

¶A partnership idea for org'ns & colleges/universities: PR students in Prof. Jim Anderson's class (UFla-Gainesville) are required to choose & track an issue. "This assignment gets students reading widely about the issues they will be grappling with thruout their careers. My message is that good public relations begins with the monitoring of public opinion and the observation of the behavior of key publics. I tell them part of their role is to interpret these things with respect to their employers and to fashion appropriate, proactive response strategies that will help insure the survival & growth of the organizations they represent." Issues pr seniors are monitoring include: 1) medical care as a social concern (who should pay? How?); 2) US/Soviet relations; 3) the homeless; 4) gangs; 5) waste disposal; 6) maternity/ paternity leaves (company policies); 7) adult illiteracy; 8) drug testing; 9) day care centers; 10) abortion; 11) surrogacy; 12) decline in service quality; 13) ban on smoking in public places; 14) guns. Would an energetic, creative student or class add perspective by tracking your issues?

¶The look of hand-addressed envelopes...by computer. New software enables an IBM PC or compatible & a dot matrix printer to "hand address" envelopes. Program also generates handwritten notes or letters. User has option of colors: red, blue, green or black. Envelope feed will address up to 1000/hr.; high volume system is available that handles up to 5000/hr. Both versions are compatible with cut sheet feeders for short runs. Numerous handwriting styles are available. Technology to include anyone's handwriting has been achieved. (More info: PC Software Services 16405 Bridge End Rd, Miami Lakes, Fla 33014; 305/362-9277)

¶Quarterly reports don't usually rate high on desired-reading lists. Confronting this reality, Emhart's (Farmington, Ct.) QR took a new format -- 4-pg insert in its employee/stockholder newspaper. "We're simply recognizing the reality that shareholders read the Emhart NEWS -- as they tell us by letter, personal comment & surveys" -- whereas readership of standard format quarterlies is "highly discretionary," says John Budd, svp corp comms. Newspaper style imparts a news "feel" to the statistics and triples the space available for editorial comment, he adds.

¶The power of research. Ford's success with the Taurus & Sable -- most thoroughly researched cars in its history -- is claimed to be the catalyst that catapulted customer research to its present position. As a measure of growth, independent research houses billed more than \$1.9 billion in '86, up from \$720 million in '79, according to Ad Age.

#### WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**HONORS.** Philip Bode (dist mgr for Public Policy, AT&T, Basking Ridge, NJ) received the annual Arthur Page Public Relations Professional Award. Charles Wick (dir, U.S. Information Agency) named '88 Pub Rels Professional of the Year by PR News. Philip Geier (chrnm, Inter-public Group of Companies) received National Brotherhood Award from Nat'l

Conference of Christians and Jews.

John Harden (longtime practitioner) posthumously inducted as inaugural honoree in the North Carolina Public Relations Hall of Fame, UNC.

**DIED.** Gilbert Fuller (former chrnm of Selz, Seabolt & Assoc, Chcg).

# pr reporter

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## NEW PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH SUGGESTS PEOPLE FILTER INFORMATION THRU THREE BASIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMES TO ARRIVE AT OPINION ON ISSUES; ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA, OTHERS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM NEWS COVERAGE

**Background** The old question is, do messages in mass media have a significant influence on thoughts & opinions or not? Joseph Klapper's 1960 studies found media had minimal effects. Subsequent research, as the "media generation" progressed, found the opposite. Along the way constructs like cognitive dissonance, selective perception & 2-step flow shed further light. The idea of people using a "conceptual frame" to filter "the information tide" began with the notion that they made decisions based on their liberal or conservative beliefs. Recent studies find this idea is "not as prominent a conceptual tool as political & journalistic elites" would have us believe.

Results of study suggest communications messages regarding public issues should be oriented to what research indicates is the most prevalent cognitive frame of a particular public. This provides a new research tool -- or at least a new line of questioning that can result in improved audience profiles. Study also helps guide any message strategy by identifying the 3 basic questions publics will ask.

A new study, presented at American Assn of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) annual conference last month, examines links among 1) sources of information, 2) knowledge & 3) opinion. It suggests underlying cognitive "frames" shape the ways issues & media coverage are evaluated. Frames do not predetermine opinions, as the liberal/conservative construct claims. Rather they aid in developing arguments used for forming opinions.

People Tend To Evaluate All Issues From Basis of Just a Few "Frames" Frames take into account 1) personal experience, 2) info from media, 3) knowledge of the issue at hand, 4) existing opinion. One frame may funnel opinion formation over a variety of unrelated issues. Researchers looking at major public issues (Star Wars, apartheid, drug abuse, AIDS) found 3 major frames:

1. Human Impact. Issues judged in terms of helpful or harmful impact on people. Marked by feelings of caring, worry, compassion. Subdivided into how issue affects 3 spheres: a) self (how it affects "me"); b) in-groups to which individual belongs (family, friends, community, nation, world); c) others (with whom the person can feel empathy). Almost half of the researchers' sample used this frame; no gender differences found in use of this frame.

