

Making extensive opinion leader lists, then tracking them by computer, is what got Mike Dukakis the nomination over 6 rivals. When the race began, there were no standouts. In fact they were called the "7 dwarfs" by many. But a VAX minicomputer named Merlin provided the Dukakis camp with organization, which enabled it to raise far more money than any rival. Program replaced 7,000 color-coded 3x5 cards, now has 120,000 names. At the Democratic convention, it will tell workers "whether a delegate prefers chocolate milk or strawberry shakes," according to Service Information Systems (Boston). Company claims the databases it manages "are among the most sensitive" including law firm lists, nonprofit's fundraising, others with "low tolerance for sloppiness." Boston Globe reports method is cost effective: while other candidates paid up to \$90,000/month to D.C.-based direct-mail firms, this in-house operation costs about \$25,000/month. (For copy of Globe story, write pr)

An element in customer satisfaction is making them feel wanted & appreciated. Waffle House, a chain, either has a "customer recognition" program or its East Denver unit is doing it on its own. When customers enter, all staff say "good morning" to everyone -- cooks from behind the grill, waitresses as they take or deliver orders, buspersons clearing tables. A veritable chorus of friendly hellos. Multivoice "Good bye, come again" sends everyone out the door.

PR makes JFK the most overrated public figure in American history, according to historians responding to an American Heritage survey. He was mentioned more often than anyone. Historian & novelist Thomas Fleming summed up the reason: "The record shows his public relations approach to the presidency was an almost total disaster for the nation, from the Bay of Pigs to the Berlin Wall to the missile crisis to the halfhearted intervention in Vietnam. The revelations of his private life have added more tarnish to the once golden image." Something for practitioners to think about in this election year -- so dominated by political pr. The old formula remains: P (performance) + R (recognition) = PR.

Another study finds pay not top motivator. Among employees it consistently ranks below recognition, communication from top management & chance for advancement. Now Carnegie Mellon U. survey finds salary not the most influential factor in career choice. Biz students rated career path & opportunity for advancement most important. Then came the work itself, use of skills, location, "comfort factor" with the organization & the people one would work with. Salary ranked 9th. 55% of last year's MBA grads did not accept the highest-paying jobs offered them.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. Nat'l School PR Ass'n '88 ofcrs: pres, Jeanne Magmer (pub info dir, Oregon School Boards Ass'n, Salem); pres-elect, Sissy Henry (dir, bd devel, S.C. School Boards Ass'n, Columbia); new regional vps, Ray Richardson (exec dir, schl cnty svcs, Waterloo Cnty Schools, Iowa); Susan Carson (schl cnty rels coord, Winston Salem Forsyth Cty Schools, NC); Kathy Leslie (dir educ'l pr, Beaverton School District, Ore.)

HONORS. 1988 NSPRA President's Award to Phil Toman, dir info svcs, Christina School District, Newark, Del.

MEMORIAL SERVICE for Sharon Berzok (Star Communications, Stamford, Ct) will be held Sunday, July 31, 10:30am, Grand Hall, Stamford Museum on High Ridge & Scofieldtown Rd, Stamford. As reported in pr 6/20, Sharon & her husband, Bob Berzok (IABC chrm '86-'87), were in a car accident June 10 in California. He is recovering.

pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations,

Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.31 No.29

July 25, 1988

PUBLIC RELATIONS & PUBLIC SERVICE: WHY WORK PRO BONO?
MANY PROFESSIONALS & ORGANIZATIONS ARE AGAIN FINDING REWARDS
THAT AID THE FIELD, SOCIETY, THEIR BUSINESSES & THEMSELVES

PR pros & their organizations -- firms, departments & professional society chapters -- are again donating services in a big way to community & public service programs. While there has always been a core of pro bono work, it seems to rise & fall in popularity. In the 23rd Annual Survey of the Profession (pr 2/1), 84% report voluntary activity. While the major incentive is positive social change, many are discovering substantial residual benefits.

The Payoff 1. Pro bono work elevates the public perception of pr, finds Dwayne Summar, PRSA president. "It clearly positions public relations as what it really is -- something more than publicity." PRSA has chapters active in campaigns against drug abuse, illiteracy, AIDS & many local causes.

2. PRSA's Connecticut Valley Chapter has been lauded for its role in increasing AIDS awareness. Its PSA titled "AIDS Don't Care," targeted at inner-city teens, employs rap music & an alley-way backdrop. Unique in its bold usage of street vernacular, ADC was initially shunned by broadcasters who found it too ribald. Now it is aired in several states and is in demand as far as Washington. CVC also has a 20-minute educational video in the works. Both video and PSA will be adopted by the Center for Disease Control (Atlanta) and distributed nationwide by chapters of the American Red Cross. Rich Domagala, CVC's pub svc chair, joins Summar in noting that public service reflects well on the field. "We are attempting to show that pr can influence, can change people's behavior."

"The really good people in this profession are givers, not takers," says Ron Robinson. "Many were initially involved with journalism and were attracted to that field because they heard a calling that was higher than that of the almighty dollar. Community service allows them to express that desire to give."

