

NAMING TRENDS ARE AWAY FROM THE GOLD AND TOWARD THE GREEN

Organizations bought heavily into the gold theme during the past decade, as evidenced by the 3,819 US trademarks with "gold" as a prefix. "They are losing their glitter and leaving a metallic taste in the mouths of the consumers," says Naseem Javed, pres, Name Bank International (NYC). "The truly elite are now embracing platinum credit cards & services to distinguish themselves."

"ECO"MANIA But even more popular are names which sport an environmental theme:

1. "Green" is now a prefix in 1,357 US trademarks;
2. "Eco" in 1,148;
3. "Enviro" in 586.

"You can stroll thru the park with an Ecosac in which to put litter, place leaves by the curb in an Ecobag, use Ecochoice or Ecobella bodycare products. At the supermarket, choose green products while using the green-line at the stockmarket."

"You could get Goldseal Service at the Golden Nugget Casino with your Gold Card from AmEx, MC, or Visa," notes Javed. "You could start your car with a Goldkey, fill up with Shell Gold or Sunoco Gold gas, and enjoy special perks flying as a Goldclub member, secure that your Golddome bank account would cover it."

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

- ¶ **FCC May Allow More Local Regulation Of Cable TV Rates.** Consumers complain prices are up more than triple the inflation rate while service standards are way down. Proposed reg aims for consumer protection by making it easier for cities & counties to control prices. Final draft of the proposal will be open for public comment until about March 30. For copies, request "Proposed Rulemaking Docket MM 90-4" in writing from ITS Copy Service, 2100 M Street NW, Suite 140, Washington, D.C. 20037.
- ¶ **Perception Isn't Always Reality.** What US city has the highest homicide rate per 100,000? If you say NYC, you are wrong. The answer is DC, followed by Detroit, Atlanta, New Orleans, Richmond, & Inglewood, Calif, according to FBI's Uniform Crime Report. NYC & LA don't make the top 25.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. Kenneth Youel, 89, retired pr official of GM & past pres PRSA. A founding member of PRSA, he received the Gold Anvil Award in 1964.
George Eisenhuth, 68, sr consultant & former exec vp Selz, Seabolt & Assocs (Chi). He was active in the field for 40 years.

HONORS. Joan Capelin, pres Capelin Communications (NYC), received "Consummate Communicator," highest honor from Society for Marketing Prof'l Svcs.

WHAT TO DO WHEN AN INDUSTRY SEEN AS A BULWARK BECOMES RIDDLED WITH CLOSURES & RUMORS OF FRAGILITY? AS BANKING FLOUNDERS, INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS STRIVE TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC TRUST

Once considered a bastion of stability, banking now suffers from public suspicion. What are individual institutions doing to keep customer confidence? pr asked several bank practitioners how they are regaining and maintaining the trust of their publics. In today's economic uncertainty, their answers are valuable to practitioners in all industries.

RON REODY, BANK OF AMERICA "We are running counter to the rest of the industry, so our strategy is to differentiate ourselves. We are expanding -- the most profitable bank in the country. We have a very aggressive program of singling out our strengths to: a) media; b) key groups & opinion leaders. There are excellent opportunities for banking right now. Many fears are misplaced. The industry has many problems, but as a whole it's basically sound. Bankers must work on changing unrealistic regulations."

COY HOBBS, BANK OF OKLAHOMA "We are on the back end of what New England banks are going thru right now." Farm failures & oil's decline had rocked his region. B of O sought FDIC help to stay afloat. "We were on the 10 o'clock news every night!" His advice, after having lived thru it:

1. **Communication.** "Be the first to tell the customers, employees, all your publics what is happening with frequent & open communication. We had 1200 employees. We didn't want them running around saying, 'Gosh, I don't know. Nobody told me.' We made sure they were informed about what we had failed to do, how we were trying to rectify the situation. Send customer mailings or make phone calls. If you lose customer confidence, you've lost the business."
2. **One Clear Voice.** "Have a brainstorming session of every conceivable question that could be asked and think of what to say in response."
3. **Conduct research.** "We made public opinion surveys on a regular basis to keep a pulse on how we were perceived."

