

CREATING A VISUAL SYMBOL THAT CAN APPEAR EVERYWHERE
IS WAY TO LINK YOUR CAUSE TO A "BIG IDEA"

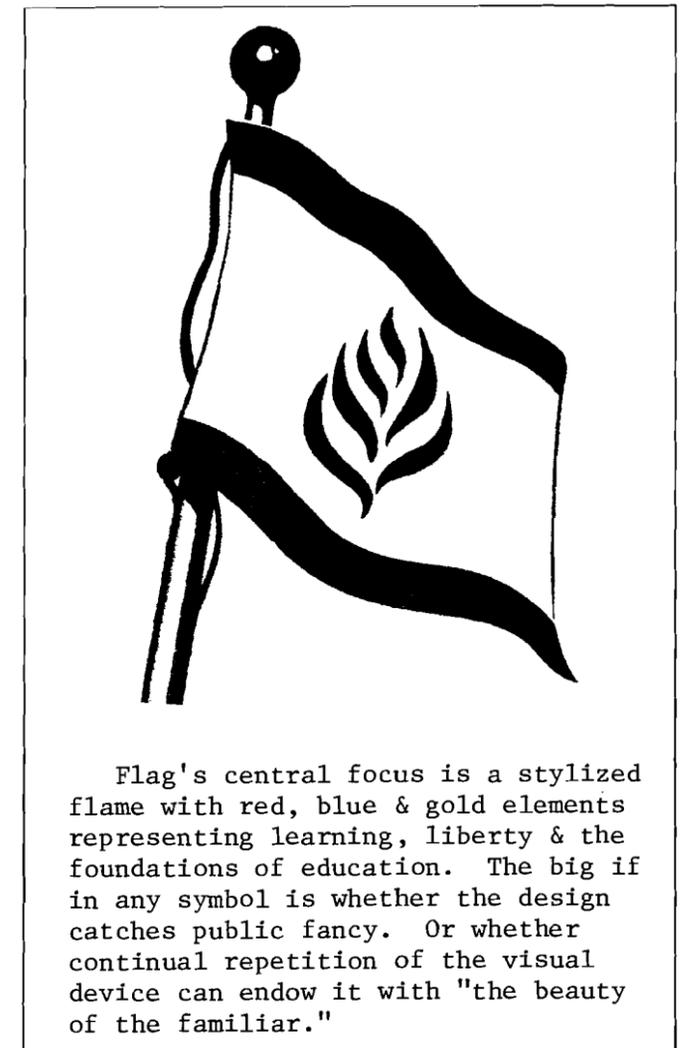
*Comms
Educ*

What do you do when the public seems to agree with attacks on you, yet doesn't want to do anything to help you improve or regain their support? "Public apathy is the worst thing that can happen to your cause," Bonnie Ellison told prr. Her cause is education. During her year as president of National School Public Relations Ass'n ('84-'85), she launched a campaign to change apathy to support.

Background. In '83, national attention was called to problems in education. Reports were released that generated lots of interest, questions, criticism. There were opportunities to provide solutions, "or if you disagreed with the solution, a 'fix.' But regardless whether it was a solution or a fix, next would be another wave of apathy."

Key Communicator Concept. To ward it off, NSPRA put together an Impact Committee of 60 pr pros representing every state. Edward L. Bernays was asked to chair. His strategic planning method (t&t 11/24/80) was used. To start, personal letters were written to leaders everywhere asking for 50-word statements on 1) their assessment of education today, 2) how it can be improved. Hundreds responded. And these are now used to win support from others. Majority feel education is "fair with room for improvement."

Linking To The Big Idea. "The single-most common idea from the letters was a strong belief in education's importance to democracy," explains NSPRA's exec dir John Wherry. Committee members met in DC for 2-day brainstorming session based on these findings. Brainchild was "flag of learning & liberty" for education -- a visual device symbolizing the importance of education to democracy. It was unfurled in every state capitol last July 4th -- which was also



Flag's central focus is a stylized flame with red, blue & gold elements representing learning, liberty & the foundations of education. The big if in any symbol is whether the design catches public fancy. Or whether continual repetition of the visual device can endow it with "the beauty of the familiar."

