

HUMOR CONSULTANT OFFERS LIST OF ITS POWER & PRACTICAL USES;
NEEDN'T BE SIDE-SPLITTING TO RELIEVE TOUGH SITUATIONS, AID LEARNING

Laughter. It's an elixir for removing barriers to relationships. "Humor is a tool for managing conflict without killing each other in the process. It can impact the corporate culture, helping people see the lighter side of serious situations. When used appropriately & in balance, it's a very powerful device," Joel Goodman, founder of the Humor Project at Saratoga Institute (Saratoga Springs, NY) told pr. He counsels organizations on how to use humor.

1. It's a useful teaching tool. It captures & maintains attention while reducing tension so "retention is better."

2. It builds bridges between people by preventing "hardening of the attitudes."

3. Provides a socially acceptable way to discharge hostility & aggression and convey criticism. "It's a tool for managing conflict. It can disarm & win over an aggressor."

4. "It's a great equalizer, the ultimate leveler. Many times, workers relate to the role of a manager instead of to the human being. Laughter can help erase those barriers." To managers afraid to try humor for fear employees won't take them seriously anymore, Goodman says "that simply isn't true. Employers who laugh with their employees are better able to work with them & motivate them."

5. It's healthy: a) enhances respiration & circulation by increasing oxygen intake, b) activates endorphins -- the body's natural pain killers, c) exercises the heart, lungs & diaphragm.

6. It's an essential work skill. Study shows 85% of people who are fired from their jobs get the boot not because they lack technical skills, but because they are unable to get along with others. Another study, done by Robert Half International, shows 84% of vp's & personnel dirs from 100 large corporations believe humorous employees do a better job.

7. "It encourages creative problem solving. The skills & process underlying both humor & creativity are comparable. Developing creativity skills opens the door for humor, and vice versa."

8. Unrelieved, stress can cause illness leading to absenteeism & low productiv-

Goodman reports "a lot of interest nationwide in the positive power of humor. We just received a grant from Humana to focus on the medical implications & applications of humor. And we're setting up humor rooms in hospitals around the country."



ity. Studies show humor diminishes stress. "If you add health benefits together with creativity, that has to impact the bottom line in terms of fewer sick days & more productivity on the job."

Techniques For Using Humor A. Encourage people to be silly during brainstorming sessions. Unrestrained creative flow will give employees the "opportunity to romp with the spontaneous child within. Allow nonsense, and sense is not far behind."

B. Create your own file of funny photos, jokes, cartoons that you can use to apply humor to a situation.

C. A la Candid Camera, take 10 minutes to observe the humor in ordinary work situations. It may take practice to find the humor -- but it's there. Then it becomes a localized tool which is even more effective.

D. Aikido -- or "tongue-fu" -- is the Japanese martial art that gently unbalances an attacker (see prr 7/18/83). It can be used to deflect verbal aggression by setting up scenarios in your mind, then thinking up punch lines, comebacks. This is "planned spontaneity." It helps you act gracefully under tense or embarrassing moments. Goodman uses this illustration: Actress Eve Arden sensed she was the butt of a practical joke during a stage performance when a phone rang off-cue. "It's for you," she said, answering the phone & holding it out to her co-star.

Rating Your Use Of Humor "Excellent, I can walk on water consistently; Good, I can walk on water in emergencies; Fair, I wash with water in emergencies; Poor, I drink water in emergencies; and Awful, I pass water in emergencies."

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION DAY IS TODAY, MARCH 16

It's the 2nd year federal legislation, sponsored by American Newspaper Publishers Ass'n Foundation, has named this day. And it will be a yearly event,

Judy Hines, pres of 1st Amendment Congress, told prr. ANPA is encouraging other organizations to observe the day.

"Our concern this year is to get the status of the day set. But next year's observance will be a national 1st Amendment Congress during the week of March 16."

Day's purpose is "to remind people about their right to know what's going on in their government, across the nation." It's celebrated on James Madison's birthday because "he was one of the main energizers behind the 1st Amendment, recognizing that freedom of information is the cornerstone of how our democracy & constitution work."

Useful tool for practitioners is "The First Amendment Handbook" from The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. Tho geared for reporters, it's a helpful, brief summary of laws every practitioner needs to be aware of, e.g., libel, confidential sources & info, invasion of privacy, gag orders, access to courts, etc. (\$4 from The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, 800 18th St NW, Rm.300, Wash DC 20006; 202/466-6313)

HOW TO PROTECT QUALITY MAGAZINE
FOR PERILOUS JOURNEY THRU THE MAIL

Not wanting to cover its attractive cover, Farm & Ranch Living mag faces a dilemma. It needs protection for mag's high-quality, laminated cover during mailing. So it has been using a paper wrap that serves as a temporary cover, carries subscriber's address & ad messages.

But, reports the editor, the majority of subscribers "leave this wrap on after they receive the issues" turning the prized cover into page 3. "It's like turning out a Cadillac with a diamond luster finish, then having the customer drive it around with an ugly tarp over it!"

