

4. It's not necessary to repeat an ad over & over. A few times & the target thinks the whole world is hearing it. Sometimes you don't have to run it at all. When a committee of the NYC Council was considering a measure to restrict indoor smoking, Schwartz cut 2 radio spots. One heaped praise on the committee members, by name. The other ripped them for bowing to the tobacco lobby. Copies were given to committee members asking which they wanted on the air. The measure passed. (Such ignorance of media effects is called The Third Person Syndrome; see pr 1/6/86 or write for copy.)

Video's producer, David Hoffman, is concerned about the manipulative potential of this media language. "Scarey. But the alternatives are also scarey. I'd rather have [media techniques] be in the hands of the little guy." He notes that til now, activists have been down on commercial media leaving the field to just one side of the debate. (\$299 from Hoffman at Varied Directions, Camden, Me.)

TRENDS THAT WILL CREATE THE ISSUES OF THE 90s

As seen by Jim Lindheim, exec vp, Burson-Marsteller, in a presentation called "Perspectives" (which can be booked by calling B-M @ 212/614-4412):

1. Anti-biz feeling & concern with the power of corp'ns. May trigger a populist backlash.
2. Political challenge of new taxes. Who will pay? What will they pay for?
3. Diminishing quality of education. Means shortage of literate & skilled labor. What responsibility will organizations & businesses have to assume?
4. An aging population. Creates increased efforts at healthcare cost containment & debate over quality of medical care.
5. Increasing foreign ownership of US & Canadian businesses. What will be the impact of American populism on multinational corporations? (And will pr firms owned by overseas chains be able to deal credibly with the topic?)
6. Growing public interest in environmental risks. Demand for disclosure of information about processes & products and their potential hazards; the challenge of how to communicate about risk.
7. Fractionalization of the media. Plus computerization; biotechnology; child care; etc.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶Bombastic overkill of the week. Said Jerry Falwell in trying to stop Congress' override of the President's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act: "It will force churches to hire active homosexual drug addicts with AIDS to be teachers or youth pastors."

¶1988 Pocket Media Guide is free. Contains addresses & phone numbers of over 700 daily newspapers, radio & TV stations, as well as trade & consumer publications. (To order, write on company letterhead to: Media Distribution Services, Dept P, 307 West 36th St, NYC 10018)

WORKPLACE POLICIES, PART II -- FOOT DRAGGING ON AIDS EDUCATION IS THE THEME FOR MOST ORGANIZATIONS DESPITE URGENT NEED; THOSE FACING MOST RISK -- HOSPITALS, SCHOOLS -- ARE VANGUARD

The mainstream America is increasingly threatened by AIDS, most organizations are approaching the topic with caution. Some employers claim AIDS is not yet an issue for them. Others fear a policy or education program could precipitate a hornet's nest of legal problems. With exception of healthcare & schools, most are slow to get involved. Evidence:

1. Scheduled April conference on communications & pr aspects of AIDS in the workplace was cancelled due to inadequate registration. Though Larimi's market research indicated a "crying need" for it, conference prompted only 30 registrants out of an anticipated 300-400.

2. Workplace policies concerning drugs, alcohol, smoking are commonplace, but fewer than 8% of those surveyed by Training magazine have AIDS policies. Just over 18% report AIDS education programs, with health services the highest (59%), followed by public administration 37% (includes schools).

"Saying an AIDS program is premature is like saying a crisis management plan before Three Mile Island was premature." -- representative of Larimi Communications

3. Fortune magazine/Allstate Insurance study of corporate attitudes on AIDS found that of 623 CEOs or other top mgmt surveyed, 84% indicated AIDS would be a concern within 5 years -- yet only 1 in 5 have or are developing an AIDS policy.

PR's Role In AIDS Education

Because of medical, legal & personnel aspects of AIDS, organizations that have developed education programs tend to rely on these areas for leadership. Many pr & pa dep'ts that pr spoke with acknowledged no involvement -- and some, no familiarity -- with the initiation, development or administration of these programs. Yet educational background of practitioners & role of pr in an org'n makes its input invaluable -- particularly if pr wants to be positioned as a problem-solving process:

1. AIDS is a pr problem. Employee fears about working with an AIDS-infected co-worker; customer/client/patient worries about sanitation; how to handle media inquiries -- no one is better equipped to address these problems than practitioners.

2. Most programs indicate no understanding of diffusion process. Mass communication is only effective to build interest & awareness. Facts & even massive doses of information alone will not change behavior. To accomplish this, interpersonal methods -- i.e. peer pressure -- are required.



3. Human nature avoids contact with fearful messages, states the ego defense principle. Study of nearly 60 gov't & private health org'n brochures indicates words & themes employed may be adding to fear of AIDS. Focus on risk, illness, death & spread of the disease might backfire, suggests Tom Mickey. His comm research class at New England College (Henniker, NH) evaluated printed materials. Using fear to motivate people has a low history of effectiveness (e.g., failure of campaigns dealing with seatbelts, drugs, smoking). Research suggests using words & themes that motivate in a positive way: love, community, family, responsibility.

