

"Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to know what's going on knows what he does is morally indefensible. He is a kind of confidence man, preying on people's vanity... loneliness... gaining their trust and then betraying them without remorse." Source? PR person just zonked by the media? Nope. New Yorker writer Janet Malcolm, herself the subject of legal complaint alleging deception.

IF FUND RAISING IS YOUR JOB OR VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT...

Prepare to become an interpersonal communications expert. One-on-one & personal net-working, house meetings & personal telephone

trees are about the only means left to reach donors. Everyone's mailbox is overfilled, 60-75% with fundraising letters. Households are rushing to un-listed phones, tired of both automated & personal (but from strangers) pitch calls. Events still work on occasion -- but must be blockbusters or annual, established affairs. Folks are tiring of being strong-armed for tickets, also. Media has lost punch except for reminder value -- but was rarely intended to pull checks anyway.

If mail, phone, media & events aren't working, what's left is to build a smaller but intensely committed list -- and motivate them to widen the circle. The real cruncher is pulling new loyalists as old ones die, move or lose interest. Add to this the fact that Big Issues, when they explode -- as pro-life/pro-choice is now -- siphon off a healthy percentage of once-discretionary contributions, and you're left with an arena ripe for new techniques. (If something's working for you, please share it with pr readers.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ New Edition of PRSA Bibliography Keeps Up With Latest In PR Literature.

It views all new field-related publications, lists authors, publishers & costs. Categories include general, special interest (e.g. real estate, religion, police/fire depts, etc.) directories & periodicals. (\$10 for members, \$18 non-members, from Prof'l Svcs dept, 33 Irving Place, NY 10003; 212/995-2230)

¶ Fax Paper Famine Likely in the next 2 years, predicts Int'l Resource Development, Inc (New Canaan, Ct) in Futurist. Consumption of thermal coated paper is growing faster than available manufacturing capacity -- sharp price rises & spot shortages will result. Also look for sky rocketing prices for toner & plain paper used for fax.

¶ "Integrating PR & PA Resources," conference by Public Affairs Council in Nov., attempts to bridge gap organizations sometimes place between these two aspects of the field. Practitioners who specialize don't help, notes Howard Chase in a recent speech, holding "hostility, even contempt" for one another. Even PAC makes a distinction many will dispute. Pres Ray Hoewing contrasts "the public affairs expert (read, public policy mgr) & the public relations expert (read, mgr of external & internal comms)..." But he urges both to "function as a team & synergistically use the incredible arsenal of tools & resources available." That will be conference theme. (Info from PAC at 202/872-1790)

WILL PUBLIC RELATIONS & HUMAN RESOURCES CLASH IN THE 90s? SURVEY FINDS TRUST IN MANAGEMENT TRANSLATES INTO QUALITY; WHOSE JOB -- OR BOTH -- IS IT TO BUILD TRUST IN MANAGEMENT?

A looming PR-HR fight could be to the 90s what the Marketing-PR war was in the 80s, predicts counselor Stacey Smith in a presentation prepared for PRSA's October conference. The employee public is No. 1 everywhere -- not just for importance to achieving organizational goals, but also as the prime public relations medium. But which dep't is responsible for what? Case:

In a survey by Wilmot Assoc (San Diego), 37 of 40 hospital HR execs claim trust of management determines how employees:

- a) view their jobs;
- b) commit to the organization;
- c) strive for quality.

Dick Wilmot spent 32 years at GM, says sentiment is universal -- not special to healthcare. "This perception is common across all disciplines," he told pr. "In this era of unpredictability, mergers & acquisitions, downsizing -- it's an even more critical issue. Employees need to trust sr mgmt with their workplace futures."

Query: Who is responsible for building trust in management?

Wilmot sees issue boiling down to 6 communication needs:

1. Openness. "If there is bad news, the employees may not like it, but they can take it." Mgmt must divulge plans, e.g. downsizing, in a timely fashion, explaining the "why" behind the decisions. Communication is crucial even if mgmt is in the dark -- otherwise, employees suspect secrecy, conspiracy;
2. Shared Values. Mgmt must share its vision with everyone from van drivers to brain surgeons, encourage employees to offer theirs. In healthcare, especially, a dichotomy exists -- employees perceive themselves as healers, mgmt looks at numbers, the bottom line;

Sr execs must heed 3 essential messages from employees:
a) they expect a trade-off for their commitment; b) they accept management's agenda, but their own comes first (so there must be negotiation of priorities); c) trust is key -- and it must start with initiatives from the top.