FRASER SEITEL, CHASE MANHATTAN CB recently let go 5,000 employees & reported a loss of \$600 million in one quarter. "Our management decided this wasn't the time to hide but rather to face up to the reality of the situation. We were quite public about our situation and



made ourselves available to Fortune, Wall Street Journal, etc. when they came to interview." Seitel also recommends openness & candor with personnel. "You can't fool an employee -- you really must be straight with them." Also:

1. **Be consistent.** "Don't open the door one day & close it the next."
2. **Personalize.** "Our new CEO met face to face with employees & customers about what was going on."
3. **"Survey** the public regularly to make sure your message is getting thru."

CONNIE HUBBELL Despite the closure of competitor Bank of New England,
BANK OF BOSTON Hubbell says B of B is having few problems due to:

1. Sound **public relations programs in place.** "Follow the pr rule: be a good corporate citizen, and when something happens, you don't have to do so much damage control. We have always stressed relationship building and have been active & honest all along."
2. **Media strategies** involve differentiating. "We are pointing out differences between us and the banks that are in trouble -- our commercial real estate portfolio is significantly smaller than others in the region. We are the 2nd oldest bank in the country and have weathered other storms."

TOM POLING, "So far, the Midwest has been fortunate because we have
BANCOHIO not experienced what has happened on the East & West coasts & in the Southwest. Of course, national news filters in to this part of the country -- Ohio people read about the crisis."

Poling says his strategy has been to do little publicly, but to use the employee newsletter to educate employees about the bank's situation in relation to the national scene. "Employees also received a sheet listing possible questions and appropriate answers." If crisis is not affecting your area, Poling's advice is:

1. **"Don't jump on the media bandwagon.** We didn't want to bring the problem up, to undermine the confidence people have in the safety of the entire financial system, so we didn't make any public statements about safety or do any safety advertising. Don't make something a concern that isn't. But...
2. **"Make sure employees are able to answer any questions** that customers may have. And...
3. **"Look at indicators so you can forecast** whether or not what's happening in another region of the country may happen in your area."

DOUG ADAMSON, PRES Notes the most common mistakes are a) failure to
BANK MARKETING ASS'N inform the employees. "This is too often overlooked. When somebody asks a teller or a customer service rep what the situation is, the worst thing that can happen is for them to say, 'I don't know. They haven't told us.'" Also, b) Having only a single spokesperson or set of spokespeople. "This immediately alarms people. Everyone should be able to respond to inquiries." c) Banks shouldn't panic, or feel there will be a run on the bank. "Most people, when asked what they think about the banking industry, will say it's in crisis. But when asked about their own bank, they're not concerned at all. This is very good news."

Of Related Interest...

¶ **Recent Bankers' Convention Highlights Public Confidence Crisis.** Sentiments include: a) banking is in better shape than S&Ls, and should be viewed separately; b) but we're on the brink of a recession; c) so major restructuring of the industry is inevitable. Speakers predict 1) fierce lobbying efforts by bankers, 2) banks' expansion into securities sales, insurance & real estate in an effort to compete with other financial institutions. Is this a possible model of what will occur in other sectors?

COALITION CONDEMNS The Research Industry Coalition, a group of public
RESEARCH PERVERSION opinion & marketing firms, has issued a statement about research abuse. "We hope to increase public awareness of the existence of deceitful practices and to educate people about legitimate survey research," says chr Diane Bowers. In recent years, solicitors calling themselves researchers have assailed the public with devious practices which include:

1. **Requiring or soliciting money.** "This amounts to fundraising under the guise of research. It takes unfair advantage of the cooperative attitude the public manifests when asked to take part in a legitimate info gathering process." In some cases, people are persuaded to contribute in exchange for some future "benefit."
2. **Selling products or services, using participants as leads.** It's a common practice to gain entry and then make a sales pitch, thus exploiting people's willingness to reveal info about themselves. In some cases, questions establish respondents' susceptibility to sales pressure. Follow up contacts are then made to those so identified.
3. **Revealing respondent's identity without permission.** "It is a normal research practice to pledge anonymity & confidentiality to the public in order to secure cooperation & frankness. Revealing the identity is a violation of that pledge unless prior informed consent has been obtained."

(Statement & details about RIC from Bowers at Council of American Survey Research Organizations, 3 Upper Devon, Belle Terre, Port Jefferson, NY 11777; 516/928-6954.)