

CPRS, NSPRA & PRSA each has a committee attacking the project. Foundation for Public Relations Research & Education has commissioned Al Walker to outline a comprehensive guide to the literature of the field. Walker, who teaches at N.Illinois U, has compiled the annual public relations bibliographies for 10 years.

He sees a 2nd value: showing other fields that pr has a BOK which is rich. "Despite our achievements, we are long overdue for respect from academia & professionals for our body of knowledge." George Fowler, chair of PRSA's cmt, plans to get a group of practitioners, known for their use of BOK, together with several scholars this summer. "We're going to lock 'em in a room & not let 'em out until they've agreed on a listing of the really key items in the BOK. Then we'll commission the teachers to track down the references & write the synopses." After the material is on-line it can be expanded indefinitely.

Fowler & his committee feel the important consideration is getting something going ASAP. PRSIG will probably be the vehicle. NSPRA already has an interactive system linking its members. When PRSA computerized in 1981, the goal was to put the Information Center on-line.

WHAT CONSTITUTES PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY  
...AND WHO DECIDES? BURSON WANTS TO KNOW

For its annual ranking of size of public relations firms, O'Dwyer's Newsletter deleted several types of services provided by Burson-Marsteller (and others). They were "unilaterally decided" to be "outside your definition of public relations," Harold Burson wrote the newsletter.

Included are 1) institutional & issue advertising, 2) management & sales meetings held for clients, 3) production of video/films, 4) marketing support such as sales promotion. Burson feels this "constitutes a limited perspective of the public relations function ... within parameters that we consider constrictive & long out of date."

Adds Burson: "Simply stated, our premise is that the need for public relations permeates the totality of the corporation and other institutions in our society which require effective communications and whose success is grounded in public understanding and good will. We aim to provide that total service and have organized ourselves to do just that.

"Burson-Marsteller, as well as other firms, have grown during the past decade in no small part because they have been successful in expanding the definition of public relations to activities well beyond the counseling and press relations services which you apparently believe constitutes the totality of what can legitimately be defined as public relations."

In addition to borrowing principles of sociology, psychology, anthropology, communications & management, among others, Walker says, "Our body of knowledge comes from many sources: 1) from the generosity of practitioners who publish their ideas, 2) from an expanding educational base in graduate & undergraduate learning, with faculty & students who are producing a body of research & application at a phenomenal rate, 3) from the increasingly dominant role that research & fact-finding are playing in public relations practice."

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The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations,  
Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.30 No.18  
May 4, 1987

MORE ORGANIZATIONS FINDING MISSION STATEMENT TOO LIMITED;  
NEEDS COMPLEMENTARY PIECES TO HUMANIZE & VALIDATE RHETORIC

First, certain organizations began supplanting mission statements with "vision" statements. Others issued "values" messages or lists -- usually suitable-for-framing, as befits such basic cultural material.

Now a hierarchy of "essence" material has been defined. Each piece has a specific role in telling internal & external publics what your outfit stands for. Together, they offer a fuller explication -- and overcome the main criticism leveled at mission statements, that they are too limited & can be perceived as a mere exercise.

Vision: dream, ultimate goal, just over the horizon;

Mission: why we exist & what we offer to society in order to earn public consent to prosper;

Values: guides to conduct, underlying beliefs, ethics, our humanity;

Strategy: how we'll accomplish it.

To make the culture a reality thru-out the organization, departmental & work group mission statements are increasingly used. When these tools are created participatively, written appealingly & communicated repeatedly, they provide the basis for building trust. Trust can only occur, of course, when actions & policies match these fine words.

The latter is particularly important. It adds realism & shows the job is doable. Without it, the others often read like pie-in-the-sky, or appear insincere. Two other useful devices in codifying organizational culture are:

1. U.S.P.: unique selling proposition; what we offer that others don't. This may be no more "unique" than being the only hospital on the east side of town -- but whatever it is, both positioning & audience targeting spring from it. It is therefore essential to marketing & public relations.

2. Motto: who will disagree that a potent slogan, which captures the culture & announces it memorably, is a marvelous tool?

APPLYING PUBLIC RELATIONS TECHNIQUES  
TO OURSELVES: CAMP KETCHUM

This program held last Oct. by Ketchum Public Relations was a retreat & seminar in one. "It was a perk to be selected" to attend, Judith Rich, exec vp (Chi), told prr. Purpose was 1) skills training, 2) motivation, 3) getting to know & appreciate peers from offices around the country.



20 people were selected -- vp's, acct supvrs, grp mgrs. "We wanted those who were obviously growing into management. To say to them, 'We have our eyes on you. We think you're terrific and we want to invest in you.'" Camp was held Sunday evening thru Wednesday mid-day at a Florida beach-front hotel.