*PRSA
Tech*

PRSA's 15th special interest group -- Technology Section -- is established. It expects to attract members in electronics, computers, aerospace, chemicals, petrochemicals, biomedical, R&D, education. "One of our goals is to help section members understand and keep up with technology & communications advancements in the industries they serve," says convenor Joel Strasser, sr vp & dir, Dorf & Stanton Communications (NYC). Charter membership meeting will be held Nov 12, 4:15pm at PRSA's National Conference in Detroit. (Applications from PRSA, 845 3rd Ave, NYC 10022)

Resh

Recognizing that strategy & performance depend on research, Arthur W. Page Society has awarded \$18,500 to 2 San Diego State U profs for the 1st how-to book on public relations research. Glen Broom will co-author with David Dozier. "There's an obvious reason why research has a modest role in many organizations -- it has not been a part of most public relations professionals' education or professional development," explains Stanley Boulter, vp-pr & pa, Mountain Bell (Denver) and dir of the Society's research committee. A Society survey of practitioners shows 98% consider research & program evaluation know-how a "pressing need."

*Funding
Agenda*

Funding for research & education that helps practitioners do their jobs is a reality thru the several foundations now benefiting the profession. The oldest, Foundation For Public Relations Research & Education, raised \$134,000 last year from corp'ns, counseling firms & individual practitioners. That's an increase of 26% over the previous year. And 2nd year in a row that contributions exceeded \$100,000. New efforts include Pathfinder Award to recognize scholarly research; Educator Advisory Committee to advise on the needs of pr educators & students; editing transcripts of recorded interviews with pr leaders. For a copy of its annual report, write the Foundation at 310 Madison Ave, Ste. 1816, NYC 10017; 202/370-9353)

ARs

Metaphoric comparisons (that's redundant) make memorable messages. Some recent examples include Sparky Anderson's description of Pete Rose when he broke baseball's big record for most hits: "Embarrass him. Knock him down. Pound him in the dirt. But don't turn your back on him and walk away unless the coroner has pronounced him dead." Another comes from the current discussion of chemical wastes, as stated by a concerned public official: "Cleaning agents, motor oil & other chemicals we regard as being benign when they're in gallon jugs under the sink, are the same toxics we regard as dangerous when a big company dumps a barrel in a landfill."

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WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. Ann Barkelew (vp-corp comms, Dayton Hudson, Mpls) receives 1st Esther V. Crosby Award from the Greater Mpls Girl Scout Council for leadership & community involvement.

Kain (retired dpr, AT&T, NY); treas, Robert Ehinger (now a consultant after retiring as vp-contributions & org'n planning, AT&T, NY).

ELECTED. Arthur W. Page Society's 1986 ofc's: pres, John Koten (vp corp comms, Illinois Bell, Chi); vp, Jean Handley (vp pers & corp rels, Southern New England Telephone, New Haven, Ct.); sec'y, E. Francis

PEOPLE. Susan Akin, Miss America 1986, has studied public relations for 3 yrs at UMississippi.

RETIREES. Robert Hampton, gen'l mgr pa, ICI Americas (Wilmington, Del.).

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NSPRA's 50th anniversary. Design costs as well as 1st 50 flags were donated by Southland Corp. (Dallas).

Flag Use Booming. Tangible evidence of whether it's catching on is sales. Wherry says they've "been flooded with orders." They're being purchased by superintendents, principals, PTAs. Businesses are buying them to give to local schools or alma maters of execs (good publicity device). One vendor purchased flag lapel pins to use as give-aways at a convention. In Pennsylvania, superintendents are passing a flag from one school to another at half time during football games. Service clubs, too, are getting in on the act by presenting flags to local schools.

