples of the attitudes the techies must turn around:

"The personal computer business is a business like any other. Products that are over-priced, over-promoted, under-designed and under-supported don't sell when the customers get wise." -- Larry Blasko, Associated Press

"An honest computer company... would be a novelty." -- Lawyer Tom Christo, who specializes in suing computer companies, has won every case he's filed including million-dollar settlements or judgments against IBM, EDS, Burroughs

"Along with her job, she lost faith in the mystique of high technology." -- Boston Globe report on laid-off worker

Computer entrepreneurs behave "more like nineteenth century inventors than twentieth century marketers. Their ignorance about their arrogance on how marketing works compounds their problems." -- Peter Drucker in his new book, Innovation & Entrepreneurship

*Book*



salespersons? Did they ease your mind...or add to the confusion? General opinion leans heavily toward the latter. The irony is that advertising can give the impersonal messages, only public relations can add the essential personal media.

3. Public relations is still the conscience of an organization. Overpromises, software that doesn't do what it's supposed to, constant planned obsolescence, incompatible systems -- these and many more rip-offs on the buyer are well known to hi-tech pr people. If they have raised a voice in protest, it has not been heard outside the industry (and as these things go, some practitioners indeed may have been vox clamantis in deserto).

4. Even hot new industries require issue anticipation. Screen glare for workers is one example of an issue that seemingly took the field by surprise. Now California may pass consumer protection for computer buyers. Perhaps marketing communicators don't work in issues. But marketing means meeting the needs & values of customers & others.

5. Corporate culture still needs tending, even in new style youth-oriented organizations. pr 6/17 cited a consultant's report, for instance, which noted one big name maker then laying off workers "didn't nurture the corporate culture it had developed" and "it got rotten. You can't just keep adding & promoting people and think everything is going to be hunkydory. You've got to make sure everybody still knows what the game is."

Conclusion: Even hi-tech requires rounded public relations practice, not just marketing communications. No sales boom will go on forever in our competitive, changing world. Selling hard is great as long as you keep one eye out for the changes on the horizon.

Some Good Concepts  
Hi Tech PR Teaches

A. Users' Networks were created by some companies. A means of getting customers to participate in solving problems as they are discovered, finding new uses, providing feedback on design. Has potential as a personal medium to reach non-buyers making purchase decisions.

B. Apply 90/10 Rule says Regis McKenna: "90% of world is influenced by the other 10%" (purview 8/26). His vaunted "Regis Touch" is basically Diffusion Process -- and whether such now troubled clients as Apple used it or not, he's one of few practitioners who has expounded it, despite years of convincing research on the subject. (On the other hand, he denies being in pr: "I've never studied public relations; I've studied technology.")

C. Exciting Projects. Another irony. Despite near total concentration on publicity, often in trade media, some of the best recent projects came from hi tech. Like "Kids Can't Wait" -- Apple offered to put a computer on one teacher's desk in every public school in the country...free. All it asked in return was tax deductibility. The benefits: spare parts sales, add-ons, upgraded models, brand-acclimated young people.

"TRENDS IN CORPORATE IDENTITY & COMMUNICATIONS"  
STUDY FINDS BIG COMPANIES MISPERCEIVED, TELLS WHY

The public "greatly misperceives" their organizations, feel 45% of 160 Fortune 500

companies. And 26% believe a large percentage of future employees are among the population with inaccurate perceptions. This indicates "a fundamental requirement

is not being fulfilled. The misperceptions that they say exist really stress the need for a total strategic communications plan and a program that's constructed to help do the job -- a program that must reflect where a firm is today, what it does, and where it plans to be in the future," explains Clive Chajet, CEO, Lippincott & Margulies (NYC) which did the survey.

A disadvantage of hugeness. Prime reason for the rampant misperception is the scope of product lines or business agglomerated in large companies. 49% say key audiences do not understand the extent of their operations. 30% feel perceptions are skewed by one highly visible line or subsidiary.

Names must be current, too. 6 companies in 10 that changed names 30 or more years ago say their selections no longer accurately project their identities. 13 of 29 firms that changed names just 10 years ago also express dissatisfaction. Almost half (47%) report changing names at least once since their inception.

Little feeling for properly targeting publics. Even worse, surveyed execs indicate they've been selective in choosing vehicles for communicating strategic changes. 77% use their annual reports to educate shareholders regarding major strategy changes. 51% also rely on news media. And, horror of horrors, 2/3rds use annual reports to communicate change to employees rather than tailored employee pub'ns; 41% try to communicate with employees thru the media.

REG JONES, EX-G.E. CEO & RENOWNED EXEC LEADER,  
TELLS ARTHUR PAGE SOCIETY WHERE PR FITS, WHY:  
CANNOT LEAVE PUBLIC POLICY TO LAWYERS, PUNDITS, POLITICIANS

"Whether they want to or not, today's CEOs have to step out into the arena

of public policy and make their views known. They must become to some extent public figures, open to public judgment and sometimes to willful abuse -- but doing their best to establish public policies that will keep the economy strong and healthy, and their own companies thriving."

"Maybe the hard work of the 70s and 80s is starting to pay off -- the investments in anti-pollution equipment; the efforts to improve product safety; the drive to mend fences in Washington; the willingness to speak up and recognize social responsibilities." '85 Roper survey reports corporations are held in the same esteem as churches, easily outpace media, labor unions, courts, schools & even Supreme Court in public favor -- in some cases by 2 to 1 margin.

But, "Today's peacock is tomorrow's feather duster. There was a time when the CEO could sit in his office and concentrate on the internal affairs of the company. If his public relations people communicated with the public and the customers in a modest & truthful manner...and took care of the press, he really didn't need to

"As a company's reality changes, it should evolve its identity to insure that perception keeps pace with these crucial changes. A growth-oriented corporation is always changing, maturing, especially in terms of its corporate culture. The key is to convey these changes, this growth, to the outside world through all available media such as name & nomenclature, design systems, corporate architecture, advertising, public relations, etc." A name change shows that a company is "prepared to be the master of its own fate as opposed to a slumbering entity incapable of managing change."

Common  
perception  
myth

Issue  
pr

PR  
General

Big  
Trends