

DVIs, MRIs, HSAs, CONs & DRGs. ¶Programs closed for lack of patients. ¶Rehabilitative services dropped suddenly -- despite the need to treat hundreds of severely impaired patients. ¶Maximum security VIP suites for visiting heads of state. ¶Self-care units with reduced charges. ¶National media acting as brokers of donor organs for a lucky few, while thousands die out of the spotlight. ¶Hospitals refusing to join insurance company programs. ¶Hospital chains selling insurance. ¶"And, increasingly more 'caring' being advertised than care being delivered," Bob Dilenschneider of Hill and Knowlton told Academy for Health Services Marketing.

"Up close you see interesting choices. From afar, the choices stand for confusion. The health-care industry has not yet figured out how to explain them to anyone who doesn't have an idle week to study up." He recommends:

A. Develop an ethical code for marketing practices that 1) contains a "Right to Know" declaration explaining how to judge options in terms of cost, coverage & quality; 2) spells out proper & improper practices; 3) requires providers to back up claims; 4) enforces it to retain or regain public confidence.

B. Support the code with sophisticated marketing practices -- starting with goals & ending with programs. "Advertising or promotion is only one element in a long-term strategic plan -- and it should be the last one."

C. Develop a damage control program that will either prevent a

ONE MORE TIME:
DON'T BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE

Unless you want to spotlight (& thus promote) something you disagree with, don't attack, rebut or comment on it! Current case in point is the book, Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence. First the Boston Catholic Diocese attacked it -- admittedly sight unseen -- calling it "sensational" and "an affront." Irish customs seized the books, then released them realizing danger of the free speech issue involved. Results? Predictably sales zoomed. Naiad Publishing, which specializes in lesbian literature, is outgrowing its building to keep up with demand.

crisis or minimize it when it comes. Should include: 1) media monitoring to spot & correct errors quickly, exploit positive angles; 2) build true relationships; 3) compile a list of allies you can use in a crisis; 4) develop scenarios for possible crises & formulate responses; 5) to avert or control a crisis, focus on 1 issue -- not 4 or 5-- that can turn a situation around.

*PR-stand
Comm
Books*

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶Americans are staying single longer than any generation this century, reports the Census Bureau study on "Marital Status & Living Arrangements." This means households are formed later in life -- which could have important implications. Median age at first marriage is 25.4 for men, 23 for women. In addition, there is a sizable increase in the proportion of men & women under 35 who have never married -- 26% for the 25-29 age group, compared to 11% for this group in 1970. Report also notes marked growth continues in the number of unmarried couples living together.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

PEOPLE. Joe Nolan retires as vp-pa Monsanto to join pr faculty a UFla-

Gainesville. Holds doctorate & previously headed sequence at U SCarolina.

pr reporter

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RECIPE FOR THE BIG PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN: FUN, PARTICIPATIVE, CREATIVE; VOTING ON "BIG BOY" BUILDS AWARENESS, REINVIGORATES OLD TRADEMARK

Publicity

In the excitement of being on the cutting-edge of the profession -- with behavioral sciences, issues anticipation & crisis management -- our publicity roots still have a role in addressing certain situations. Public awareness & participation are the major ones. Rogers & Cowan's (LA) Big Boy campaign -- a PRSA/LA PRisms award winner -- is a fine example.

Comm

Public Participation. Key is to give the public something to do about publicity. Marriott Corp, parent of the Big Boy Restaurant chain, and its ad agency decided to let the public vote on whether the pudgy Big Boy trademark character would stay or go after almost 50 years. Good response to commercials tested in DC led Marriott to seek advice for a publicity campaign that would "create high visibility for the character & the restaurant, positioning them in the eyes of the consumer," explains Richard Taylor, R&C exec vp.

On-Site Action. Marriott's goal was to get 2 million votes on the question. Publicity encouraged people to go to their local Big Boy restaurant and cast their ballots. "We had kids out front with signs that read 'keep him' or 'get rid of him.'"

"Interview" Was A Hit. "We had the character 'interviewed' without any voiced response -- he's an inanimate object -- in almost every major market in which the restaurant operates. We prepared the questions & sold the segment. The host or hostess just stood in front of the statue and had fun. Cristina Ferrare, hostess for 'AM LA,' did a 4-minute segment 'interviewing' Big Boy. We put the statue on the stage and she interviewed him. He just stood there holding his hamburger."

Public relations firm's experiences on the project are indicative of what's happening.

- Last minute notice. "It was the 11th hour when they contacted us. We put together a presentation in 24 hours and presented it to them in DC. And they went with it," Taylor told prr.
- Conservative approach is out. Good ideas must be milked to the point of almost seeming ridiculous, e.g., the "interview." "We took it as far as we could!"
- Staff morale is a payoff. "We had a lot of fun with this campaign."
- Successful projects lead to continuing clients. R&C has been retained to handle Big Boy's 50th anniversary celebration next year.

Trends



The Big Announcement. After the votes were tabulated -- 7 of 8 voted to keep him -- result was announced at Hollywood High School in front of "2,300 cheering students. We went live to 780 tv stations around the US on our own satellite feed. ABC, NBC, CBS network news were there; all the local channels, AP, UPI, Reuters. Coverage was unbelievable." Two bodyguards wearing earphones & talking into their sleeves like the secret service, carried in the Big Boy character which had been positioned as the "Real Candidate."

