

PRACTITIONERS VOTE FOR ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

After 2 years discussion, PRSA's Assembly voted to initiate a 4-stage program of professional progression: 1) Orientation for new members, focusing on body of knowledge & code of ethics; 2) sequenced syllabus, leading to accreditation examination; 3) mandatory maintenance of accreditation thru a combination of academic & practical accomplishments; 4) College of Fellows to encourage continuing leadership in professionalism by senior practitioners. Specialty certification was tabled.

Body of Knowledge. Assembly set up permanent board to oversee the updating of the BOK, formally adopted by PRSA. Abstracts of BOK are now in preparation & will be available in May. (For copies of BOK outline, write pr.)

Towards professional unity. 1) PRSA voted to open its accreditation process to practitioners belonging to organizations with membership in the North American PR Council. 2) Language revision of PRSA's Code of Ethics brings major section into conformance with code adopted by other members of NAPRC. 3) PRSA Register will include accreditation designation by other pr organizations in addition to its own APRs.

Short Takes From The Conference:

¶Walter Barlow, pres, Research Strategies Corp, Princeton, NJ:

"In the long run, greater awareness increases favorable opinion of organizations -- but may increase opposition to ideas. The pivotal strategy for spreading corporate awareness is internal communication. One-size-fits-all message strategy will not be effective in reaching specific audiences. First, research their interests or cluster of concerns."

¶Walt Lindemann, vp/research, Ketchum PR, NYC:

"Public relations needs to be as creative in its research methods as in communication techniques."

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. Ric Willix, long-time Atlanta & national PRSA leader.

ELECTED. 1989 PRSA ofcrs: pres, John Paluszek (pres, Ketchum Public Affairs, NYC); pres-elect, Jerry

PRSA & its Conference have become synonymous with Professional Development (caps intentional). In Cincinnati there were no tedious plenaries addressed by pr-bashing journalists or tired gov't or biz figures. A crowd-wowing international political scientist, a leading futures researcher & a Socratic Dialogue led by Fred Friendly filled 1-1/2 hour slots. All else was PD -- 262 presenters on 170 topics. Most sessions were packed. Many flowed into the halls. PRSA's Assembly set the stage by adopting Professional Progression, which emphasizes PD from the moment of joining.

Dalton (mgr corp comms, LTV Corp, Dallas); sec'y, Dolores Swift (prin, Dolores M. Swift Public Relations, Chi); treas, Joe Epley (pres, Epley Assocs, Charlotte, NC).

pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations, Public Affairs & Communication

Vol.31 No.46
November 21, 1988

603 / 778 - 0514

PRSA CONFERENCE THEME: PRACTITIONERS MUST BECOME BRIDGEBUILDERS TO HELP SOCIETY & ORGANIZATIONS UNDERSTAND THE IGNORED IMPLICATIONS OF AN INTERNATIONAL MARKET & ITS ECONOMICS & SOCIOPOLITICS

This imperative is not just for multinational corporations or those doing business overseas, but affects every organization -- local hospitals, schools, banks, gov't agencies; manufacturers that sell only domestically; public & privately-held companies, whether large or small.

Public relations techniques are critical now. But to serve effectively into the 1990s, practitioners will have to ground themselves in economics, political science, sociology & humanities. Those who take this initiative will play a key role in facilitating change for their organizations & the publics they serve. This is a golden opportunity to demonstrate to CEOs, senior managers & boards of directors that public relations serves at management's highest level.

This is eons beyond publicity to fundamental strategic planning. Here are trends to watch in that assignment as seen by international affairs expert John Stoessinger (Trinity U, San Antonio) & futurist David Pearce Snyder:

SNYDER: WHERE BAD DECISIONS COME FROM

All decisions are for the future. The future is everything that might happen. Therefore the most common cause of bad decisions is bad assumptions about the future. But data is readily available -- & "public relations must serve as interpreter of this information back to the organization." Here are the major data sources & their reliability:

<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Reliability</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Adult Demographics	15 years into the future	This generation is already born
Macroeconomic Forecasts	10 years into the future	A "large system," inherently stable
Technology Forecasts	5-7 years into the future	Breakthrus kept secret until marketed
Forecasts of Economic Performance	90 days into the future	No model good enough to see further

Major problem: Most business decisions by all types of organizations are made on assumptions about economic performance -- the least reliable, most short term mode.



1. Opening of True World Market. US/Canada trade pact, 1992 single European market, USSR & China opening their doors to capitalist ideas represents a mega-billions market. But for North American goods to compete with better quality & lower prices available from other continents requires greater a) productivity, b) innovation, c) customer service & d) reawakened work ethic.

