

& college-educated people are more interested in company-sponsored environmental programs than the less-educated, lower income segment. Blue collars, many of whom reside in the North Central "rustbowl" states, heavily consider plant closings & lay offs when evaluating a company's trustworthiness.

If public trust is a primary factor in how a company fares catastrophe, some industries do better than others: prescription drug receives a high rating of trust from 30% of the public; computer, 27%; life insurance, 16%; defense related aerospace, 14%; chemical, 9%; tobacco, 6%.

Brown cites Johnson & Johnson as an example of a company that benefited from past pr when it battled the Tylenol crisis (pr 1/30/84 & 2/6/84). Larry Foster told pr that his company's solid reputation did fend off damage during the crisis, but action taken at the time was just as instrumental. "Being highly decentralized, we have been able to be involved in community efforts around the world. We have worked at creating good-neighbor programs as well as others which have increased public trust & confidence in us. During the Tylenol crisis, we generated goodwill because of 2 principal actions: 1) we immediately were open with the public; 2) we promptly took action (pulling products, etc.) to protect people."

Despite multiplication of legal, labor, community & product controversies in recent decades, some corporations are cutting activities that win kudos from the public. Brown feels that "to abdicate control over such an important determinant of a company's future invites disaster to the same degree as losing control over costs or product quality."

#### ITEMS OF VALUE TO PRACTITIONERS

Resurrecting Carl Byoir & Co. to specialize in counseling CEOs & top management sends a mixed message. Clearly, that is where counsel should be given if public relations is a management -- not a technical -- function. But this confirms the suspicion that service assignments & project work have become the rule at the big firms -- like H&K, Byoir's parent. Critics have been claiming that the need to look good in the next quarter's report, imposed by publicly held ad agency parents, has become the be-all-&-end-all. Publicity & promotion projects staffed by low paid juniors is the quickest route to that end. But it turns the field into a vendor of services, not a consultancy. If this move creates a separation between counsel & services, what effect will that have on firms claiming to offer both? Are the two now distinct?

Social responsibility programs increasingly take bottom line focus. Time, Inc. (New York City) in conjunction with National Literacy Day announced the expansion of its instructional literacy program. By the end of autumn '88, "Time To Read" should be operating at 33 sites in 12 states with over 2,000 volunteer tutors & learners. The company's magazines are used as teaching tools. And if goals are achieved, there'll be more customers for its products. Literacy campaigns in the US are interesting examples of public service projects that directly benefit the sponsor -- Enlightened Self Interest. "Creating life-long readers is our goal," says comty rels dir Toni Fay. Time spokesperson Ed Adler told pr: "Of course it will help our industry. Everyone in publishing wants people to read." Another literacy helper is B. Dalton bookstores (pr 7/18/83). Commendable, a real boon to those served, tho ironic -- like a mattress company helping to find a cure for insomnia.

# pr reporter

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#### ON PRR'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY, SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE NEXT 30

Could public relations be having midlife crisis? Historically, the contrast with September 1958 -- when Charles Prout started the newsletter -- reveals a field that was emerging beyond its pioneers into nascent acceptance as a legitimate part of management. Today it is almost universally accepted -- yet filled with insecurity.

Structurally, pr has been around long enough that the pioneering spirit, the quest for new applications & social usefulness, has given way to bureaucracy & protecting the flanks. There's abundant entrepreneurship -- but its goal is mainly building careers or businesses, not the profession. Two re-energizers:

1. Re-establish our social compact. Stop bragging so much about our value to clients & employers, emphasize what we can do for society & the public. Consulting firms -- the most visible portion of the practice -- could switch the hype from who's biggest, new sales strategies & other self-congratulatory approaches. When recently have we heard a firm talk about advancing the field's usefulness instead of market share? We can be so consumed with competitiveness that we lose respect -- including self-respect. There's more to life than dog-eat-dog. Besides, rebuild our social contract & the pie will be much larger for everyone.

2. Launch a professionwide management awareness program, by professional societies & by individual practitioners. Use a 2-pronged theme: a) Organizations need to think of the pr ramifications of all actions, just as they think of the financial impacts. b) Public relations is forever -- like janitorial services. Just as dust settles every day & must be cleaned up, so human relationships change & require constant attention.

#### "DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS" COMBINES BRILLIANT MESSAGE STRATEGY WITH CITIZEN & ROLE MODEL INVOLVEMENT TO GET BEHAVIOR CHANGE

In the past 3 years, Texas has seen a 58% reduction in highway trash. Pub info mgr John Cagle of the State Highway Department (Austin) attributes the phenomenon to the synergy of 2 pr campaigns -- one identifying the culprits & then "target marketing" them, the other encouraging Texans to take stock in the highway.

"Don't Mess With Texas" began as a PSA effort. "We weren't getting through with nice guy tactics. Preaching at the public wasn't working either." Cagle told pr that while the environmentally aware may respond to campaigns like "Give



A Hoot, Don't Pollute," research indicated that the offenders were 18-35 year old males, many of whom really did not give a hoot. "We realized that the ones we were trying to reach were the guys driving down the road crushing beer cans & throwing them out of the truck without a second thought."

