

Free Press columnist Bob Talbert, friendly but frank with the profession, ended his piece with "An assignment: after visiting Detroit, tell me why we have an image problem and what you'd do to change it." Have at it, gang! (Write prr for copy of column.)

*Media: hint*

Do what it takes to get your first job, Chrysler's Jim Tolley told PRSSA. His break-in job, with GE, was collecting trash around a mobile trailer show on science & invention. He made the point memorable by brandishing a pole with a nail at the end.

*PR: Prof.*

Further evidence of technology's acceptance: PRSA's Midwest District voted to give PRLink membership to each of its chapters.

Better door-prize winner couldn't be designed -- even by pr pros. Stan Wallace (vp-comms, Panhandle Eastern, Houston) won the use of a new 7-passenger Chrysler Mini Van for 12 months. He is prez of a nonprofit foundation that operates a sheltered residence called Vita Living for severely retarded adults. "In Texas, state facilities for the mentally retarded are under a court mandate to shape up. So we've erected the first such residence in the state." Wallace took mike to donate his prize to transport Vita Living's residents to a sheltered workshop each day.

*PRSA Nonprofit*

USING EMPLOYEES AS BAROMETERS FOR CORPORATE GIVING

Employees can become a community sounding board by showing their support or non-support of requests for corporate funds, according to

Kenneth Murphy, Public Relations Operations (Richmond, Va.). Using a matching gifts format, companies can control the amount they give to various charitable & nonprofit organizations by being a reflection of their employees.

*Emp Rel*

Corporation might suggest it will match employees' giving on a 2-1 basis. If there is little interest in the charity or organization campaigning, and employee giving is low, the company will not be required to make a disproportionate gift. Likewise, if the cause is popular and employees show a lot of support, the company is more comfortable making a substantial contribution.

*Corp Resp.*

Another benefit is that this takes the pressure off management by virtually forcing the charity or cause to pay most of its attention to the employee group, rather than corporate officers.

Consistency and criteria are the keys, according to Murphy. Understandable criteria must be set up and administered consistently. For example, rules for employee solicitation in the workplace must be established and abided by. Once the matching gifts formula is set, it shouldn't be varied unless changed for all potential recipients.

*Community Rel*

Corporate contributions are an important & positive part of community relations, Murphy believes. Using a matching gifts formula based on employee contributions creates the added benefit of a three-way partnership between the community, the company and its employees.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARD. Hugh Culbertson (prof, Ohio U) receives Foundation's Pathfinder Award

for his research on the roles of pr pros & how they are perceived & taught by educators.

# pr reporter

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REAL TALK OF PRSA CONFERENCE -- IN THE HALLS & BARS -- WAS ON 2 SUBJECTS:  
1) THE GREAT ADVANCE IN USE & ACCEPTANCE OF COMPUTERS;  
2) THE VARIETY OF PROPOSALS TO VERIFY OR ENFORCE PROFESSIONALISM

*PRSA*

TECHNOLOGY WAS EVERYWHERE. Battery operated PCs popped up on laps & tabletops during seminars & luncheon speeches. Spectacular opening sessions showed power of laser technology to enhance emotional appeal. 5 PD sessions & 5 roundtables, each offered twice, focused on computers in specific pr applications.

*Tech*

*PR: Prof.*

A TECHNOLOGY CENTER was open thruout for 1) hands-on experience with micro-, mini- & briefcase computers, 2) demonstration of an interactive video disc employee communications system (see prr 9/16), 3) production of the Conference Daily on a Macintosh computer, Apple Laser-Writer printer & Aldus PageMaker software. Process was projected on a large screen tv system so conferees could watch. 5) PRLink transmitted summaries of conference activities to its data library. Members who couldn't get to Detroit, got round-the-clock coverage thru their computers.

COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE organized an opinion survey -- by computer -- on pr issues & use of the new technologies. Computers were set up near the registration area. 500 conferees (often with several waiting in line) took the 6-minute survey.

Proliferation of technology shows the diffusion process at work. Conference was fertile ground for trial or adoption stages -- colleagues influencing colleagues that technology is advantageous, useful, can increase productivity. Previously it was the demense of the techies (or innovators). In a year, behavior has changed. (For 8-pg handout from the Task Force, write prr.)

By-computer survey results show:

- a) 83% have computers in their org'ns; 42% in their own offices; 35% have purchased home computers for use in their work.
- b) 82% agree pr is increasingly effective in helping solve the nation's key problems.
- c) They also feel pr's principal responsibilities now tend toward in-depth counseling of mgmt & strategic planning as well as the implementation of communication prgms.
- d) 67% agree "the public is likely to accept only those new video technologies that mean something concrete or have practical value.
- e) 55% believe it's important that public relations practitioners be licensed. (For copy of complete results, write PRSA.)



