

lot of mealy-mouthed speeches because candidates don't want to say anything. Hopefully, IVOTE could force candidates to address the issues."

Program is successful in Utah where it received full candidate participation. Neighboring Colorado has expressed interest & is plotted as the next frontier. "We hope to go to some sort of national level by 1990." System is adaptable to practitioners' use in issue campaigns.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

Is the labor problem of low-pay industries a pr problem -- or opportunity?

Epitomizing the situation is Osco Drug's employment campaign: "Homemakers, Students, Senior Citizens. Come join our family!" Who's left to fill part-time retail slots except these 3 groups? As retail & customer service personnel of all types, including bank tellers & even loan officers, become casual workers, the risk to Customer Satisfaction goals is immense. Says Osco's flyer, typical of similar materials found in restaurants & retailers everywhere: "Experience is not necessary -- only outgoing, personable individuals who like dealing with people." Opportunity knocks for training by public relations practitioners, striving for One Clear (Friendly) Voice. No one else can give them this Big Picture.

New US Federal Reserve check clearing rule contains another pr pitfall. Staff education at all levels is required -- for any operation that handles checks. Rule requires endorsing checks only 1) on the back, 2) within the first 1.5 inches of the left side. Purpose is to allow room for bank & check processor endorsements. But result could be returned checks. Does anything make people angrier? Ask your bank for details.

No One's In The Kitchen With Dinah. Holly Farms has had one heck of a year -- their worst, in fact. And they make no bones about it in their 1988 annual report. Like many organizations, Holly Farms is realizing that when it comes to the annual report, no one is fooled by good cheer when there is nothing to cheer about. Difference is, this company goes further by fingering the true culprit -- Holly Farms! "You already know the Bad News about our past fiscal year. We were wrong about the chickens. The chicken market did not recover from salmonella publicity & we entered a sharp chicken depression...the Good News is that we know who the enemy is: The enemy is us.... We now can see that there is tremendous room for improvement in our Holly Farms chicken company if we will just manage it properly."

PSA stomps on a budding demographic -- the couch potato. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (Elk Grove Village, Ill), children in the US spend more time watching the tube than doing anything else (except sleeping). By the time he or she is 70, today's child or teen will have spent 7 years watching tv. The Nat'l Health Examination Survey reports an alarming increase in childhood obesity -- a trend it attributes to "a poor diet coupled with an inactive lifestyle." AAP has therefore produced a PSA which will discourage boredom-induced baking in front of the set & commercial-inspired overeating. The PSAs, which depict children literally becoming potatoes from too much viewing, tell kids not to "just plop in front of the tv" & to "watch out for overeating." Question 1: will this be effective? AAP says that next to family, tv may be the most important source of info for children & a principle factor influencing their development. Question 2: Will networks run a PSA that tells kids not to watch so much tv?

BREAKING THRU THE CLUTTER: JUST HOW BAD IS IT? WILL BACKLASH OCCUR AS PEOPLE ASK "CAN'T WE DO ANYTHING IN PEACE ANYMORE?" OR DOES MESSAGE PROLIFERATION OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR TARGETING?

Lo the 80s, a decade in which bathroom stalls have become a medium for advertising. "It started as a joke," Richard Weisman, pres Stallwords (Boca Raton) told prr. "I was promoting a hotel & decided to put flyers inside stall doors, thinking 'what else do people have to read?' It caught on, and now everyone -- from doctors to dog groomers -- wants to advertise this way." Astute internal communicators have known about -- & used sparingly -- this medium for critical employee messages, but advertising??

Neither is the sanctity of church a bulwark against ads. The Wall Street Journal reports that during Lent last year, church bulletins in 5 US cities carried ads for meatless Campbell soups. The campaign reaped results, & Campbell officials think that parishioners read the ads during sermons.

In addition to rest rooms & church bulletins, the list of additions to the barrage has lengthened:

1. Ads are raiding phone bills. "Try ignoring ads placed here," brags US West, promoting its bill-stuffer ad service.
2. In an effort to gain reader attention, advertisers -- e.g. Toshiba & Greycom International -- are sending promotional pieces via overnight carrier services.
3. Fax machines are now advertising vehicles...often at the expense of the recipient when the uninvited transmission shows up on his or her phone bill.
4. At over 200 ski resorts, skiers can view "strategically placed soup ads on their way up the slopes," according to The New York Times.
5. In Baltimore, ads for Jeeps are appearing on parking meters.
6. While waiting to land, bored passengers on American Airlines can now read ads on boarding pass stubs. They're commonplace on ticket envelopes.
7. One advantage video rentals had over tv was providing movies free of ads. Now many of them carry advertisements -- in addition to movie previews.

The question: is there a saturation point? Will people simply turn off? Estimates of the number of messages/appeals bombarding us presently range from 1400 to 5600 daily. It would take the whole day for a person just to process that number, so many must miss their mark. If the message marketplace is overbooked, each new addition bumps one existing message.



