

his own wacky way while other people, strapped in drab conformity, look on admiringly. The Cool Jerk is a legacy of the Me Decade." These characters have no jobs or hobbies or visible means of support. They just do mindless things -- like prance thru the supermarket "in a psychotic sort of way" with a can of 7UP, or hang out, just being cool in 501 jeans -- "Madison Avenue's idea of iconoclasm & irreverence. The people in these ads aren't practicing irreverence. They're just acting like morons." Shales says biggest dud is the "Not So Great Moments In Sports" shown 432 times a day on every station in the universe. "Commercials endorse modes of behavior. Children see these ads constantly.... America is about to produce her first true jerk generation." (The old question again: can media motivate behavior? In this case, where it's just play-acting & not central to living, the answer is probably yes.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

If Finance Is Such A Hot PR Topic why does PRSA keep cancelling its Investor Rels Seminar due to lack of interest? It was moved from October to January to February. "I'm really disappointed," says organizer Dave Rosenstein. "We offered a superb conference at a great price. The first time we had to cancel we were discouraged, but voted it was too good to give up on. We prepared bigger mailings, more promotions -- they didn't work, obviously." Rosenstein surmises response would have been better had he booked a lot of famous names, but some of the most important names & themes on Wall Street today are not commonplace. Example: Marsha Parker, ed, Pensions & Investment Age, was to lead a discussion on Institutional Activism. Rosenstein thinks not enough people were familiar with the name or the topic. "Next time, we'll have to impress upon our members how important this area is. And Ms. Parker is certainly an expert in this niche."

Medley of Promo Ideas in a Box of Tissue. Ribbon of paper inserted between tissues near the bottom of the box says: "Scotties lasts longer. If you had been using Puffs, Kleenex, or Softique, your box would now be empty." Employees from Scottie plant in Fort Edward NY personalize the message by signing the ribbon. Box also features: "Scott Paper Learning Tools For Schools" seal -- by collecting enough you can help your school earn free educational equipment. There's an 800 number for questions & comments.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ORDAINED. Barbara C. Harris became first female bishop of the worldwide Anglican (Episcopal) Church on 2/11 in Boston. A longtime pr professional -- formerly with Sun Oil -- she served on several PRSA committees into the '80s.

DIED. Leon Festinger, on 2/11 in New York. He developed the theory of cognitive dissonance, which occurs when 2 perceptions that are relevant to each other conflict, forcing the individual to begin reevaluating his or her decision.

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RELIGION IN THE WORKPLACE MAY BE DANGEROUS HIDDEN AGENDA:
EXPERTS SAY FUNDAMENTALISM SABOTAGES PRODUCTIVITY & INCENTIVE
WHILE NEW AGE TRAINING ERODES LEADERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY

Today's workplace yields additional evidence people are hungry for values. Materialistic, impersonal eras spawn a search for humanizing balance. As a result, well-managed organizations know they must establish good pr values, caring for employees & community. But some, like Dudley Lynch of Brain Technologies (Fort Collins, Colo), worry that looking for a silver bullet to build commitment, or applying over-zealous personal beliefs -- of top managers as well as entry-level employees -- can jaundice the workforce by causing collision of value systems.

"Certain belief structures have their place and can be very useful," Lynch told prr, "but when applied in the extreme they're detrimental," especially:

A. Fundamentalism: Christian, Muslim, Zen etc. Individuals are fatalistic, feel the future is predestined, totally in divine hands. Their actions won't help them to win, so the best they can do is avoid losing. This leads to structured hierarchy -- everyone has & knows their place. Training, mgmt methods which originated in the Industrial Age (Henry Ford was a master) were successful in the past, but in a global economy & high-tech world, they lose effectiveness. Left out are participation & the means to equip org'ns for an age of rapid change. Spawns:

1. The uncompromising shark who's going to lick everyone else before they lick him -- "I intend to get as much as I can no matter what";
2. The martyr-like carp who doesn't see that her own needs are met or usually sacrifices himself.

Both reject responsibility. They manipulate, control, impede progress, are sabotage-oriented.

Does religious conflict threaten your organization? How would you know? It has always been verboten to pry into this area of people's lives, but surely a strong belief system contrary to your organization's philosophy could impact productivity & morale. And are your training methods or mgmt practices tinged with religion & bothering certain employees? Lynch, who counsels Fortune 1000 companies, educational institutions & gov't agencies, says the problem is out there in a big way. Whether overt or hidden, it undermines goals, subverts loyalty & ruins camaraderie.



