

RHODY'S RULES FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT
WERE LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE

When facing a hostile takeover, or any crisis, "your ability to move people to your cause, to communicate effectively, may be the determining factor in survival," feels Ron Rhody, svp corp comms, Bank of America (San Francisco). His successful battle as the target of a takeover attempt by First Interstate Bank shaped the following advice:

1. Know your opponent thoroughly -- what they or their allies are doing with the stock, with institutional investors, at the regulatory agencies, with customers, what they're saying to what audiences.

2. Overcome arrogance that blinds your organization and its outside advisors to their weaknesses & shortcomings. Unchecked it can be fatal. Arrogance is different from pride, self confidence or righteous indignation, which work for you.

3. Plan. Don't act on incomplete intelligence, be panicked by the media or rumors, let attacks on the corporate ego cause you to be goaded into rash reactions.

4. Take & hold the initiative; be in control of the information flow. Good news or bad, get it out and tell it first. By doing so, you define the problem, set the context and, in many cases, preempt criticism.

5. Be candid. Tell it like it is as rapidly as possible. It helps you manage the "crisis" more effectively and helps people understand what's going on and have balanced info on which to make judgments.

6. Don't be "blackmailed" into participating in a story just because the editor says "we're going to write it anyway." There are circumstances where the responsibility to be accurate, or to protect a negotiation or decision being formulated, makes rapid response impossible, even tho you may draw negative copy.

7. Be bold & imaginative. This is an out-of-the-ordinary situation, so it needs to be handled out of the ordinary -- even with buttons, t-shirts & bumper stickers.

8. There is evidence that public opinion looks on hostile takeovers as bad, and at the people who try to pull them off as bad guys. To the degree your opponent can properly be cast in the bad guy role with constituents -- whose individual or collective opinion can affect shareholders or legislators -- to that degree you will significantly strengthen your hand.

Make sure every single constituent hears your story -- directly from you -- & hears it often: customers, business colleagues, local businesses, opinion leaders in your operating areas, boards & leaders of charitable org'ns to which you contribute, educational institutions, elected officials, editors of local newspapers, mgrs of broadcast media, retirees, employees & their families & friends who can be perhaps the most important of the communication weapons available.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. David Ferguson (sr consultant, Hill & Knowlton, Chi) received 1987 Ball State Univ Nat'l Public Relations

Achievement Award for his contributions to advancement of pr education during his presidency of PRSA.

pr reporter

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BECAUSE STUDENTS SPEND "MORE TIME IN MEDIA WORLD THAN IN SCHOOL,"
ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEVELOPS "MEDIA RESOURCE LITERACY BOOK,"
CRITICAL THINKING METHOD TEACHES DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEDIA & REALITY

"If schools are going to relate to living in an information & experience culture, they have to teach students to be critically aware of how the media operate, what their messages are, what the commercial implications are," Barry Duncan, pres, Ass'n for Media Literacy, told prr. He serves as chairperson of a group of educators & officials from Ontario Ministry of Education which has developed a teachers' resource book, due in Ontario schools this fall, called Media Literacy Resource Book K-12.

Students will investigate tv, movies, pop music, rock video, radio, advertising, photography, newspapers & magazines. They will be taught to differentiate between fantasy, reality. On tv, for instance, the fantasy of police work is pursuit of criminals in fast chases. The reality is issuing speeding tickets. Explanation of the difference is that people prefer to see the exciting over the commonplace, but viewers need to know the difference.

Critical thinking strategy is one approach to be used. A checklist includes: 1) distinguishing between verifiable facts & value claim; 2) determining the reliability of a claim or source; 3) determining the accuracy of a statement; 4) distinguishing between warranted & unwarranted claims; 5) detecting bias; 6) identifying stated & unstated assumptions; 7) recognizing logical inconsistencies; 8) determining the strength of an argument.

"Television programmers claim they are giving us what we want, while in fact we are simply getting what they give us," says Dick Cavett. To prove the point, Toronto Star article announcing the media literacy project was headlined "Ontario wants students taught how rock video influences them." While project may help practitioners by dulling unfair media reports, it will also demand better standards for public relations materials.

Key concepts of media literacy, according to a draft version of the book, are:

1. All media products are constructions: Although they appear to be extensions of reality, they are, in fact, carefully crafted constructions. Meaning & impact are created thru selection, context & juxtaposition.

2. The media construct reality: Everyone has a sense of what the world is & how it works. The media shape raw sensory data into coherent representations of reality.



3. Audiences negotiate meaning: What a reader makes of a "text" depends on past experiences, skill in reading, current state of mind.