Making It Universal & Perpetual. "Now we have to establish our symbol -- not just in America but in democratic societies all over the world. The campaign is an involvement model -- getting people involved in the future of their neighborhood public schools. And not just parents who have a reason to be involved. The target is the 73% who don't have children in school. Education doesn't have a built-in support base anymore," explains Ellison. Campaign is developing support by:

1. Widely-distributed brochure depicts flag, explains symbolism, includes quotes by well-known leaders about the importance of education to democracy.

2. "We're rewriting the Bernay's model for application to an 'education for democracy's sake' campaign for school use." First move is to determine the degree of knowledge & enthusiasm for education in local communities. Then the replies from authority figures can be used as persuasion.

3. "We're talking about sending a flag with the 1st teacher in space next January."

4. Declaration of Independence from Ignorance is being written.

5. Flag will be introduced at meetings & conventions of other educational organizations. Goal is to have one flying over "every school, public & private, every school district and every education institution in America. It will serve as our constant reminder to focus attention upon the critical role education plays in our society." (More info from NSPRA, 1501 Lee Highway, Ste. 201, Arlington, Va. 22209; 703/528-5840)

Two neglected verses of "America," which are about the value of education, are being brought back. When sung by children along with the two usual verses "people cry, they stand up and cheer. It's like America winning the hockey game again. It's picking up on the patriotism people have and the deep-seated feeling to make sure our schools are as good as possible. It has really hit a nerve. While we had idealistic visions for this project, it has outstripped anything we ever dreamed of," says Wherry.

"America"

Our glorious Land today
'Neath Education's sway
Soars upward still
Its halls of learning fair
Whose bounties all may share
Behold them everywhere
On vale & hill.

Thy safeguard Liberty
The School shall ever be
Our nation's pride
No tyrant's hand shall smite
While with encircling might
All here are taught the Right
With Truth allied.

PUBLIC PRIORITIES: MEASURED BY SUPPORT FOR MORE GOV'T ASSISTANCE

Of interest to a broad range of practitioners is where the public wants gov't aid to be increased, decreased or stay the same. Note that defense & space -- but also welfare -- have the least support for increases and the most support for decreases. However, despite the talk of spending for infrastructure, note the poor showing for highway & transportation. Apparently people want their tax dollars spent on very personal, human benefits -- such as health, education, food.

Gov't Aid For...	Increased	Stay At Current Level	Decreased	Don't Know/No Opinion
Medical research	72.7%	21.1%	5.1%	1.1%
Medical care for the aged	72.1	23.7	2.8	1.4
Higher education	60.9	28.4	9.7	1.1
Agriculture	58.3	25.5	12.5	3.8
Elementary & secondary education	58.1	31.4	8.2	2.4
Cleaning up the environment	55.8	34.6	8.5	1.2
Needy college students	52.6	34.5	10.6	2.4
Energy research & development	49.7	35.1	12.6	2.6
Post-secondary vocational & technical training	42.7	43.5	10.7	3.1
School lunch program	35.7	46.5	15.3	2.5
Social welfare program	26.8	38.6	32.1	2.5
Highways & transportation	26.8	57.4	13.6	2.2
Space program	23.4	44.9	30.1	1.6
National defense	23.0	<u>38.2</u>	<u>37.3</u>	1.5

-- Source: Council for the Advancement & Support of Education's 4th annual survey of attitudes toward higher education. Opinion Research Corp phoned 1,004 respondents nationwide between 9/29 & 10/7. Statistical margin of error at the 95% confidence level is + 3%.

ITEMS PRACTITIONERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

advig "A tip for planners of PSAs: Video Storyboard Tests/Campaign Monitor, a NY research firm, asked 1,000 tv viewers to rate commercials in terms of their effectiveness. In this order, respondents said commercials with 1) humor, 2) children, 3) portraying real-life situations and 4) music were the most effective and persuasive.