Results. Campaign ran 10 weeks. "We got more than 4 million votes -- double what they hoped for." Publicity generated included 10 major mentions on the Johnny Carson Show in a period of 2 1/2 weeks, a song about the Big Boy character done on the tv special "That Was The Week That Was," a 6-inch pile of clippings, 3 1/2 hrs of tv exposure. A questioned trademark was rejuvenated. Great awareness was created for the restaurants. Measured behaviorally, millions visited them & ate there when casting their ballots.

ANTI-APARTHEID PROTEST DAY IS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11; OPPORTUNITY...OR DANGER?

A chance for your organization to show its support for a "free" South Africa...or to be lambasted if you have investments, subsidiaries or plants there. Because the date coincides with Southern Africa

Political Prisoner Day, campaigns for the release of Namibian & South African political prisoners will also be stressed.

Protests are presently planned in Albany, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chi, Detroit, Houston, LA, DC, NYC, Phila, Portland, SF, Seattle, Tuscon (where AFL-CIO is sponsoring a rally) and at over 100 colleges & universities. Because protests are being organized locally, tactics will vary.

Organizer is American Committee on Africa -- which started the present movement against South African policy with a carefully planned sit-in at the Embassy last year (see prr 3/4). Theme for the day is "Free South Africa. Divest Now -- Break Economic Links With Apartheid." Organizers hope for the following:

1. At 1pm EST (noon/Central, 11am/Mountain, 10am/Pacific) people should rise & observe a minute of silence to honor those killed or under arrest.
2. Individuals wishing to participate should inform employers beforehand & get their agreement for this observance. Announce the plans. Alert local media.
3. Distribute & wear black armbands thruout the day as a sign of support. (More info from American Cmte on Africa, 198 Broadway, NYC 10038; 212/962-1210)

KEEPING PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS WHEN THE LINES ARE DOWN: HOW TO HANDLE A HURRICANE

"We came thru the March '84 blizzard in good shape. But Hurricane Gloria is different. Tougher from a customer relations standpoint. You don't have the snow lingering afterwards to remind people there was a bad storm. So there's a higher degree of public hostility & consumer concern," Carl Gustin, dpi of Boston Edison, told prr.

Customers First. Communication with customers received primary attention. "Our customer contact people have been working 12 hour days. When you're getting 3000 calls an hour you've got to get the information & get it into the computer as fast as you can. Now that the calls are dropping off, we're in a position to spend more

time with the customers -- to the point of being on first-name basis with some of the callers."

News Media Helpful. "The media has been very helpful in soothing & calming people down. They're telling the public, 'You've got to understand that these people are working 18 hour days. Don't point your finger at people who are out there trying to help you.' We've done a lot of live tv broadcasts. We make sure we've got spokespeople available at the site or the station. We're working hard to keep our public communication going." Department of Public Utilities chrm, while announcing plans to investigate another state utility's performance, held Boston Edison up as a good example of public & customer communication.

Ads To Be Sure. 1) Full page ads with strong graphics were placed in daily papers before the storm hit, warning about possible downed live wires -- not to touch them but to call the utility. 2) Monday after the hurricane, full pg ads were placed in metro & suburban dailies telling parents to warn their children that lines were still down and what to watch out for on their way to school. 3) Ads in Tuesday papers asked customers who were still without power to check the lines into their buildings (illustrating what to look for) to see if they would need an electrician -- per town code requirements -- before utility crews could do their work. 4) Final full page ads ran Sunday saying "thank you" to customers, media, town officials, employees and those from utilities in other states who came to help.

...MEANWHILE UTILITY ISSUES KEEP RIGHT ON COOKING

The same employees who repair downed lines and staff the phones are also the main troops on issues. To provide info they can use when discuss-

ing issues, Boston Edison is trying a perceptions vs. facts technique. Subjects will cover the need for Seabrook (nuclear power plant), acid rain, nuclear waste, forecasting considerations, cogeneration & small producers outlook, etc. Discussion will be carried in the weekly employee newsletter, "Last Week."

"For example, our first issue is Seabrook. It's hot, with broad public discussion. So there's no doubt our employees are likely to encounter it. We're simply trying to help them be prepared to deal with it and know the company's perspective," Gustin reports.

Boston Edison has held meetings on issues for years. Employees discuss with other employees anything from benefits to rate increases. "Over the years we've dealt directly with public issues, and tried to provide info to our employees on how to deal with those issues in their personal contacts. This perception/fact perspective is the latest in a series of efforts to inform employees. We're adapting the way we communicate on issues with our employees to the changing external environment."

NEW HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT IS CLUTTERED, CONFUSING; LESSON HERE FOR EVERYONE

¶Money-back guarantees & cash discounts. ¶Cost-free surgery. ¶Cash-only services. ¶Satellite centers ("Docs in a Box"). ¶Limited access to emergency care thru strict treatment criteria.

¶Healthcare advertising agencies publicly criticizing each other over unsubstantiated claims. ¶Recovery hotels for recuperating patients & their families. ¶Vacation excursions for weekend-surgery lottery winners. ¶HMOs, PPOs, IPAs, PROs,

Special Section

Religious/Activist

Class Comm

Utilities

Chris Gustin
cust rela

Colony

James Wright

Utilities

Healthcare