Education is the Best, Maybe Only, Defense In the workplace it can 1) provide an opportunity to learn what does -- and doesn't -- cause AIDS; 2) diffuse employee fears about working with those who have AIDS; 3) instruct in procedures to assure customers of product safety; 4) demonstrate concern for the well being of employees & their families.

Families are a key motivator for both employees & employers. Many feel sexually active teenagers ("FLYERS," see prr 3/21) & young adults face high risk. Hence, tho Honeywell's projections show few cases expected among its workers, dependent children whose health insurance is covered by company are a worry. Honeywell found employees more likely to attend noontime AIDS briefing if it was couched in terms of "What Can I Do To Protect My Children?."

Problem: One-time exposure to AIDS info is unlikely to work. Some experts think it may take 3 sessions or more: the 1st to deal with fears & denial; the 2nd to gain acceptance this is something they have to know about; the 3rd where people finally become concerned about the person with AIDS rather than themselves.

But to be effective, education must come from many sources: workplace, family, schools, media, community, religious organizations. The Washington Business Group on Health predicts leading companies will reach beyond the workplace to 1) involve dependents, including pre-teens, in employer-provided health & sex education programs, 2) form new alliances with public health departments & community groups.

Private Sector Programs Farsighted organizations realize the question is no longer whether to develop an employee AIDS policy or program. It's how to wade through the tons of information available to create effective ones.

1. Is A Separate Policy Necessary? When employees are in high-risk situations (hospitals, etc.), a policy can clarify specific concerns. In other situations, an AIDS policy may create more problems than it solves. "It's inappropriate because then I'd have to write a policy for every disease in the medical book. We handle it like any other serious illness," says Dr. Robert Dedmon, vp-medical affairs, KimberlyClark (Neenah, Wisc.).

2. Components of Typical Education Programs. Kimberly-Clark, Goodyear Tire & Rubber are similar: 1-hour presentation combines videotape & Q&As with internal & external experts. Goodyear prepped employees thru articles in its monthly magazine & employee newsletter. Both companies relied on existing materials available thru gov't & resource org'ns. Honeywell developed extensive supervisory training to familiarize them with company policy (relating to discrimination, disability, privacy), prepare them for hypothetical situations.

Schools Are Front Line Recognizing the importance of working with other groups, they've developed pilot program to empower teachers as community change agents. Nat'l Education Ass'n has linked with US Public Health Service, Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Nat'l Ass'n of School Nurses, medical & academic experts to build a network for providing info & changing behavior. NEA has published a guide, The Facts About AIDS, to help teachers educate students about behaviors that put them at risk.

RESOURCES FOR AIDS PROGRAMS

1. American Red Cross will launch in April a program for the workplace, "Working Beyond Fear"; has brochures, resources, info. PRSA will be involved in implementation. (Contact local chpt or 431 18th St NW, Washington, DC 20006; 202/639-3200)
2. American Foundation for AIDS Research in May will have available: a) The AIDS Information Resources Directory, listing according to target audience (teens, minorities, etc.); b) Workplace Package including a book, "AIDS: An Executive Briefing", worksite videotape, informational brochures & poster (40 West 57th St, Ste 406, NYC 10019; 212/333-3118)
3. National Leadership Coalition on AIDS unites corporations, trade & professional ass'ns, labor, minority, gay, civic, voluntary & religious org'ns, among others. Objectives are a) to stimulate AIDS info campaigns, b) serve as a resource center c) bridge gap between groups emerging on the AIDS policy scene & those already established as resources. (NLCA, 1012 14th St NW, Ste 601, Washington, DC 20005)

GENERAL PUBLIC IS BEING INTRODUCED TO "THE LANGUAGE OF MEDIA PERSUASION" Tony Schwartz, known for some controversial political ads (e.g., the "Daisy" ad in '64 election which showed a little girl plucking petals from a daisy & then a nuclear explosion), has produced 2 videocassettes on the subject. One explains how he makes political ads. The other, called "Guerrilla Media," shows how anyone can use the media to persuade. Christian Science Monitor describes his findings:

1. Media are evocative rather than impressive. They don't implant new images or info. They tap into what we already think & feel.
2. A little goes a long way. Make a suggestion and the viewer/listener's mind will fill in the rest. "Daisy" ad never mentioned Barry Goldwater. But Schwartz knew the public feared he had a too-quick trigger finger -- and they would fill in the blank.
3. Use media to produce a small-town sense of shame. NY State planned a prison near a Girl Scout camp which would force the camp to close. Schwartz produced a plea from one of the campers to then-Gov. Hugh Carey, aired it during the morning commute in Albany. In 25 years, station mgr had never seen such a response. Even Gov. Carey called to respond.

Since issue ads are shunned by broadcast media -- as the Kaiser Aluminum, Mobil & W.R. Grace cases demonstrated -- Schwartz advises running for public office on the issue in question. Stations can't legally reject political ads. Or cast the spot as a product ad for booklets, etc. Physicians for Social Responsibility cleared out some old antismoking pamphlets this way.