

Less intimidation from the top, more communication from the bottom, "top-down training" spawned a smooth operation. Idea is applicable to in-service or mid-management courses as well.

MANAGEMENT MOVING TOWARD  
A FUSION OF DISCIPLINES --  
& PR IS ALREADY THERE

Is data from other disciplines playing an active role in areas of human performance? More & more, says J. Robert Carleton of Vanguard Consulting Group (Larkspur, Cal.) His firm ushers organizations thru times of crises & change, & he finds a merging of disciplines is becoming the trend -- e.g. the role of semantics & linguistics in communication; of psychobiology & chemistry in the study of the thought process.

Perhaps most important to pr is the incorporation of anthropology into biz & management (see prr, 11/30/87). "We are emotional beings. We do not take our emotions off at the door," states Carleton. Organizations that had stressed competence among employees are now realizing that feelings of value & confidence must be nurtured. "We need both sides of the management equation. Anthropology gives us the data on how to use the emotional side of the human psyche in a business setting."

As anthropologist Art Harkins puts it, "Public relations practitioners are presentday anthropologists. They study current society the way we study the Incas or Winnebagos."

Anthropology tells us cultural traditions & rituals have purpose. "A rocket plant went thru a major transition when it stopped making one model & started making another. The company had a funeral for the obsolete product & an actual burial on the front lawn. They followed this with a party -- a celebration for the birth of the new product." Sounds corny, but Carleton credits this use of ritual with smoothing the transition. "No loss of personnel, very little loss of productivity."

Carleton points out that pr is ahead of the game. "PR has always known the importance of appealing to the emotional side of the human psyche, but to biz & management, this is a relatively new concept."

"FOCUSED APPEALS" NEED DESIGN

"As more & more of us begin to use desktop publishing for even the simplest of memos, the way it looks to the recipient can be as important as the message itself," writes Bob Moulthrop, dir mktg, Deloitte Haskins + Sells (NYC), in response to prr's 6/27 lead. "If the look of the page makes my eyeballs itch, I'm probably not even going to begin to read it; if the material isn't well organized & clearly written, I'm not going to finish reading it. For particularly difficult communications projects, I'm a proponent of bringing in designers early on as part of the team. Good design gets the message across in the right way. A good designer can make a positive contribution to almost any project."

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NAME SURVEY FINDS MEANINGLESSNESS A BARRIER:  
"PEOPLE PREFER NAMES THEY CAN UNDERSTAND."  
DOES THIS APPLY TO SLOGANS & THEMES AS WELL?

What we call something -- the semantics used to frame an issue, the spin on a news story, a job title -- often has more influence on acceptance or rejection than other factors. LandorResearch produced a survey evaluating the effectiveness of 672 corporate & brand names. What are the implications for practitioners?

Survey was based on 1,000 consumer interviews. Tho rival "corporate identity firms" argue many names are not designed to appeal to the general public, Stewart Owen of LandorResearch (that's right: no space between the words) contends, "All audiences prefer names they can understand, whether it's the investment community or the general population. In this study, people are reacting against meaninglessness. They prefer meaning."

Among names with the highest image power are Coca Cola, Levis, Sears, AT&T. Lowest ranking -- Exide, Gaggenau, Bang & Olufsen, Klipsch. Note 3 of the low rated names sound clearly foreign, another form of meaninglessness.

HOW ONE HIGHLY VISIBLE CATEGORY WAS RATED: BEVERAGE BRANDS

Of 672 names:	Image Power Rank	Share of Mind Rank	Esteem Rank
Coca Cola	1	1	1
Pepsi Cola	3	5	8
Budweiser	20	12	69
7 Up	21	29	30
Minute Maid	33	70	27
Dr. Pepper	89	56	188
Jack Daniels	93	146	74
Hawaiian Punch	109	118	125
Kool-Aid	130	57	329
V-8	132	103	205
Michelob	161	140	208
Coors	183	109	319
Canada Dry	184	137	264
Bartyles & James	188	198	181
Sprite	218	158	334
California Cooler	219	195	256
Lowenbrau	253	226	321
Busch	268	283	236
Heineken	270	302	207
Miller	298	274	344

With major organization name changes occurring in record numbers -- 930 in the first half of '88 alone, according to Anspach Grossman Portugal (NYC) -- the doubt about meaningless names is important. Many are ditching the homespun sound for something more hi-tech & galactic (American Hardware Supply Co. to Servistar, International Harvester to Navistar) while a few are leaving cold, pre-fab names for folksy-sounding ones that evoke images from a Grant Wood painting (Consolidated Foods to Sara Lee).