4. Commercial implications: All media products have commercial implications which shape both their content & form.

5. Ideology & values: All media products contain, usually implicitly, value messages & assumed "truths" about the nature of the world & its inhabitants.

6. Social & political implications: Media have the potential to affect social & political behavior in a variety of ways.

7. Relationship of form & content: Different media "codify" reality in different ways -- the medium shapes the message.

"The approach we're taking is to try to get kids to realize that media presentations are not necessarily reflections of reality. They are visions of reality that someone chooses to show," explains Jerry George, Ministry of Education.

U.S. Not Involved Yet Duncan isn't aware of any US-wide initiative on this issue. Leading countries in the media literacy campaign (from most to least) are Australia, Scotland, Ireland, England, some Scandinavian areas, W. Germany, Canada & then US, according to Duncan. "It's ironic that the rest of the world is looking at tv programs that primarily emanate from the US. They set the agenda for most of the western world. But to our knowledge there is no movement to address this issue in the US."

"Trailblazing" program will be introduced to Ontario teachers with workshops. By next spring feedback will be available and Duncan hopes to raise funds to bring the book & program to others' attention -- in US & Canada. (More info from him at 40 McArthur St, Weston, Ont. M9P 3M7; 416/394-6990)

A.I.D.S.' INCREASING EFFECT ON SOCIETY IS INFLUENCING MARKETING

Lewis & Assocs (LA) predicts these results: 1) We can expect marriage to markedly increase in popularity, along with a return to family values of the 50s. 2) Babies, houses, household furnishings, all facets of family life will again capture the attention of marketing strategists. 3) Heightened awareness of personal hygiene will lead to a multitude of "new medicine-chest occupants."

Public lifestyle will also be greatly influenced. 4) Disposable dishes & eating utensils & paper or plastic cups & glasses could become the standard table setting in restaurants to allay fears of contagion. 5) The overt advertising of condoms is evidence of some of the revolutionary developments to anticipate from the viewpoint of marketing as AIDS affects the lives of all, directly or indirectly.

VALUABLE TIDBITS FROM CURRENT SURVEY RESEARCH

Useful for triggering marketing strategies, indicating trends, forecasting public's agenda:

Flexitime 1. According to vp's & personnel dirs of 100 of America's 1000 largest companies, to achieve maximum efficiency or productivity, the number of hours in the average workday should be: 5 (1%); 6 (2%); 7 (10%); 7 1/2 (8%);

7 3/4 (6%); 8 (57%); 8 1/2 (2%); 9 (6%); 10 (5%). Executives recommend an average of 7.9 hours/day, concludes Accountemps (NYC), survey's sponsor.

2. 54% believe workers who choose their own working hours are more productive. 12% feel they are less productive. 17% say it depends on other factors. 17% don't know.

"Upbeat Generation"

3. 86% of 1,650 people surveyed by phone for Wall Street Journal survey say "the American dream" is alive.

4. 18-29 yr olds are more "bullish" on their chances of achieving the dream than their elders. On a 10-point scale, with 10 signifying they expect to attain all their dreams, 18-29 yr olds ran up an 8.7 score. National average is 8.2.

5. On average, respondents feel a household income of \$50,000/year will allow attainment of the American dream.

6. Threats to the dream are: illegal drugs (79%); crime (69%); diminishing quality of education (66%); deteriorating environment (57%); federal budget deficits (57%).

7. What is the dream? Being a good parent (95%); having a happy marriage (90%); a high school education (84%); freedom to choose how to live (80%); owning a home (78%); sending one's children to college (77%); college education for themselves (68%); financial security (64%); doing better than their parents (61%).

Staying Home

8. Census Bureau figures show 60% of males aged 18-24 and 48% of females in that age group lived at home or in college dorms in '85. That's up from 54% of men & 43% of women in '80 and 52% & 41% in '70.

Crime Poll

9. In a nationwide Media General-AP phone survey of 1,251 people, 30% keep a gun at home for security reasons; 68% feel they should have the right to shoot an intruder even if they're unsure the person is armed.

10. 73% feel their homes are safe against crime; 79% feel the streets they live on are safe to walk at dark.

11. 29% report either they or their family have been victims of burglary, robbery or assault in the last 5 years.

Young & Elderly

12. Conflict between them is largely a myth, reports study by Yankelovich for Amer Ass'n of Retired Persons.

13. Anti-elderly expressions that arose came from poorly educated & poor. Study suggests one action to avert conflict between generations is the best education possible for today's children. However, those 62+ are less willing to support increased spending for education -- an area where AARP needs to educate its constituency.

14. 75% favor expansion of medicare to include coverage of longterm medical care, which is otherwise borne by the family. Healthcare costs is the single largest burden on families, survey finds.