And, from a marketing viewpoint, "it keeps potential subscribers from noticing it. When the wrap's removed, our cover is likely to catch a prospect's eye. But nobody will ever notice or ask about this magazine with this bland wrap on it." So mag has come up with another solution -- a clear polyethylene bag that protects during mailing & won't "cover up our cover."

USEFUL KIT GIVES INFO ON COALITION BUILDING,
GRASSROOTS LOBBYING, GROUP MOBILIZATION

"With the high number of issues up for debate this year, elected officials will depend on public opinion more than ever to help evaluate & determine their position," says Warren Bechtel, Western Union's corp comms dir.

To be effectively heard by government, organizations need to know who to talk to and how they can be reached. Western Union's "Speak and Be Heard" kit provides organizations with the information necessary to "mobilize large numbers of people to collective action on important legislative issues." Three elements of the kit are:

1. "How to Reach" gives tips on coalition building: identifying organizations or interest groups that support your effort; targeting your message to the people who can most positively affect your issue; communicating effectively with supporters of your cause; directing supporters to appropriate action.
2. "Who to Reach" lists names & addresses of elected officials including governors, mayors, state & US Congressmen, House & Senate committees. Also helps you gain access to lists of ambassadors & other officials.
3. "Action Hotline" explains how Western Union's hotline service can assist in getting messages out fast.

With these how-to brochures, Western Union hopes to "help groups move public opinion off the street and onto Capitol Hill." (Free kit from WU, One Lake St, Upper Saddle River, NJ 07458)

ARE TV NETWORKS RESISTING
ACCURATE EVALUATION?
ARE FEWER PEOPLE WATCHING?

A.C. Nielsen's "people-meter" is replacing the old diary method as verifier for the set-turned-on monitor. But this attempt at more accurate accounting has already caused ABC & CBS to drop Nielsen. There's agreement the new method is a truer measure -- but tv execs apparently prefer to live where their programs are, in fantasyland.

Actually Nielsen's device isn't state of the art. That is a machine which sits inside the set and watches people watching -- akin to the ones used to trace eye movement or "gaze motion." The one being introduced requires each person to hit a button when they start & stop viewing. Networks say this isn't much better than diaries.

Information to date suggests people-meters will deflate the numbers for tv viewership. Some top shows may drop 10% or more. But did anyone seriously believe we spent as many hours a day in front of the tube as Nielsen has been reporting?

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶Computerization problems are an expanding challenge to practitioners, writes Harvey Jacobson, UWis-Oshkosh, in a letter to prr. Referring to prr's 2/9 lead story, "Experts Warn: Computerization Is Becoming Major Problem...Public Relations Should Anticipate These Issues Now," he sends an AP clip about a false twister bulletin that reported Rockford, Ill. demolished. Bulletin was a test designed for weather service personnel only, "but a change in computer software at the service's Chicago office allowed it to get out. Another computer goof later Monday sent an erroneous severe thunderstorm warning on the weather wire," reports the AP article titled "Never Mind."

¶Responsibility is the carrot organizations must dangle to hire execs, reports Runzheimer (Rochester, Wis). It's what most motivates execs to move to new firms, a survey shows. Second is autonomy. Cash is third. Over 30 years of research has indicated mainline employees rate cash below other job considerations -- now this study shows it is equally true for managers. This means corporate culture, organizational values, interpersonal relationships & other responsibilities of public relations continue to increase in importance.

¶Gebbie Press has made its media directory available on PC compatible diskettes. Done in 2 sets, one contains 1,700 daily & 6,750 weekly newspapers. The other identifies 1,100 tv stations, 7,000 AM-FM radio stations, Black radio & Black press nationwide. Offered in 2 formats -- variable or fixed lengths -- each comes in zip code or geographic arrangement. (\$90/set, prepaid, from them at Box 1000, New Paltz, NY 12561; 914/255-7560)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. PRSA's 1987 District Chairs:

¶East-Central: C. Wayne Hasty (dpa, Indiana & Michigan Electric Co, Fort Wayne, Ind)
 ¶Mid-Atlantic: John Gullett (vp-corp comms, Noland Co, Newport News, Va)
 ¶Midwest: Rosalee Roberts (dpr, Bozell, Jacobs, Kenyon & Eckhardt, Omaha)
 ¶North Pacific: L. Neal Amidei (pres, Amidei & Co, San Francisco)

¶Northeast: James Bradley (sr counsel, Mann Advertising, Manchester, NH)
 ¶South Pacific: Michael Bardin (dir, comms & pa, Scripps Memorial Hospitals, La Jolla, Calif)
 ¶Southeast: Kathryn Carson (pres, Carson Creative & Assocs, Columbia, SC)
 ¶Southwest: Sally Evans (Public Relations Counsel, Houston)
 ¶Sunshine: Harriet Gonzalez (dpr, General Telephone Co of Florida, Tampa)
 ¶Tri-State: Paul Brennan (ass't prof, Nassau Community College, Garden City, NY)