

90s EXEC WILL LOOK TO PUBLIC RELATIONS PRO AS CLOSEST ADVISOR-SUPPORTER

Everyone including your editor has been predicting brave new managerial styles -- dictated by changes in a) organizational, b) workplace & worker, & c) stakeholder

demands. New books talk about managing chaos, civil liberties coming inside the organization, computer commuters & more.

Put it all together and out comes a clear picture that relationship-building & communication abilities will single out the effective exec. The opportunity for public relations can be nirvana...if practitioners have a clear enough picture of this new style to train their bosses & clients in carrying it out. (They weren't taught anything about it in business school!)

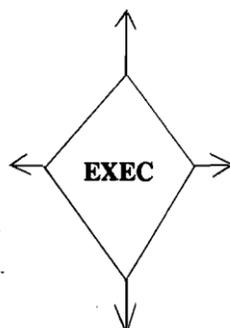
¶ Being responsive to reasonable demands is left to marketing (products or services) and public relations (policies).

¶ The required skills are vision, trust and shared values, and conflict management -- all areas where the public relations Body of Knowledge is primary source.

TODAY'S EFFECTIVE EXECUTIVE

*Be a leader, i.e., provide vision

Manage conflict externally by advocating with key publics when it is not possible to respond to their needs or demands.



Manage conflict within organization among constructive & creative people.

Help people of the organization build mutual trust based on set of shared values.

ITEM OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ To Clarify Something In Last Week's Lead Article... According to Jerry Dalton, LTV televises its corporate video report because government contracts won't allow the company to show videos in-house. That seemed curious, so we contacted Dalton for further clarification. It turns out that when employees are working on government projects, their time is charged to that project. The government won't pay for them to attend company-wide gatherings.

TODAY'S YOUTH OUT OF TOUCH WITH PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LACKING IN SENSE OF CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, STUDY FINDS; IMPLICATIONS HUGE FOR PR, BUT SO ARE OPPORTUNITIES

It's time to sound the alarm about the growing "disconnectedness" of young people, claims People for the American Way (DC). According to its study, "Democracy's Next Generation," youth participation in civic issues has slid steadily downward since '72, when 18-yr olds were given the right to vote. Commitment is at an all-time low. Apathy is higher than ever.

Tots of today determine public policies of tomorrow. If predictions are accurate & trend continues, practitioners involved in public affairs, lobbying & grassroots campaigns can expect weighty ramifications.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY Study by Peter Hart Assocs was divided into 4 components: 1) nationwide 25-minute phone interviews with 1,006 randomly selected youths in 316 locations; 2) in-depth interviews with another group of 100 youth; 3) phone survey of 405 social studies teachers; 4) focus groups with teachers in Providence & Kansas City.

FINDINGS Young people & teachers agree today's youth is much less involved in public affairs than youth of years past. Specifically:

1. Freedom's meaning only half-absorbed. Young people cherish America's liberties but have no concept of what it takes to preserve them. They see the benefits, but don't consider the responsibilities. Most equate being a good citizen with being a good person -- law abiding -- but few consider proactive duties, e.g. being involved in or informed about public affairs or even voting.
2. Uninvolved, uninterested in public life. They're caught up in personal agenda of career, family, individual happiness. Only 16% report a "great deal" of interest in current events.
3. No one to inspire them. Institutions which should instill a sense of citizenship let them down -- parents who are themselves too busy to set examples, schools which fail to encourage or facilitate involvement, government & other leaders who set poor examples, turn kids off.
4. Well-intentioned. Overwhelmingly, young people claim they are "likely" to help an elderly neighbor or work an hour a week on a community project. And by 58% to 38% they reject the notion that "people should care for themselves." Most support idea of community service.

WHAT CAN BE DONE? Community relations programs can prepare young people for active citizenship, win organizational/brand loyalty at this crucial & impressionable time in their lives. Themes might be:

- a) understanding that freedoms carry responsibility;
- b) voter registration & awareness of how to exercise this right;
- c) participative service projects, perhaps as a school requirement;
- d) exciting, community-based training to make youth well informed about how democracy works (possibly on the widely-used model of Nat'l Ass'n of Community Leadership Organizations; see prr 6/25/84.)