B. New Age philosophies say everyone can win, just "go with the flow" of the benevolent universe; anything can be changed thru behavioral quick-fixes. "The belief in a benign universe leads to a shirking of responsibility." Richard Bendler, co-founder of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, says it's the duty of your unconscious mind to keep unpleasantries from your conscious mind. Breeds wounded pseudo-enlightened carps who believe behavior can be transformed with quick fixes. Sharks have buffeted them about, so back to carp-like dynamics -- need to be a victim. Best described by what they're against:

1. Materialism: they escape thru drugs, seances, channeling, metaphysics, spiritual therapies, etc.
2. Masculinity: "Gov't and testosterone are an unholy, lethal combination."
3. Structure & Time Constraints: set limits, which they don't accept.
4. Technology: can disrupt "flow" of positive universal energy.
5. Authority: to accept the view that this is a requisite for organizing society is to be forced to accept evil as a reality.

"Their training & mgmt techniques make the workplace a spa for wounded psyches. Their healing strategy is: 'You're okay, all you need do is release your personal power & get into the flow of universal energy -- everyone will win.'"

"Hundreds Of Thousands Are Being Spent On These Types Of Training"

Says Russ Wise, Probe Ministries (Richardson, Tex): "Corporations are paying for their own destruction."

While touting self-improvement, some New Age methods:

¶Sell a belief system. Lynch says they trap people into buying a philosophy, an ethic. Richard Watring, pers dir, Budget-Rent-A-Car (Chi) told Training Mag: "Corporations shouldn't attempt to change basic belief systems of employees, or promote techniques that accelerate such change. Spiritual growth is important, but they shouldn't prescribe the method." St. Paul OD consultant John Cowan agrees the trend is troubling, morally & legally: "I have a right to talk to employees about job-related behavior, but what goes on in their heads is none of my business."

¶Manipulate. NLP, est, Lifespring, Dianetics, Scientology, mysticism, Silva, suggestology & guided imagery use mind control. They set out to align employees with corporate goals, enhance creativity with stress mgmt, mediation, visualization. Good if applied positively, but too often used to control others' behavior.

When Management's Methods Are At Odds With Employees' Belief Systems

Watring says rapid spread of "psycho-technologies" are leading to lawsuits based on religious discrimination,

psychological damage. A Tacoma man sued Walker Chevrolet, which fired him for refusing to participate in a New Age training program. On the other end of the spectrum, Louis Pelvas sued his employer, Townley Mfg (Eloy, Ariz) for forcing employees to attend daily assemblies which feature a Christian message, singing & prayers. "He didn't have to participate," J.O. Townley told prr. "We told him

he could read the newspaper or sleep. He'd still get paid worktime." Townley says Pelvas filed suit after he found out his division was moving & he'd have to relocate. But should mgmt have religious rights? Tho Townley changed company policy to excuse dissenters from devotionals, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is still in court trying to prohibit them. "Now they want to violate my rights to conduct my business according to the dictates of my Christian conscience."

Carla Pennington, nat'l producer, Evening Magazine (LA), studied the situation for a program segment: "The problem is fairly widespread. We spoke with a psychiatrist who has 12-14 patients with mental problems stemming from these techniques. Most are suing their employers." She told prr that Pacific Bell was investigated by the Public Utilities Commission for its use of the Krone technique. "They spent over \$40 million on this. The employees we talked with said they hated it, but were afraid they'd lose their jobs if they complained. 'They're trying to make us think differently, talk differently,' they told us. 'We wouldn't go to these seminars in our private life, why should they be forced on us at work?'"

YUPPIES MAY BE DISAPPEARING BUT THEIR MATERIALISTIC MINDSET LIVES ON

Gearing appeals & messages to social groupings gets more confusing. 3 new considerations:

¶Upcoming Generation Cares Most About Money. So finds a Gallup poll of Canadian 15-24 yr olds. While bucks top the list, bucking the system is at the bottom, as is changing the world. "They're into success, a combination of flying 1st class and enjoying good relationships," says Toronto sociologist Donald Posterski. Tho confident about their intelligence, most rank it 8th on a list of 12 attributes needed to get what they want out of life. Concerning social issues, they're worried first about sexual assault and last about nuclear war. They're disenchanted with religion & politics, but believe in God & community involvement. 90% view employment a right, but they want lots of time for leisure. "Excessive individualism is going to cost us," Posterski warns.

¶But Utilitarianism is the Trend for Marketers, Practitioners to watch. According to ResearchAlert newsletter, Americans are abandoning the extravagant lifestyle typified by yuppies & are celebrating: 1) durability, 2) quality, 3) usefulness -- the selling tools of tomorrow. "Americans are already grasping items they perceive useful...jeep & truck sales are soaring. Soon clothes & furniture will appeal to consumers because of practicality & sturdiness." Notice also plummeting ratings for Dynasty, Dallas -- who actually lives like that? The "Reagan Pig Out" is over. RA says marketers should highlight prudence even when targeting the affluent sector: stress wise investments.

¶TV May Spawn A Generation Of Jerks. That's what Tom Shales, Washington Post Writers Group predicts. He says people in commercials have always acted like jerks, but now we have Jerk-As-Role-Model -- "the real cool dude who behaves in