Team Building A logo was designed and printed on t-shirts & sweatshirts for each camp member and presented to them in their camp bag upon arrival. Color of t-shirt determined teams. No one from the same office was on the same team. Office friends became competitors. Room assignments matched people from different parts of the country. Even seating at meals -- place cards were used -- encouraged making new friendships.

Competition Monday brought 2 outside speakers on management, and 3 presentations by internal staff -- programming, creativity, presentation style. Then the Pittsburgh office head played the role of an airline president looking for help from a pr firm. He explained his company's problems and asked each of the 4 teams to present a proposal the next morning. It was 4pm then. Lots were drawn to determine in which order the teams would make their presentations beginning at 8:30am.

Each team had a headquarters which was supplied with typewriters, yellow paper, poster board, marking pens, "everything they'd need plus catered meals."

Presentations next morning "were great. Some had hand-out proposals. I don't know who they coerced at the hotel to make their copies. They had boards. One even did a videotape by shining a bedlamp and acting out man-on-the-street interviews. They drew logos, created slogans. As each team finished, members could stay and listen to the next. And they applauded each other. As competitive as they were, they were supportive at the same time."

After the presentations, remainder of the day was filled with athletic competition on the beach -- swimming, throwing balloon water-bags, volleyball, tug-of-war. "As professional as they had been that morning, they were kids in the afternoon."

Rewards Before the formal awards presentation on Wednesday, an open forum was held where camp attenders could ask any questions of pres. David Drobis & chrm. Paul Alvarez. Diplomas were given to each camp member and plaques to each team. Winning proposal team won trophies.

"Months afterwards people are still talking about it. A senior management seminar held later was dubbed Camp Ketchum even tho it wasn't, because it had become such a positive catch-word & experience." According to Drobis, firm will hold Camp Ketchum on a regular basis.

Ketchum Public Relations is this year's leading Silver Anvil winner, earning 4. "One of the reasons we did so well was because we started an internal competition for the best public relations programs called Ketchum Kudos. They were due a month before the Anvil's deadline. Everybody sent in entries and prizes were awarded. It's the spirit of competition & reward & pride & team spirit from our internal programs. There's a carryover," believes Rich.

CONCERNED ABOUT CHANGES IN THE LANGUAGE?  
DOES IT SEEM "OFTEN FOR THE WORSE"?

Ronald Dennis of Mobil Oil Canada (Toronto) writes: "Too often, the English I read is not a hybrid, born from someone's deft creativity, but rather sloppy or lazy writing betraying lack of training. Sure, language must constantly change and enrich itself. But to me, it must also retain a basic core of rules so that when we say or write something important, the majority will take away a common understanding of the message." Some bugaboos:

1. "Verbalizing" nouns is too often the lazy approach. An ad campaign touting a new generation of personal computers managed to turn "obsolete" from adjective to verb -- you could buy the new equipment "without obsoleting" your entire system.

2. Another ad failed to have the verb agree with the subject -- "team of engineers are working" on solving a problem. Common. Sloppy.

"I speak and write English. I'm proud of my proficiency. Those who trifle with my language, demeaning it by lazy, sloppy use, do harm to it. Worse yet, they defeat the aim of verbal and written words...communication. I don't insist we should all speak and write in heroic, Shakespearean prose. Simple is best. And the best writing, to me at least, is correct writing."

3. One Ottawa bureaucrat once told an information seminar that if the question was (gasp!) "properly grammarized," he would do his best to "disambiguate it." (Whew!)

4. Saying that we are writing for public relations and not literary purposes, is no excuse. Some even have the gall to claim they break the rules "for effect." My response is, to break the rules for effect, one must first know the rules.

"When I spot or hear these errors, penned or spoken by so-called professionals, I'm turned off. The mistake is sometimes minor enough to make me puzzle more on it than the intended message. Other times, the error is so jarring, the intended message is blown away by sheer outrage.

"If language is used to express ideas, to persuade, to sell, to provide entertainment, to express outrage and a myriad other uses, then its sloppy use harms both it and receiver. By all means, let our language grow and change and enrich itself.

"But let that change spring from fertile ground -- a creative, well-ordered human mind -- rather than jump into use through faddish repetition."

PUBLIC RELATIONS BODY OF KNOWLEDGE  
HEADED FOR COMPUTER RETRIEVAL

At least 4 projects are underway to codify & then make available by computer, the field's underlying "BOK." Practitioners needing help with a problem of, say, persuasion, would punch in key words to retrieve synopses of the relevant theory, research & cases. Practicing "by the book" -- which is what distinguishes professionals in all fields -- would be a simple matter. Currently it is largely a pipedream because harried practitioners do not have, or will not devote, the time required to perform the library research necessary.