OTHER SUGGESTIONS 1. Support intensive, one-on-one recruitment of youth as community service volunteers. Ideal for NPOs which need them, good way for corporations to team with NPOs. (Both teachers & youth stressed need for this. See prr 6/11/84 for one model used by Toronto Dominion Bank.)

Strategy: This builds on natural link between community & nat'l affairs. Most youth feel connected to their community. It may be easier to promote community involvement rather than political participation. But evidence abounds that volunteerism leads to political activism.

A number of teachers feel high school students are selfish & spoiled. Some comments: "My kids are going to look at community involvement and say, 'That's not going to buy me a Gucci shirt. What's in it for me?'" ; "They want something for nothing"; "instant gratification." A number feel parents are responsible for children's tendency to seek material rewards.

- 2. Design & sponsor hands-on forms of political participation such as mock elections, internships in political world, etc. Ideal for banks, utilities, others which serve the whole community -- but could work for a car dealer or hospital.
- 3. Sponsor teacher participation. Since they don't see themselves as part of the problem, they may balk at bearing disproportionate share of burden. For once, don't ask them to add one more extra-curricular assignment -- provide stipends, project funds, other rewards.

Place to Start Right Away...

Teens Are The Forgotten Troops In Earth Day Efforts, asserts Youth News Service. "Teens themselves appear to be doing little in preparation.... 20 years ago, they were among the leaders of the first Earth Day." Problem is tho there are programs for them on a regional level, there is no national direction for them to key into. Nat'l hq (Stanford) concedes there are no activities which mobilize teens as a group. "The national office is not here to organize the youth," says coord Abby Ruskey. She concedes program is like much of society in its tendency to ignore teens as serious participants. (Does youth's apathy stem from our inability to motivate them?)

PUBLIC OPINION POLL: MANAGEMENT GAINS FAVOR WHILE UNIONS GET MIXED REVIEWS People now hold management in higher regard than unions, finds an AP-Media General poll. Nationwide sample of 1,163 adults indicates many perceive unions as weakening -- and the plurality (33%) feel they should be weaker. This is a critical finding as labor organizations move into education, hospitals, gov't.

MANAGEMENT SEEN AS BENEVOLENT Meanwhile, management scores points. 64% of respondents have positive perception of management. 47% vs. 37% are unwilling to join a union. 7 in 10 favor "right-to-work" laws which ban mandatory union membership.

ONE GOOD SIGN FOR UNIONS Despite the perception of unions as weakening, 49% (vs. 31%) believe workers are better off with a union than without. (Not surprisingly, managerial employees say workers are better off non-unionized -- but by a surprisingly slim margin, 47% to 36%.) 44% view unions favorably, vs. 38% unfavorably. Youthful respondents, 18-29, are most likely to favor unions -- which may indicate unions have a viable future.

Consider Case At Coors: After one of the longest strike-boycotts, when unions approached workers to organize, company countered with meetings, articles, information pieces. "Our strategy was not to attack the unions, but to show employees they could trust the company," says vp-pa "Swede" Johnson. "Unions only promise things to come" -- whereas a well-run organization can highlight what already is. Result: 72% of employees favored company's position. "The best defense is a well-established bond of trust between the company & its people. Management credibility -- which means sharing bad news as well as good -- should be rock solid."

HOW PEOPLE RATE THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS NOW *

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	DK/NA
Overall	35%	46%	15%	3%	1%
Safety	41	46	10	3	-
Health Benefits	27	34	15	15	8
Pension Benefits	20	26	16	25	14
Time Off	32	37	15	11	5
Salary**	15	45	27	10	2

* Base for question is 812 people, 120 of which belong to unions (slightly overrepresents union membership in society).

** See prr 3/12/90 suggesting wages are again a motivating factor.