

PROFESSIONALISM CONCERNS THOSE TEACHING  
THE NEXT GENERATION OF PRACTITIONERS

Educators share similar concerns to administrators, with marketplace factors leading (23.6%), followed by funding (22.5%). But academics have greater concern for the profession itself.

Problems with ethics, competence & professional development are frequently mentioned -- with several references to issues surrounding certification/licensure. Some want tougher admissions standards, apart from journalism. Some see the need for considering more interdisciplinary education.

Academics are also more concerned about social issues: drugs; crime; homelessness; childcare. Teachers' views have special impact since they may be an influence on students.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

Business cards pack a lot more info these days. Bruce Erley, vp-corp comms, Up With People (Tucson), demonstrates both the international arena & the peace mission of his organization by having one side in English, the reverse in Russian. And he lists a second address in Oslo. Martis Okpalobi, mhr, 7-Eleven Stores prints this on the back: "We provide fast, friendly service and quality products at fair prices in clean, conveniently located stores. We provide what the customer wants when the customer wants it." Lorraine Marchand, ass't dpr, Eastern Virginia Medical School, gives instructions on the back of her card for reaching her on her beeper.

How does one go about removing from use longtime slang expressions that may seem harmful to your organization or industry? US Distilled Spirits Council is bothered by a reference to "booze" in Ass'n Trends newsletter. "Use of the word 'booze' shows a bias against the distilled spirits segment of the alcohol beverage industry," says pres Fred Meister. The magazine contends that booze is an all-purpose word for cocktails, beer & wine and its usage in a headline is more fun than "alcoholic drinks."

Bottles Will Carry Surgeon General's Warning. Starting in December '89, beer, wine, & liquor will carry a government label cautioning 1) pregnant women that drinking can lead to serious birth defects; 2) consumers of driving & health hazards. All part of omnibus drug bill passed in October which Reagan is expected to sign. "Altho we must continue more comprehensive education efforts about the many dangers of alcohol abuse," says American Academy of Pediatrics pres Donald Schiff, "the new warning labels are a significant step."

Couch Potato PSA Lives! In response to prr's query on whether or not networks would air the spot (pr 10/10), which tells kids not to watch too much tv, distributor West Glen Comm (NYC) wrote an emphatic "Yes!" "All 3 networks approved the PSA with record speed, & individual stations responded just as positively," says Annette Minkalis, vp. She adds that broadcasters can be counted on "for strong & spirited cooperation whenever the public interest is involved."

# pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations,  
Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.31 No.45  
November 14, 1988

24TH ANNUAL SURVEY OF THE PROFESSION -- PART III

TECH TRENDS: WHAT'S CATCHING ON IN PR PRACTICE IS BOTTOM-LINE EMPHASIS AND THE PLANNING, ISSUE ANTICIPATION, EVALUATION RESEARCH & OTHER SCIENTIFIC METHODS THAT ACHIEVE IT

Practitioners were asked how certain industry trends and new technologies apply to their practices. Results reveal that 8 in 10 are emphasizing programs tied to the bottom line. This overwhelming trend may be a mixed blessing. While focusing on major organizational & managerial goals is an undisputed requirement (which pr was once criticized for ignoring), the immediate, short-term focus can distract from the essential job of building long-term relationships & avoiding tomorrow's crises.

PR is taking itself more seriously by acting more scientifically. More formalized planning (40.4% say it applies "greatly" to their work now) and research (26.2%) are being done. The amazing Fax machine is used by nearly everyone to reach clients, editors, legislators -- another mixed blessing as breathing time disappears. And we are increasingly resorting to "Big Picture" tactics to break thru the clutter of overcommunication.

	Greatly	Somewhat	Total For The Trend	No Change
Emphasis on bottom line	49.7%	35.3%	85.0%	15.0%
Formal planning process	40.4%	37.1%	77.5%	22.5%
"Big Picture" projects	30.7%	44.3%	75.0%	25.0%
Use of Fax to editors, et al	39.5%	33.0%	72.5%	27.5%
Formal research evaluation	26.2%	40.3%	66.5%	33.4%
Issue anticipation programs	19.2%	42.3%	61.5%	38.6%
Use of data base services	16.9%	40.9%	57.8%	42.2%
Psychographic, other research	16.9%	38.4%	55.3%	44.8%
Reduce number or length of publications	15.8%	37.0%	52.8%	47.3%
Use of VNRs	8.7%	29.1%	37.8%	62.2%

Reduction in length & number of publications is reported by half the respondents. Video news releases aren't catching on as fast -- but new tracking system may change things (pr 10/17). Only 16.9% report heavy use of a data base, while 42.2% claim no change. Use of advanced targeting research techniques i.e. VALS, PRISM, ACORN, etc. is also increasing among practitioners, with 16.9% reporting "great" application.