ELECTRONIC MAIL OFFERS SEVERAL ADVANTAGES IN TODAY'S NO-TIME-FOR-IT WORLD

When considering purchasing a system, Steve High (San Jose) told conferees they should think about these benefits:

1. Timing. A prospect logging on to view mail is ready to receive it & may respond more favorably than if interrupted by a phone call to receive it vocally.
2. Less likely to get tossed or lost. Because E-mail is screened, it won't get thrown in the waste-basket by mistake.
3. International communication is improved. It's often difficult to communicate with organizations on different timeclocks. With E-mail, you send the message on your time & they receive it on theirs. They may even respond as early as the next morning.
4. Expense. In the long run, you'll save money on long-distance, mail & of course, employee time.
5. Computer copy is more likely to get edited than rewritten altogether. If a piece is going thru a many-step approval process, the boss often finds it easier to rewrite rather than make changes on paper. On the terminal, it's easier to make a few corrections & leave it closer to its original state.
6. Inbox/Outbox tells at a glance what you've sent & what you've received. Some even tell when your message was received. "Did you get my letter?" becomes "What did you think of my letter when you read it?"
7. Data library, as on PRLink, allows you to call up anything from local pr news to available jobs to AP news briefs to conference proceedings.

Some tips for computer beginners from Bill Brody (Memphis State U):

1. Always buy software by mail. It's cheaper and local computer stores usually can't help you with your problems anyway.
2. Software & hardware come with technical help lines. Be sure to get these numbers; call when you need help.

SO YOU'RE COMPUTER PHOBIC? TAKE HEART...SO ARE OTHERS

The best way to conquer your fear, Ron Solberg (Comms Technology Task Force chrm) told attendees, is to start simple. Biggest mistake, made by many,

is to over-purchase, then become frustrated with an oversupply of bells & whistles. He advises:

1. Think small and have fun with your first computer.
2. Network with people like yourself.
3. Start a computer users' club in your org'n or town.
4. Join PRLink and communicate with computer-using colleagues.

If your problem is resistance from a soon-to-be-computerized staff, e.g., mgrs who see using a keyboard as a clerical function, sell top bosses first. That will take your best one-on-one cheerleading abilities. But once they become users, others will follow.

MULTIPLE EFFORTS UNDERWAY NOW TO VERIFY OR ENFORCE PROFESSIONALISM

Evidence of rising interest are these incidents at the conference:

1. Incoming PRSA prez Tony Franco announced he is considering a spring conference to discuss mandatory accreditation, licensing & similar proposals. PRSA should take the lead in any decisions, he said.
2. Incoming Counselors Academy chair Joe Epley announced a task force to investigate certification for firms. If they find it's a good idea, task force will recommend prgm criteria at the Academy's annual meeting next year.
3. North American Public Relations Council will investigate the feasibility of uniform accreditation among the org'ns now offering it. They are PRSA, CPRS, IABC, Fla. PR Ass'n, Southern PR Federation, NSPRA. Programs vary, PRSA is not the innovator now: e.g., CPRS requires paperwork submission before the exam, FPRA has 2 levels, NSPRA requires reaccreditation every 5 years.
4. NAPRC also saw a first draft of a possible uniform code of ethics. Org'ns will report back in February with any changes necessary.
5. Continuing Education Board chair Mel Sharpe reported on use of CEUs as a reaccreditation measure. Board recommends PRSA mbrs complete 2 CEUs/yr or 6 in 3 yrs and PRSA Sections should administer the prgms.
6. Cocktail & mealtime talk frequently turned to the pros & cons of state licensing.

NOTABLE ITEMS FROM PRSA CONFERENCE

\*Olympic gymnast Bart Conner's appearance (he's a pr grad of UOkla) dramatized how tv builds over-expectation. While huge on screen, where cameras focus tightly on his incredible performance, he is tiny in person. Several hero worshippers expressed disappointment.

\*Overcoming the psychological barrier of ego defense was demonstrated by film festival winner Pringle Dixon Pringle (Atlanta). Firm's volunteered anti-drunk driving PSA has the drink explode in slow motion as a metaphor for a car crash. Studies show people don't want to see real crashes or actual results of accidents.

\*Detroit media covered conference thoroly -- if sometimes snidely.

OLD TECHNOLOGY STILL NEEDS ATTENTION

It's great how we're going places with the new technology. But it's apparent -- from the glitches at the conference -- that we still haven't mastered the old technology. Some simple questions based on our observations of Murphy's Law in action at the conference:

1. Did you get the size video screen you need?
2. Is the screen high enough for those in the rear to see -- particularly in a long narrow room.
3. Does the video player take your width tape?
4. Your video may be fine...but what do you do if there's an annoying hum in the audio that prevents you from running your program?
5. And how about looking after low-tech hindrances? Best intentions at audience participation are thwarted if acoustics -- or lack of microphone -- prevent half the audience from hearing a question and therefore making sense of the speaker's reply.

Tech

Computers

Ethics

Tech

Media: Elect

Psych

Film/Video

PR: General