- 8. Nat'l Multiple Sclerosis Society finds yet another medium for its message -- checks! "Each time you write a uniquely personalized MS Message Check, you're endorsing our efforts to short circuit multiple sclerosis," touts society pres Thor Hanson. Would the tactic seem obnoxious in the profit sector?
- 9. Grocery shoppers, once able to reflect on their purchases with only piped-in Muzak as a backdrop, can muse no longer. The occasional voice of the friendly grocer pushing meat pies in the deli section is now upstaged by ongoing spiels from manufacturers over the loudspeaker system.
- 10. 1991 marks the advent of the tv shopping cart. Electronic devices on store shelves will trigger ads to appear on a video screen, right in the shopping carriage! Limit -- two ads per aisle...but how long will that hold?

The Difference Between Breaking Thru The Clutter & Adding To It: One View

"I frankly do not consider these messages 'ad clutter,'" Jed Laird, sr investment analyst, Hambrecht & Quist (NYC), told prr. "Clutter occurs when one medium has way too many advertisers.

Clutter remains, at this time, in the mailboxes & on the networks." While he shuns the idea of advertising on a parking meter, Laird applauds what he calls "appropriately targeted messages" which hit the right audience in the proper forum, e.g. the supermarket. "Sending messages to consumers who have fists full of dollars ready to go into the cash register makes more sense than competing with 6 other advertisers during the Cosby Show in someone's livingroom."

According to Ad Age ed. Fred Danzig, mail clutter is another story. "It's in its infancy. We haven't seen anything compared to what will happen." Target Marketing says the dumping of 3d class mail by postal workers is becoming epidemic. "The postman doesn't even ring once," it complains. After investigating, USPS concluded the higher the perceived value of a piece, the better the delivery. Despite rigorous training on the importance of all mail, says a postal official, "Some mail carriers just don't think 3d class mail is worth delivering." More incentive to try original packaging, big picture formats, overnight couriers & ticket stubs.

The clutter cutters are experimenting with unusual forums for their messages, does this mean relief for the consumer? "There may be a body of consumers who are offended by this proliferation of media vehicles," says Laird, "but I don't think most people are bothered by it, especially if messages are well done & touch them in some fashion."

HEALTHCARE RESPONSIBILITY: WHO PAYS FOR THE UNINSURED?

Percentage of Americans who have no regular doctor or other source of healthcare has nearly doubled over the past 4 years, according to a survey by

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Change could be due to decline in Medicaid coverage, reduction in the uncompensated care provided by hospitals, changes in physician practices, cutbacks in free care from public health clinics. But everyone pays in higher healthcare costs to cover indigents -- especially employers thru raised health insurance premiums.

In Washington State, healthcare, business, community & gov't leaders joined together to address the problem. "Largely because of the efforts of the Committee for Affordable Health Care (CAHC), the legislature acted to deal with the problem of access to affordable healthcare for uninsured & underinsured populations. We believe this is the first such legislation in the country and might serve as a model for other states," explains Marilyn Hawkins, whose firm, Sharp Hartwig, completed the 18-month statewide public education campaign for CAHC. (More info: CAHC, 601 Valley St, Seattle 98109; 206/464-6143)

COMPUTERIZED VOTING SYSTEM STRIVES TO REINSTATE ISSUES AS #1 PRIORITY

Has Dukakis been depressed? Is Bush effeminate? Did Quayle chicken out of going to Viet Nam? In this presidential race of non-issues, fluff seems to be the focus. Ex-pres Nixon says voters are

being shortchanged (Newsweek): "the candidates, their supporters & the media should end their obsessions with trivialities." Candidates are briefed on how to gesture, smile, & evade direct responses to questions. No organization that has to build relationships for the long haul, day after day, could get away with this -- only candidates, whose triggering event is a date certain, after which they can do as they please.

Voters seem able to smell the bulloney. TV viewership of the conventions was lower than ever (& video rentals were up on those dates), an indication the public may be fed up with insubstantial campaigning. But if they don't pay attention to the political rhetoric, how can Americans make sound choices at the polls? Informed Voting Options Thru Education aims to help people "vote intelligently." Developed by computerist Jerry Debenham and U Utah profs Gerald Smith & James Mayfield, the program matches candidates & voters.

How It Works

Candidates' positions are condensed into a report & sent to voters, who return a questionnaire indicating their own opinions on a variety of issues. They later receive printouts listing those candidates most in sync with their ideas. "Here in Utah, there are hundreds of people running for state, city & county offices," Smith told prr. "Citizens have to consider them in addition to presidential candidates. If each candidate wrote a 1-page essay on 42 issues of importance, voters would be required to read 4,200 pages. IVOTE makes it easier."

If IVOTE catches on nationally, the researchers predict:

* "Intelligent voting" & increased voter participation. "Many people don't vote because they feel stupid or unqualified. IVOTE offers them a data base of information."

* Shift from focus on personality back to issues. "This could have great impact on campaigning. Candidates are afraid to speak directly about issues now because they know many voters form their choices based on negativity -- who they don't like. So what you get are a

Debenham says the idea came to him at the polls one day. "It was awful. I didn't know who people were that were running for some of the local offices, and when it came to presidential candidates, I knew their views on about 4 or 5 issues... and I consider myself a fairly literate person. We'd developed a personnel evaluation system, & I thought 'wouldn't this be great applied to the candidate selection process?'"