

Newspaper Cautions Artists About Hiring PR Firms. A column in the Christian Science Monitor says that, bogged down by the business of promoting their work, many artists are turning to pr firms for help. "There are just not enough hours in the day to do everything," says LA painter Edward Ruscha, who hired Livet Reichard Co (NYC) to promote his work. "If I had to do all the art business stuff, I wouldn't be able to create as much art." According to article, pr develops bios, portfolios, press kits, glossies and provides the artist with press contacts. But "the price for this help is not cheap...from \$45-\$150 an hour, and their work can be time consuming." Also notes that results are not guaranteed & cautions that being a small account in a large firm may mean receiving minimal attention.

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

New Annual Report Technique is introduced by Reynolds Metals (Richmond, Va). Aluminum maker's 1988 AR cover is a holograph that looks like aluminum. A first, it is made with sophisticated techniques involving lasers & precise optical instruments, film & paper lamination. "It punctuates our outstanding results in '88, showcases our abilities as a premier packaging company & symbolizes our emphasis on quality & technology," says CEO William Bourke.

Several States May Change Fundraising Laws following Supreme Court ruling that struck down as unconstitutional several aspects of a North Carolina law: requiring that solicitors, when asking for donations, disclose percentage of funds which actually go to charity; limiting percent of funds that may be kept by solicitor; licensing for professional solicitors. Ruling capped 4 year struggle against state regulators by nonprofits, who say having to disclose a lengthy set of percentages to potential donors hampers appeals & is a violation of free speech. Also, the provisions were too broad; smaller or newer or unpopular charities were more likely to utilize the svcs of paid solicitors & were therefore hardest hit. At least 16 states will seek change in similar solicitation laws. According to Giving USA Update, officials predict decision may backfire on nonprofits as fundraising frauds continue to receive public attention, could lead to decrease in donations.

Canadian Practitioners May Be Defined "Lobbyists" when new Lobbyist Registration Act goes into effect, according to CFRS Communique. Henri Denolf, Consumer & Corporate Affairs Canada, says officials & courts will eventually clarify specifics of the law, but until then, practitioners had better familiarize themselves with the terms of the Act. It defines as lobbying any communication with public office holders which aims to influence their decisions. Communique says it seems most pr activity within the framework of gov't relations will require registration. Several states and other provinces have considered this approach, may be encouraged now to try again.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AWARDS. IABC announces its top award winners: Rae Leaper (exec ed, shareholder comn, Chevron, SF) & Donn Silvis (owner/pres, Silvis Comn, Cerritos, Calif) receive Fellow Award for outstanding contribution to profession & IABC; John Johnson (publisher, chrm & CEO, Johnson Publishing Co, Chi, & chrm/CEO,

Supreme Life Insurance Co) named EXCEL award winner, given to a non-mbr who, along with his org'n, reflects support of pr principles & practices; Sharon Berzok (Star Comms, Stamford, Ct) is honored posthumously with Chairman's Award for her time & talent given to IABC at an international level.

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IS "THE INFORMATION AGE" TURNING INTO BE "THE NON-COMMUNICATION ERA?" PRACTITIONER DISSECTS PROBLEM, WE OFFER SOME POINTS TOWARD A SOLUTION

To call the 80s a time of non-communication seems ludicrous when messages proliferate in every medium, from matchbooks to fax machines (pr 10/10/88). But communication requires a receiver as well as a sender, and longtime observer-commentator Bob Clay, Clay Comn (Lake Forest, Calif) concludes messages are not getting thru. "People are being inundated and a lot of them have turned off," Clay told pr. "They just want pictures, brochures, not words or information.

One symbolic example: "An increasing number of tv ads don't even describe products. They feature music, show people dancing, walking on the beach, whatever. It's not until the end that you find out whether you're watching a commercial for beer, jeans, or a car."

Besides the message glut, social conditions contribute to non-communication: a) people are densely packed together, causing them to tune out; b) instant gratification gives way to self centeredness; c) people live from weekend to weekend. These produce mindsets which pose special problems for practitioners, marketeers, communicators:

1. Non-thinkers: do anything to avoid being left alone to think. Diet consists of movies, music, tv, sports. They don't think on the job, where they can't absorb what they hear, can't anticipate situations, don't reach conclusions.
2. Non-talkers: not silent, but full of insubstantial verbiage. Talk in cliches & hollow phrases. Talk is cheap, don't expect meaningful responses from them.
3. Non-listeners: are so intent upon making it big that they try to do 2 or 3 things at once. Good luck trying to get thru to them.
4. Non-readers: Intelligent, but never touch a book. Look at tv, magazines for the pictures. They want brochures, ads with all pictures, few words.

The last presidential election illustrates the phenomenon. "The candidates made a deliberate effort to say nothing. The major issues were studiously avoided. Our nation faces several extremely threatening problems, but you would never know it. All we heard was trivia. Rather than trying to win the election, the candidates wanted to make sure they didn't lose it. If you think about it, the 'let's not confuse them with the facts' mentality pervades America today."



Some Things We Can Do About It:

A. Spoon feed your audience info in easily digested bites. Lead them by the hand, step by step, always making sure that your presentation & language are interesting & unmistakably clear.

