

MEDIA TRAINING STILL A GROWING ASSIGNMENT;
THREE EXPERTS UPDATE THE TECHNIQUE

Saying the wrong thing while the camera is rolling or being grilled by a hostile, insistent reporter are growing fears of many execs. Growing to the point where media training has risen 45% this year for Savin/Williams Associates (Evanston, Ill). It now accounts for 1/3 of the firm's biz, says Lou Williams.

His training course educates about the media, trying to convince execs that reporters generally have good motives. But he prepares them for the worst. Some do's & don'ts he suggests:

- 1. Give a direct answer to a direct question.
- 2. Don't use jargon.
- 3. Tailor your remarks to your audience.
- 4. If you don't want a statement quoted, don't make it.
- 5. Limit your message to 1 or 2 major points and make them early.
- 6. Don't exaggerate the facts.
- 7. Tell the truth, even if it hurts. Personal appearance conveys image, especially on tv. He advises:
- 8. Dress conservatively.
- 9. Doctors do well to wear their smocks in office interviews.
- 10. Men should think about shaving again for late afternoon interviews.
- 11. Never refuse powder. "Richard Nixon will never forget that."

Being Persuasive On TV:
Increase Control Of Interview

Before agreeing to a tv interview, Walter Pfister of The Executive Television Workshop (NYC) advises finding out:

- 12. What's the program? Then watch it to see typical approach.
- 13. How long is a segment?
- 14. What other guests will be interviewed? In what order?
- 15. Will interview be edited? If so, insist that interview length be related to edited length: e.g., for 2-minute news spot, give 10-minute interview; for 15-minute segment, 1 hr interview.
- 16. Will interviewer have basic knowledge of subject? Request it. To get your organization's message across in the interview:
- 17. Relate high priority items to human interests of viewers.
- 18. Use human-interest stories as "sparklers," e.g., a DuPont exec uses his daughter's escape from a car accident because she was wearing a seat belt to illustrate reason for his emotional commitment to employee safety campaigns.
- 19. Use opportunities such as a) open-ended questions; b) invitation for wrap-up remarks; c) compliment from interviewer (should it occur!); d) pauses while interviewer consults notes; e) hostile questions -- bridge them with positive response.

Hostile mock interviews can be detrimental as a training technique, believes Jim Smith of Communispond (Chi). It might just reinforce the fear that's already there.

Following our custom, pr reporter will not be published next week. This is the last issue in 1985. Happy Holidays!

pr reporter

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IF ONE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES IS FOUND TO HAVE A.I.D.S....
OR IF YOU'RE WITH A HOSPITAL AND AN A.I.D.S. PATIENT REGISTERS...
OR A SCHOOL WITH AN A.I.D.S. VICTIM...WHAT'S YOUR COMMUNICATION POLICY?

What do you say to your employees? The media when they call? The general public? Should you say nothing...until you're asked? Or be proactive...and risk stirring up a maelstrom?

One of the most important public relations functions is to calm a crisis. Some suggestions toward a policy, adapted from a Michigan hospital's (and expressed in hospital terms, tho applicable anywhere):

Internal Audience Is Crucial For external as well as internal relationships, the crux is the behavior of employees. This is especially true of a hospital -- "the health experts." The external community will take its cue from how employees behave. Take the leadership as: 1) a credible source of info; 2) a role model for individual behavior; 3) an institution that understands & sympathizes with people's feelings about AIDS at the same time as it carries out its ethical responsibilities.

Primary tool is an ongoing internal education & emotional support program for all employees. Tho content will vary for different employees, all must accept the hospital's policy of treating AIDS patients. Include representatives from all levels in the coordinating group -- to get early feedback on problems & concerns.

Speak With One Clear & Calm Voice This can occur only if 1) employees believe their well-being & the community's is the overriding concern; 2) fears & rumors are discussed openly in group sessions without fear of ridicule; 3) counseling is offered to those with special needs or in high-risk situations; 4) honest discussion is held about the inevitable rumors of personnel contracting AIDS on the job; 5) an AIDS team is available as a resource for employees' or supervisors' questions; 6) all press inquiries are directed to one office; 7) a spokesperson for external audiences is designated; 8) all employees maintain the patient's right of privacy.

If an employee contracts AIDS, continued employment subject to clinical surveillance & safeguards makes the most positive statement -- and is probably the least expensive. Firing the employee would: a) probably result in legal action; b) send signals of panic thruout the hospital & community that the hospital can't control infection; c) blacken the name of the hospital as uncaring.

External Audiences Important ones are public officials, news media, schools & colleges (administrators, teachers, parents, students), community groups, particularly concerned individuals, e.g., members of the gay community. Guidelines: 1) Develop a positive theme for response to questions. 2) Involve employees in conjuring up all possible questions the public might have about AIDS. 3) Then come up with answers to guide the designated spokesperson(s).