3. Domagala adds that involvement in such projects commands respect from corporations. "CEOs are impressed. They're aware of us, and they're watching. We want them to recognize public relations as a professional function and see what benefits can result from a well-run campaign." He adds, "Corporations will view the (AIDS) program as professional and honest. Because of that, we will be more credible in the eyes of the community."

4. Jack Tucker of Keyes Martin Public Relations (Springfield, NJ) agrees. His firm co-sponsored the President's Volunteer Action Awards. He points out that working



for the good of the community validates pr's role of counselor. "Your advice has more credibility with businesses."

5. For counselors, new business is a consideration. Tucker notes businesses engaged in pro bono work relate well to firms with similar commitments. "Companies like to do business with companies that think like they do...that have a philosophy compatible with their own." Same is true of new job opportunities for individuals who gain visibility thru pro bono.

6. Involvement in public service fosters good will within an organization. According to Domagala, work on the AIDS awareness campaign made members "proud to belong to this group and be leaders in a movement." Ron Robinson is president of Cranford Johnson Robinson Associates (Little Rock). His group has contributed work to over 100 non-profit organizations; recently won a corporate humanitarian award. Robinson claims that the greatest secondary benefit of pro bono is the gratification felt by employees.

7. Organizations maintain that involvement in public service work is natural to public relations -- partly because the issues of the day are at stake. "Most organizations realize it is their duty to advance issues." They regard it as a professional responsibility rather than a device to drum up business. That, from Bernadette Sohler of Keyes Martin, states what most practitioners claim to be the first reason for working pro bono.

IMPORTANT STRATEGY QUESTION: Siobhan Nicolau of the Hispanic Policy Development Project (NYC) doesn't think so. She contends that ARE HISPANICS HOLDING FAST TO THE SPANISH LANGUAGE? Hispanics are not as resistant to learning English as they have been portrayed.

"Hispanics follow the pattern of all other groups of immigrants that have come to this country. They assimilate the language by the third generation." Nicolau explains that the constant influx of Latin American immigrants creates the illusion that they cling to their native language. Fact is, "Most people who immigrate from a Spanish speaking country are, after 10 years, speaking English on a daily basis."

They Couldn't Even If They Wanted To Nicolau adds that learning English is necessary for Hispanics to get ahead in the US. "It's desirable to know Spanish -- it's desirable for anyone to know a 2nd language. But knowing English is crucial."

Preston Conner, research specialist, US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (Kansas City, Mo), points out that English is the primary language of Hispanic enterprise. He agrees that for Hispanics, knowing English is a necessity. "Our society is becoming more and more technology-oriented. Those who don't speak English will just fall thru the cracks." According to Conner, knowing English is necessary even within the Hispanic community. "Many Hispanic business owners have customers who are Anglos. They want employees who can speak English."

Projects In Spanish? A. If we're not becoming bilingual, what of all the advertising in Spanish being targeted at the Hispanic community? "It's short-run advertising strategy," says Conner.

B. If Hispanics are willing to adopt the English language, what of the surveys that indicate they still prefer Spanish radio stations? That's easy, says Nicolau. "They like the music!"

C. And if learning English is vital, why the fuss over laws to make English the official language?

NON-PRO PROVES THE RULE AGAIN: TRY THINGS...& THEY OFTEN SUCCEED, BE TOO DUMB TO KNOW THEY WON'T WORK

The Queen Anne Inn is a comely tho small accommodation in downtown Denver. Tho in business but a year, it has received extensive attention -- the subject of over 60 articles, some in major publications. Innkeeper Charles Hillestad provides tips on how to market a start up business with a miniscule budget -- via pr:

1. "Be bold," he advises, "and aim high. For our grand opening, I invited the mayor of Denver. I didn't expect him to accept, but he did. We'd scheduled it on a Sunday -- a slow news day, so I called up the local tv stations, told them the mayor would be attending, and invited their news teams to come. We received coverage."

2. "Try unusual avenues." With wife & fellow innkeeper Ann, Hillestad put together information packages & mailed them to a variety of small, obscure magazines, some of which wrote articles. That resulted in larger publications calling, looking for story ideas. The big ones do feed off the smaller ones.

3. "React quickly." It paid off to answer these inquiries immediately. "Within a day, they would have a polished-looking package of material on their desk -- pictures included. Out of the 50 or so B&Bs they were considering for an article, whose do you think was among those chosen? Help the writers out," he urges, "and they'll help you out."

4. Deliver more than is promised. "Writers were often delighted when, after receiving our package and visiting our inn, they would discover amenities we had not mentioned. This resulted in higher praise."

5. What of the guests that are mere travelers and not newspaper critics? "Always assume your customer is a reviewer. Our customers are our source of new customers."

6. Finally, "Always do good deeds for the community. It pays dividends." The Hillestads offer complimentary rooms to visiting dignitaries, lecturers, actors -- people the city has its eye on. Not only does this produce media attention, but it generates new customers when these guests spread the good word.

Hillestad, a real estate attorney with no previous marketing experience, emphasizes that all of these tips are common sense. "But not everybody thinks of them. So many people get caught up in thinking that pr is something you have to have a degree in, or years of experience. We never lost track of the fact that we are in the hospitality industry & it is our business to provide a world class place to spend the night. Sometimes people get lost on the pr package -- they forget what pr is all about."