- 3. Consistency Of Words & Actions. Slide shows on team spirit, camaraderie & goals will be seen as lip service if mgmt meanwhile isolates employees, offers them no real concept of the future, ignores their suggestions, lays them off without warning;
- 4. Appreciation. Mgmt must reward, show appreciation for employees' commitment to the organization;
- 5. Feedback. Sr mgmt must solicit & consider employees' input, allow them to speak out with impunity. Often, trouble stems from execs believing theirs is the only workable way;
- 6. Autonomy. Employees must have respect, be allowed to work independently without mgmt breathing down their necks. "Empower the employee" -- HR buzzwords of the 80s -- must be put into action.

How Is Quality Affected? Wilmot calls it the "Trust Triangle." When the base starts to crumble, quality slips (pr 6/10/85).



Note To Health-Care Practitioners According to survey, health-care is plagued by other "people" problems. Short-ages, in particular, create an ever-changing sea of faces, hinder cohesiveness. Technicians, who are in great demand, tend to be more loyal to their profession & less to their employer, resist the management vision. But overwhelmingly, the HR execs say lack of communication from the top, and eroding trust from the lower levels, constitute the biggest challenges.

HOW CAN PRACTITIONERS PREPARE TO DEAL WITH HR? First, understand how close its aspirations are to those of pr. When the hr professional ass'n announced a name change (last week's issue) they offered this reason:

"No longer is 'personnel' a safe place to put people who can't contribute to an organization's success, but who have been around too long to fire & are too young to retire. Instead, human resources mgmt is a profession, and we want our Society to reflect this important shift?"

Sound familiar? Smith is among those who feel learning OD (organization development) techniques is the best positioning. Ideally this allows practitioners to talk with hr folks in their own language -- and will lead to cooperation rather than destructive turf wars. Alternatively, if you're stuck with an old-school personnel unit, OD empowers you to get the job done without their assistance.

To Read Up: 1) best overview book on OD, she thinks, is Organization Development: A Normative View, by Warner Burke (Addison-Wesley '87). He was principal speaker at the final PRSA Institute, back in 81, and understands pr. 2) prr has run much on OD. Ask for copies or check your index. 3) July Employee Services Mgmt mag has article, "HR/PR, The Perfect Fit". Copy from prr.

"YUPPIES" A FALSE DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORY? THEIR CLOUT MAY HAVE BEEN EXAGGERATED At this year's IABC conference in New Orleans, Faith Popcorn predicted a proliferation of small luxuries: "No longer able to afford big necessities like houses, people are settling for chocolates, flowers, champagne, stuffed bears, shorter vacations, home nail treatments, fancy bikes."

Her words reflect a growing awareness that "yuppies" are not so upwardly mobile after all. Indeed, they may be better classified as "weps" -- "without economic promise." A credit card, condo & leased BMW are not signs of affluence. And don't be fooled by the pate & soda crackers. These petty indulgences provide boomers a small degree of comfort. They're not as well off as their parents, who as they age, continue to have the tightest grip on this hemisphere's purse strings (pr 8/15/88), but at least they have more taste!

Boomers' parents were home-owners, living comfortably on one income. Now Dinks (dual income, no kids) usually rent apartments -- but own nice cars. How was trend set in motion? How can it be reversed? According to financial seers, things will get worse before they get better. But practitioners will want to take heed of how the huge Yuppie public reacts.

Katy Butler, baby boomer, in Mother Jones: "The newspapers were full of stories about yuppies & blackened redfish & new restaurants. The cognitive dissonance hurt my head: Was I the only one who felt like a failure? Was it only my friends who were in trouble?" She notes that boomers, raised in affluence & pumped full of rhetoric about being the "biggest & the best educated generation in history," have become the first downwardly mobile generation since WWII.

PROF SCOPES JOURNALISTS SELF-PORTRAYAL IN FICTION Journalism prof Steve Weinberg, U Missouri, (Columbia), says popular fiction perpetuates misperception that journalists lead dangerous, adventurous lives, that they're always key players in murders. "In real life, journalists are rarely heroes or villains. In fiction, they're rarely anything else." Many stories feature scoops who "solve more murders in a chapter than real reporters solve in their combined lifetimes."

Weinberg has made a hobby of studying 20th century journalism novels, says journalists use fiction to fantasize about themselves as ace reporters. In truth, their daily routine is monotonous -- long hours, deadlines, autocratic editors & puny salaries (pr 1/16).

A Bitter Bunch They don't even seem to like each other. They won't trust one another with quotes (pr 5/8), employ sardonic prose to describe peers.