4) Discuss the AIDS policy at a background briefing with editors & news directors. Remind them of a patient's right of privacy. Ask for their cooperation in stemming the hysteria about AIDS. Taking the initiative in issuing a public statement on AIDS is not recommended. It would probably stir up unnecessary controversy instead of being a calming influence.

Proactive, Not Reactive These actions must be taken before an AIDS case is admitted or the issue otherwise materializes in the area. Only then can leadership be shown. A potential crisis like AIDS is an unusual opportunity for reinforcing the sense of professionalism & teamwork within the organization.

12/9 prr suggests questioning rising insurance rates. Dr. Philip Lee of San Francisco's Health Commission estimates AIDS related in-hospital treatment costs between \$25,000 - \$32,000 per patient. This is less than a fourth of the \$140,000 price tag arrived at by the federal Bureau of Communicable Disease Control.

Go On The Offensive When It Does Happen Once an AIDS patient is admitted from the local area and receives public notice, a "Q & A" hotline should be considered for the community. Also, speakers should be made available to community & school groups concerned about AIDS. Offer to be a resource to schools attempting to draw up attendance guidelines about school attendance. However, since schools are in a no-win situation over AIDS, be careful not to be perceived as the decision maker, only as a helping hand performing a public service.

ANOTHER CEO, THIS ONE FROM A UTILITY WEIGHS IN FOR CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION Boston Edison's perception/reality technique (prr 10/7) is used by CEO Steve Sweeney to sell employees on public participation. Perception: "Boston Edison's the only game in town. Who else am I going to buy power from? Why should a utility care about what I think?"

Reality: "Over the past dozen years or so, a number of wrenching changes to our industry eroded the consumer confidence we had come to expect. Hostility and conflict increasingly characterized relationships between utilities and our customers, regulators & legislators.

"We weren't communicating. We responded by withdrawing, by becoming even more distant from our customers as their discontent grew. Today, it's a different story. Today, public participation in the decisionmaking process is a vital element to our future success. I endorse the process and give it my full support & involvement.

"There is no doubt that today's sophisticated consumers will make their expectations known. We have two choices -- wait for the public to land in anger on our

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doorstep or we can seek out and bring consumers in to participate in a dialogue geared toward providing an energy future that meets their needs.

"The choice is ours, but really, there's no choice. We need to be in touch with our customers because they must be our partners in molding the energy future. That requires full two-way communications and dialogue. This must be a continuous process. It must occur in bad times as well as in good times. It must involve as much, if not more, listening than talking."

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DURING THE SEASON OF GOOD CHEER, FRAME THIS HOW-TO LIST ON BUILDING YOUR DIPLOMACY SKILLS

without hurting the other person's feelings or self image, and without sounding critical, judgmental or know-it-all, are the keys, says an article in (of all places!) the National Enquirer. Tips from Dr. Eileen Gambrill, School of Social Welfare, UCalif-Berkeley:

1. Completely understand the other person's position. Ask him where he stands, then repeat it in your own words. Don't assume there's a difference without clarifying what it is.
2. Share your discomfort. Say something like, "This is difficult for me, but I do want to talk about it." Show you're not just trying to be superior.
3. Emphasize points of agreement. If you only focus on areas of disagreement, the other person is more likely to be defensive.
4. Keep it private. Don't disagree in front of others because it's likely to embarrass him.
5. Don't give the impression that the other person's point of view is silly, stupid or worthless. Comments such as "That's a stupid idea" are apt to turn a disagreement into an argument.
6. Don't show anger or annoyance. Keep your voice pleasant, avoid interrupting and don't frown, shake your head or grimace.
7. Don't go into the disagreement thinking you can "win." Simply present your point of view. And don't lecture.
8. Disagree selectively. Don't "nitpick" or people will turn a deaf ear.
9. Be complimentary. If the other person is a good listener, praise him.

Communicating the truth to customers is lauded by a CEO whose company has experienced its influence. Speaking before PR News' 1985 awards banquet, Chrysler's Lee Iacocca said:

"Effective public relations was our life support system for a while. We weren't running on fumes anymore, we were running on faith. The faith of the public that we could make it allowed us to stay in business. And we kept that faith only through our ability to communicate. We learned, for example, that when you level with people -- when you not only tell them the truth, but the whole truth -- they'll believe you. And they'll want to help you. To my mind, a company today that isn't willing to communicate openly and effectively is doomed. And so is a company that doesn't accept public relations as an integral part of its management team. We're alive today because when we were down we knew how to communicate. And now that we're healthier than ever before, we're never going to forget that. And I mean never!"

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