2. Personal Control. Manifests in 3 ways. People a) feel individual control; b) control by "chance" (fate, the inevitable); and c) control by powerful forces (God, gov't, the wealthy). Feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, and inefficacy were



dominant; many expressed doom & gloom. Used far more frequently by women than by men. "There's nothing I can do about it." "You can't fight City Hall."

3. Economics. Judgments are made about issues by a) citing their costs; b) suggesting a profit motive; or c) linking issue to national or world economy. Costs were most prevalent, i.e., "Star Wars takes money from more important needs."

Public Issues Affected By Both News and non-News Sources In describing the basis of their knowledge or an opinion, respondents had tendency to blur sources of information, drawing on media & personal experience interchangeably. They interweave personal experience with information gained from both news & entertainment.

This creates both a problem & opportunity for public policy shapers: It expands potential range of influential programming (i.e., consider impact of daytime soaps, talk shows, movies on such topics as war, anti-nuclear, drug abuse). As researcher Marion Just says, "it suggests it may be easier to sell Star Wars on Oprah Winfrey than on the evening news."

But it also reminds us that knowledge & opinions are often formed based on subjective, inaccurate fiction (i.e., problem of teenage pregnancy may be exacerbated by casual sex depicted in movies, where characters don't talk about contraception).

Value of Stories in Building Understanding Researchers found interviewees relied heavily on "stories" in their discourse about public issues. Several referred to programs like "Roots" or "Holocaust" that took a major historical event and reduced it to the experience of just a few families as significant in helping them understand complex or remote events. The use of narrative in conceptualizing issues also blurred the distinction between knowledge & opinion.

(For copy of study "Understanding Issues In the News: "I Don't Know Much About This But..." by Crigler, Just, Newman, Campbell and O'Connell, write prr)

KEY CONSULTING SKILL, MANAGING YOUR BOSS, DOESN'T MEAN BOSSING YOUR MANAGER "It means understanding your boss & managing yourself," explains Bob Mezoff, pres, ODT Assocs (Amherst, Mass). With downsizing, restructuring & competitiveness, change is the byword today. Survival during change depends on adaptability & flexibility. To encourage these traits, org'ns are training employees to take greater initiative & responsibility in their relationships with bosses. He offers this advice:

1. Stop trying to change your boss. Key to a better relationship is willingness to change your own behavior. (Ironically, your ideas & even criticisms will get a better hearing with this approach -- because it engenders trust.)

2. Self-knowledge is the way to power. Candor gives you the ability to a) determine your match of styles with the person you report to, b) take responsibility for the effect you have on your boss, c) learn how to change the effect if it isn't what you desire.

3. Assumptions about your boss' goals can wreak havoc. To make sure you are fully aware of your boss' objectives, don't hesitate to a) ask clarifying questions, b) probe for information, c) objectively point out inconsistencies when tasks seem out of line with stated goals.

4. Make sure your priorities are in line with your boss'. Keep your boss posted on how you've prioritized your work. Give him or her the chance to change it.

5. Relationships can often be dramatically improved thru the efforts of just one of the parties. Take responsibility for making the relationship work. Petty resentments are foolish indulgences.

6. Take responsibility for your appraisal. Clarify expectations early. Solicit feedback (both positive & negative) in a systematic fashion.

7. Become a scientific investigator. Study your boss' personality, style, preferences. Ask your peers (or former incumbent of your position) for ideas on how to work with the boss most effectively.

8. Build on your boss' strengths. Dwelling on weaknesses & shortcomings will only make things worse. Find something positive and build your strategies on that.

9. Use psychological judo. Don't resist your boss' objections. Accept them. Probe to determine the full emotional & factual background. Diffuse resistance by fully understanding the situation from your boss' point of view.

#### ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶Have you listened to support staff lately? Secretaries are aware of their role as ambassadors. When Bill Banach surveyed school secretaries nationwide, he found 98% agree the way they treat callers & visitors shapes opinions about the school district. Survey provides a vehicle for staff to share their thoughts/feelings, agenda for training sessions. Questions included: 1) what they like/dislike about their job, 2) how they would make the office more efficient, 3) training they'd like to have. Also 4) training they'd like their bosses to have; top responses include human rels (12%), mgmt/adm (8%), pr/comm (6%), computer (6%), stress mgmt/relaxation (6%). Bosses scored lowest in "letting people know when I've done a good job", "regularly evaluating my work". (Exec Summary, \$5 from Communication/Management Training Dep't, Macomb Intermediate School District, 44001 Garfield Rd, Mt. Clemens, Mich. 48044-1497; 313/286-8800 x220)

¶Will Calif's Prop 65 warnings add to toxiphobia? At point of purchase, place of employment and in prominent ads, these are the key words: "Detectable amounts of some chemicals known to the State of California to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm may be found in ..." Then follows a list of facilities or products. Credibility is added by copy like: "Community Notice. The Safe Drinking Water & Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Proposition 65, approved by California voters)..."

¶Public relations, marketing & advertising jobs will increase by 32% between now & 2000, estimates new report by US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Question is whether trained professionals will be available to fill the slots (pr 4/18).