Comments offered by respondents support other, previously reported trends:

- ¶More projects, less "agency of record"
- ¶Fee for service for in-house "clients"
- ¶Increased interest in community relations programs; outreach directly to "fenceline" neighbors
- ¶Unified communication strategy for entire company
- ¶More active involvement in industry affairs; industry association participation

EDUCATION, SUBSTANCE ABUSE TOP SOCIAL PROBLEMS BEING ADDRESSED BY ORGANIZATIONS' DOLLARS, VOLUNTEERS BUT THE REALM OF CONCERNS IS WIDE

Government cutbacks -- & public relations effectiveness (pr 9/26) -- have increased the

need for organizations to strengthen social responsibility efforts. Changes in the workforce are motivating increased attention to employees' personal difficulties. Responses to the Annual Survey indicate higher education leads in cash contributions -- the old school tie is as strong as ever. Secondary schools get the most volunteer time & also top other causes in combined cash & volunteer assistance. But alcoholism/drug abuse is the top concern of other types of efforts, such as counseling, & ranks second in cash donations as well.

Number of Respondents Reporting The Activity (969 responses from a sample of 4,742)				
	Cash	Volunteers	Both	Other
Improving Higher Educ	18.1%	8.7%	12.8%	4.2%
Alcoholism/Drugs	14.1%	9.9%	14.2%	10.1%
Improving Public Educ	12.6%	12.6%	21.4%	6.7%
Minority Employment	12.2%	5.0%	11.2%	8.8%
Childcare	11.4%	9.3%	8.6%	6.6%
Homeless	10.3%	8.2%	9.4%	4.3%
AIDS	9.9%	8.7%	7.7%	9.5%
Eldercare	7.6%	7.3%	6.4%	4.4%
Illiteracy	7.1%	9.2%	9.8%	3.8%
Crime, Gangs, etc.	5.5%	4.3%	2.9%	4.0%

Note: reported in the Other category are in-kind gifts, lobbying for needed legislation, employee or community counseling etc.

Receiving the most mentions in respondents' comments as also getting attention are, in descending order: 1) healthcare/cancer research, 2) arts/cultural, 3) United Way. Multiple mention was also made of a block of activities, closely grouped, that include the disabled, child abuse, the environment, safety education, hunger, economic development.

ISSUES OF '88, COMPARED WITH THOSE OF A DECADE AGO, REFLECT CHANGING PRIORITIES & SOCIOPOLITICAL TRENDS

Practitioners' worries are not over, but they are different from those of

ten years ago. A comparison between chief concerns of '78 & '88 seems to accurately chronicle changing times.

During the Carter Administration, government relations & regulation led top concerns (21%). Now, as organizations deregulate & go global, marketplace is primary -- 20% list foreign & domestic competition, market share, changing markets & quality of products as first in importance.

Yet under Pres Reagan, funding & budget cuts worry 15% of practitioners, especially those in health-related industries or academic institutions. In 1978, company image secured the #2 spot (16%), particularly among educators & industrials who were possibly still feeling the fire from the cynical late '60s, early '70s.

A decade ago, many pr firm & industrial practitioners were concerned with inflation & their budgets (8%) -- now, in the wake of Black Monday and in the midst of an unpredictable economy, 13%, banks & federal gov't pr people especially, worry about public confidence.

Employee relations has retained the #4 spot (5.4%, now 11.4%) since '78. Consumer & community relations made the list before, but not now. Cost containment galvanized the 70's practitioner, especially if s/he was in hospitals or insurance; now management/corporate culture is a challenge -- restructuring, quality of leaders, planning, crisis mgmt.

Social issues, some of which barely existed in '78, have become critical in '88: ethics, AIDS, education, drug/alcohol abuse, homeless & child care. Also, environmental & tech issues, listed under miscellaneous in '78, are of primary importance today.

Remaining 9th on the list 10 years later is the profession itself (3.4% in '78, 5.6% in '88). With all these other issues taking precedence, one could surmise that practitioners haven't the time to worry about the status of the profession. Yet shoptalk everywhere shows they do -- and PRSA's initiatives toward Professional Progression programs may at last offer options for dealing with the problem.

1978	
Most Important Issues	Industries Most Concerned
Gov't reg/rels	Indus/Cons Prods
Image	Educ/Indus
Inflation/Budget	PR/Indus
Employee Rels	Congloms/Educ
Cost Containment	Hosp/Ins
Consumer Rels	Cons Prods/Ass'ns
Rate Increases	Utils/Ass'ns
Org'l Change	Hosp/Indus
PR Profession	PR/Educ
Comty Rels	Nonprofits/Hosp
Other	Various

  

1988	
Most Important Issues	Industries Most Concerned
Marketplace	Banks/Educ
Funding/Bdgt Cuts	Hosp/Educ
Public Trust	Banks/Gov't
Employee Rels	Gov't/Hosp
Gov't/Leg, Regs	Ins/Utils
Economy	Banks/Adv'g
Mgmt/Corp Culture	Indus/Educ
Social Issues	Gov't/Social
PR Profession	PR/Educ
Environment	Utils/Indus
Tech	PR/Indus