¶Implications for PR: A) Opportunity for training at all levels of internal & external groups. B) Exposing the myths that keep us from facing this "insurmountable opportunity."

2. Continuation of Domestic Economic Shift: Downsizing, lower overseas wages, transformation from labor-intensive manufacturing into knowledge/information economy will continue to exact a toll on key publics.

¶Implications for PR: A) Be ready to deal with layoffs & plant closings. B) Community dislocation will occur due to move away from high-cost, inefficient big cities to cost-effective rural areas & suburbs. C) Confront skilled labor shortage & proliferation of service jobs by finding ways to make careers attractive.

3. Increasing Foreign Ownership of US Companies: Japanese auto plants in Ohio & Kentucky, English buyouts of several companies etc. etc.

¶Implications for PR: A) Impact on community relations -- will they participate or even care about being good corporate citizens? B) Differing employee relations styles, some good & some not so good. C) Opportunity to build bridges by nurturing cultural diversity.

BEING PART OF THE MANAGEMENT TEAM MEANS
BEING A CONTRIBUTING, KNOWLEDGEABLE MEMBER;
REPUTATION AS PROBLEM SOLVER, INFORMATION HOLDER,
FRIEND GETS PRACTITIONERS INTO EXECUTIVE SUITE

The only way public relations practitioners will gain their place on the management team is by earning it, numerous

presenters reinforced during the PRSA conference. Practitioners need to play many roles that are currently missing from the mix on most teams.

Along with being knowledgeable & fluent on international & economic issues of society, speakers urge practitioners to make themselves useful and expert in other areas.

1. "Be a problem solver" recommends Patrick Hunt, assoc vp univ rels, State U of NY (Albany). He urges practitioners to "build a relationship" with the CEO. "Ask him or her for a problem (and not a pr problem if they don't understand what you do). Then solve it." Most CEO problems, Hunt finds, are relationship problems with one other person. Solve that problem for your CEO and your place will begin to be built.

2. Carrington Fox, pres, Doe-Anderson PR (Louisville), suggests doing research first to "know your CEO's problems, reactions, image among employees, & external publics. Most importantly, who influences your CEO?"

3. "All practitioners must see themselves as counsel -- whether they are internal or external," Pat Jackson told participants. "Our key skills must be as a collaborator vs. an expert or extension of management. To do this, practitioners must be able to do three things: a) Control your ego. Don't feel the need to get the credit. You can best serve the organization by letting management think your idea was theirs. b) Understand their managerial view. Set the stage by offering them ideas that make sense to their ways of thinking. Then, offer them options. c) Integrity. Don't give it up. But distinguish between what is integrity (in the public interest) and what is ego. Sometimes what sounds like a stupid idea, works. If the decision is ethical -- but you don't agree with it -- be a team player and make the best of it.

Becoming A Member
Of The Management Team Jack Felton,
vp corp comm,
McCormick &
Co, shared tactics he's found to assist in the quest:

1. "Learn the business, all the business." Practitioners must have a handle on finance, production, etc.
2. Help yourself along the way. If you must, attend classes in finance, law, etc. "There's no need to get your degree, but at least understand their terms," said Felton.
3. Think strategically about where opportunities lie. Use the advantages you have & know. Find alliances with your fellow managers & line them up. Discover what your CEO likes -- aside from work -- and build a relationship with him or her around one of those.
4. Have the best memos in the executive suite. Once you are known for your good writing, they will seek you out to assist them. Dependence is one of the best ways to become a member of the team.
5. Write their speeches. Since giving speeches is the number one fear in this country, you can get next to CEOs by writing their speeches & assisting them in delivery, practice, etc.
6. Be a reliable source of information. Customer trends, what people are saying, important news, are all key to the CEO.
7. Never tattle...don't break confidences -- part of being a good team player.
8. Think strategically about the business, not just your career. This will show thru & make you a stronger member of the team.

"Watching a bullfight this past summer," Robert Norrish, mng dir ext afrs, Olestra Division, P&G, writes, "I began to wonder: What if I were the bull's PR guy? He's already got a terrific image. The braver he looks, and the more genetic his behavior, and the more glandular his reactions -- the more the crowd loves him. But he's got a problem. He's going to get clobbered.... Problem solving is needed here -- more than communications. It's even more productive to see the manager as a 'customer' with problems & needs -- and then convince the manager there are better ways than the 'lower your head and charge' approach."