"Unum," new name for Union Mutual Insurance, bombed near the bottom of the survey as did "Allegis," formerly United Airlines. Both were the brainchildren of Lippincott & Margulies (NYC). Others also fared poorly, including Anspach, whose "Unisys" (ex-Sperry & Burroughs) was ranked low.

Who's The Target? Its rivals are critical of the fact Landor surveyed the general public, which often is not a factor when corporations decide to re-christen themselves. The intent is to appeal to certain audiences, not to the average consumer. Furthermore, many don't change their names to sound more asthetically pleasing but because of necessity (divestitures, spin offs, leveraged buy outs, etc.)

Even so, Clive Chajet of Lippincott & Margulies "ends up telling half his clients to stick with their original monikers," according to US News & World Report.

The Real Questions 1. Does the semantics employed add anything to the "pictures in the heads" of the target public? If not -- as in changing U.S. Steel to USX -- why pay huge fees to these firms? Or was USX aiming to become invisible because of its problems? Will "the childrens' agenda" attract political support that daycare & education couldn't?

2. How soon will "the beauty of the familiar" take over? Once a word or phrase becomes by definition a cliché, a handle, much of its denotative meaning is lost anyway. Maximum value from new wording is derived during its awareness period. Once it becomes well known, familiarity does breed dullness if not contempt.

3. What is the role of practitioners here? While consultants' skills in mnemonics or graphic psychology may be useful, pr staff is responsible for the whole range of reactions to the organization. Unless practitioners are in control of these naming/semantic projects, One Clear Voice can easily be sacrificed to some glib salesman with a classy dog & pony of snazzy graphics. That is not what it's all about.

4. Except perhaps for brand names, so what? Unless it's an impulse purchase, does the name influence -- assuming it's not repulsive or has no attached bad reputation? Bang & Olufsen may not be very sexy, but in buying high-end stereo equipment would that matter? The impression is the company is run by 2 Scandinavians, folks with a sound reputation for designing & making technical equipment.

(More info from LandorResearch, 1001 Front St, San Francisco, 94111; 415/955-1200)

AT&T REACHES OUT ...AND BEYOND  
WITH CONSTITUENCY RELATIONS PROGRAM

enlists employees to act as "ambassadors" helping their communities with telecommunication issues.

Customers get personalized service -- a neighborhood consultant, on-call, ready to respond to questions & concerns. "At AT&T we recognize the need to develop relationships with our customers," Randy Berridge, dist mgr pr, told prr. "It's not enough that AT&T urges customers to 'reach out' to one another. We must reach out to them."

Consumer Markets Div. asks participating employees to contact at least 25 acquaintances & let them know they are available to assist in getting answers to product or service questions. This differs from similar programs elsewhere, such as US West Communications, where opinion leaders are targeted & assigned to "key contact persons" (pr 6/15/87). "Start up" kit includes a sample customer letter, stationary, information to help employees refer questions to the proper department. Training sessions familiarize them with likely questions.

And the public's response? Linda Morton: "The community is welcoming them. The volunteer has become a local presence -- the 'AT&T Neighbor.'"

"TOP-DOWN TRAINING" STRENGTHENS  
PERFORMANCE AT BOTH ENDS,  
GETS SENIOR EXECS RECHARGED

Kate Ludeman, ex-vp human resources at KLA Instruments (Santa Clara, Cal.), implemented a program from which other organizations can model. "Top-Down Training," in which execs teach management trainees, is designed to get new concepts to recruits while polishing the rusted-out listening & learning skills of their seniors.

Program arose in response to a problem -- poor attendance at training sessions. They were low priority among mid-managers, who forced recruits to cancel because other tasks took precedence. Senior execs, however, considered training crucial.

"I asked them, 'If you support it in theory, would you be willing to participate?'" Ludeman told prr. "At first, some were reluctant. But after the program caught on, they became enormously enthused."

Ludeman evaluated the skills of each exec, assigned them teaching topics from which they could also learn. By brainstorming, role playing, story-telling & discussing, seniors & recruits got a clear focus on each others' needs. The results? Refreshed senior execs, in touch with new methods as well as with personnel. Trainees on top of who's who in the organization, how they got there & what they expect.

"It's going like gangbusters here," says Linda Morton, cnsmr mkts mgr. "After we ran a feature on the new program in our local employee newsletter, we immediately received 60 new volunteers & filled both our orientation classes to capacity." Employees are taking ownership of the program and bringing it to churches & shopping centers. They are not sales personnel -- many have had little contact with the public in their jobs, so they're enjoying the chance to deal directly with customers."