1. The strategy was to target this segment of the population. "We decided to find heroes who would win these guys over." Austin ad agency GSD&M developed spots which featured the Dallas Cowboys walking along the highway, picking up trash & crushing cans in reference to "the guy who did this." "The heroes got on the side of these people. They were not against them, they were talking about someone else as the offender. Now, former litterers are identifying with the message & saying 'tough guys don't litter.'" The PSAs, which were introduced during football games, have coined a slogan now known statewide. "Don't Mess with Texas" is seen on everything from beer mugs & mud flaps to grocery bags & Coke cans.

2. But the decrease in highway trash cannot be credited to awareness alone. "Adopt A Highway" rallies citizens to action. Sections of highway are delegated to groups & individuals as personal clean-up territory. "People have really become involved. Around 2,500 groups -- motorcycle gangs, churches, scout troops, high school honor societies have become part of the program. It's also used for probationary purposes." Cagle says signage along the highway indicates ownership & participants leave full trash bags for pick up below the signs. Travelers see the efforts made to combat pollution & are less inclined to litter.

Also strategic was the decision to appeal to a Texan's sense of state patriotism. "Texas was really needing a shot in the arm when this campaign came about. Suddenly there was a message stated in terms that people could identify with, that Texans were ready for."

According to Cagle, the programs are models for groups around the US. In D.C. they're using the "Don't Mess With Texas" approach with Charles Bronson and Clint Eastwood. Oklahoma's similar macho slogan, 'Don't Lay Trash On Oklahoma,' became a song played regularly on local radio. The theme on the West Coast is 'California Cleanin',' for which song rights of 'California Dreamin' may be purchased. 'Adopt-A-Highway' is imitated on the coast with 'Adopt-A-Beach,' in New Mexico with Adopt-A-Park & even Adopt-A-Median (highway divider strip). River & lake conservationists have 'Adopt-A-Spot' campaigns.

"The magic is not in the phrase 'Don't Mess With Texas,'" Cagle reminds, "but in successful targeting of an audience, & in the effective harmony of two pr efforts."

GE'S JACK WELCH MISQUOTED ON LOYALTY, PR DEP'T SAYS

It's only "a paternal, feudal, fuzzy concept of loyalty" he opposes, according to an internal document circulated after the Wall Street Journal reported

critics are questioning his "ruthless" methods (pr 8/29). He sees loyalty as "an ongoing voluntary compact that is continually renewed -- in effect, loyalty toward a shared set of personal standards & values."

Wrote the CEO: "My concept of loyalty is not 'giving time' to some corporate entity & in turn being shielded & protected by it from the world outside. To me

that use of the word is 'nonsense.' Loyalty is an affinity amongst people who don't expect to be sheltered from an increasingly competitive world; they want to grapple with it & win in it & ask only for fair & respectful treatment if they do not. Their personal values & dreams & ambitions cause them to gravitate toward each other & toward a company like GE that will give them the resources & the opportunity to flourish & win."

NEW RESEARCH VERIFIES THAT VISIBLE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS GENERATE BUSINESS, HELP IN CRISIS

"There seems to be a bottom-line impact," says pres Andrew Brown of Opinion Research Corp. "PR efforts that burnish a company's image as socially responsible enhance its reputation for 1) providing quality products & 2) honesty in relations with customers. These are essential business characteristics that ultimately translate into profits." ORC asked 1,003 adults nationally to rate the importance of 30 characteristics of major corp'ns. Interestingly, results show certain kinds of public service have greater bottom-line impact than others.

- A. "Good neighbor" acts -- demonstrations of concern for the environment, local community, employees -- rank high along with providing quality products at reasonable prices.
- B. Less influential are 1) endowments for arts & cultural activities, which have a strong impact on 39%; 2) involvement in social problems & minority issues, impressing only 24%.
- C. Least notable are "achiever" factors: economic importance, the skill & imagination of management.

In Times Of Crisis, A Strong PR Record Helps Accrued pr efforts divert negative publicity in bad times, finds 2nd ORC study. Public seems willing to forgive unintentional damage done by an organization with strong philanthropic programs. 1,040 respondents rated the importance of "things you might read or hear" about a company. More than half say their trust in an org'n is affected by its public service efforts -- helping the handicapped (63%), environment (63%), & education(59%). A minority say accidental environmental damage (39%), defective products (32%), or plant closings (29%) have a strong impact on their confidence in a company.

Part of the population is especially critical of business. According to ORC, this "corporate activist" segment is thick with women (particularly non-working), low- to middle-income people & Democrats. It attaches more importance to every attribute listed than does the public as a whole. Members of this segment expect business to be concerned about customers, active in dealing with social problems & effective in the market place. This segment gives business the lowest rate of approval. Its high expectations, therefore, are apparently not being met...in its eyes.

Population segments vary in their responses to the factors measured. Blacks are particularly impressed with minority hiring programs, but they hold "good neighbor" acts in higher esteem. Professional