B. Personalize everything. Even simple newsreleases. PR Data Systems says its research finds that localizing material for media -- such as identifying the local dealer, his address, ascribing quotes to him -- improves placement 300-500%.

Many nonprofits now reply to inquiries or respond to donations with handwritten letters from staff or volunteers -- who identify themselves as such. One school has teachers respond.

C. Go beyond creativity. You cannot build relationships thru creativity. Any relationship that begins because of your creative approach will probably end up not being a relationship at all -- because the other party expects you to be an entertainer, constantly providing an injection of creativity. Of course, creativity can capture initial attention. But simple, human relationship building on a down-to-earth level must complete the cycle. The longer creativity remains at the core of the union, the less it will be a true relationship.

This is why public relations to be practiced consistently must be a science, not an art. Art may embellish & enhance, but what's needed is process management. As Kipling said, "99% perspiration, 1% inspiration."

D. Substitute personalized, participative vehicles for mass communications. There is no more mass audience. Open houses, advisory committees, computer-tracked opinion leader lists, meetings & conferences, user groups, etc. actually reach -- thru networking -- more people today than the old mass vehicles. And they are many times more persuasive & believable.

"The problem with pr is that most business people don't understand what it is and does. They still think of it as publicity & promotion. Practitioners should be standing on street corners preaching pr, or at least hold free seminars to teach business leaders and entrepreneurs what pr can do for them and for society in general."

SINCE CELEBRITIES CAN BACKFIRE, STAY ON THE SAFE SIDE BY USING ANIMALS, CARTOONS

Hiring celebrities to promote products and organizations can result in embarrassing & unprofitable situations. Pepsi learned the hard way: First it got Robin Givens & Mike

Tyson to hawk its product; then the pair got entangled in a nasty, very public divorce. Now its in a pickle again, as Madonna's "ungodly" video features the same music as its new spot campaign (pr 3/20). They aren't alone. As Business Week points out, "The Beef Council didn't think Cybill Shepherd was a hamburger helper when she admitted she shunned red meat."

In search of wholesome, thoroughly trustworthy symbols, some are turning to animals & cartoon characters:

¶Spuds MacKenzie has proven reliable & cooperative sponsor for Bud Light. He keeps his mouth shut off the set and doesn't conduct himself in a way that would embarrass the company;

¶Now Miller Lite beer is planning a campaign that features not 1 animal, but 3 -- a monkey, an elephant and a lion;

¶Betty Boop promotes Hershey's chocolates;

¶Solo detergent features Olive Oyl;

¶Metropolitan Life employs the Peanuts gang.

¶Or create your own celeb as General Mills has done with Betty Crocker -- she'll do whatever they ask of her!

Practitioners should remain cautious, however. Note how many of these are symbols created for children, now used to attract adults. And animals may not be so wholesome after all. As columnist Mike Royko notes: "Monkeys are the creeps of the animal world. Talk about obscene gestures, disgraceful conduct and lewd behavior...." As for cartoons, Olive & Popeye were not married, and their creator never explained how they got Sweetpea.

LAMPOONING PR REMAINS FADDISH AMONG JOURNALISTS; ONE PRACTITIONER RESPONDS; BUT DO WE ASK FOR IT?

A Boston Globe columnist painted a tacky picture -- complete with red Jaguars &

"power breakfasts" -- of a practitioner, namely George Regan of Regan Comm (Boston). Jim Joyal of the Sterling Hagar firm (Cambridge) responds: "Beating up on the pr industry is becoming a trend.... If it's such a simple, non-cerebral, no-brainer kind of job that carries with it undeserved fame & fortune, power & perks, why is it that so many of your journalistic colleagues end up in our line of work? I guess if you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

"It's really getting to be too much," Joyal told prr. "The papers are always full of happy horse manure about pr. In this case, the columnist contacted Regan & said he wanted to do a 'day in the life of a pr person' feature. Regan picked him up in a limo, tried to show him a good time, took him to a nice restaurant, lined up some interesting clients. What he got in return was an article making fun of his car, his car phone, his strategy sessions, basically saying that he & his profession are all show & no blow."

In his letter to the Globe, Joyal noted: "PR people get involved in things like Tylenol refund programs & influencing legislators to pass laws that require tamper proof, safety sealed caps. They reveal info about unsafe nuclear power plants and raise funds for org's like Save the Children & the AIDS Action Committee. And they provide people like you with enough press kits, company bios & story ideas to make your life run on automatic pilot."

Could it be we should go back to making the idea, product, service, organization, or cause the centerpiece -- and stop paying obscene rates to celebs whose main interest is building their status?

Speaking of strategy: It appears Regan played right into the hands of his tormentor. By using a limo, having a posh lunch, etc., didn't he reinforce the perceptions? See Dear Abby's March 6 column; or Scotty Reston's February 8 blast suggesting "cutting the federal pr budget in half." (Ask prr for copies if you missed them.) Most pr folks are more apt to be found in their old gas buggies, and eating a brown bag lunch or standup meal before the next task -- in an ever-rushed day serving clients/employer needs.