

**Question To Ponder: Who's Being Hysterical?** Is Pendley right in his assertion the environmental movement is endangering scores of communities & industries? Is it a runaway cause, sweeping everyone into its momentum, so much so that they're losing sight of real issues? Or, is issue property rights vs. people's rights -- to breathe, drink clean water, etc. Pendley's views could be typical; is an expansive backlash in the works?

#### NORTHWESTERN CHANGES PR CURRICULUM TO INCLUDE ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Reports that school will no longer offer a master's degree in pr don't aptly reflect the transformation, says dept chrm Stanley Tannenbaum. "What we are doing is changing the name of the curriculum," he told *pr*. "We have integrated advertising, marketing & communications." In other words, pr will no longer be the name of the master's program, but students can still specialize in pr.

Real rub could be Northwestern's view of what pr is: "The industry is changing. More & more companies are **integrating pr into the marketing mix**. We are really on the cutting edge of that trend and we've revised the curriculum to reflect it." (He feels "It's becoming a far more vital function this way," tho how limiting pr's role to marketing achieves this is questionable. Trend is in fact an old one, and in many cases now being reversed.)

Tannenbaum says pr is still a field of study, as much as it was before, but now there are more courses surrounding it to "give a more general perspective on the business world. Students can leave with a degree in advertising, marketing or communications, or be a strategic generalist."

#### SCHOOL TOUTS STUDENT-RUN CORPORATE PR JOURNAL

Graduate pr students are distributing pr research & comment journal to practitioners nationwide. "We want to share some of the leading-edge thinking going on at Northwestern," says ed David Grossman. "There's a growing body of knowledge in pr. Our mission is to make it relevant for professionals." Articles are written by grad students, profs & professionals. (For info, call Grossman at 312/609-6387)

#### COORS PASSING ALONG AWARD-WINNING PROGRAM

Coors is showing organizations how to develop a dynamic volunteer program of their own. "Volunteering With A Vision" is a day & a half workshop inspired by the company's "Volunteers In Community Enrichment" (VICE) program (*pr* 9/21/87). Largest corporate volunteer program in the US, VICE won the 1990 President's Volunteer Action Award from President Bush, who says, "Every company in America should follow the lead."

A third of the employees plus retirees serve on the VICE Team, working together to build nature trails, paint seniors homes, plant trees, conduct food & clothing drives. (Info from 800/628-2610 between 8-5 MST)

Vol.37 No.12  
March 25, 1991

#### *pr* Case Study

#### INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS IS A PROCESS, NOT A PROGRAM: 2-WAY COMMUNICATION VIA MEETING NETWORKS FOSTERS DIALOGUE, INSURES ONE CLEAR VOICE, SOLIDIFIES EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Studies consistently show employees prefer to get information on their organization face-to-face, preferably from their managers. Years ago, this method of communication was standard practice. But, as with external relations, media became the fad and managers erroneously presumed 1-way techniques -- bulletin boards, newsletters, video, etc. -- would do it all. Increasingly, organizations are seeing these as **supplementary tools** and are reviving the interpersonal schematic.

#### PMI: PR STAFF MUST LET MANAGERS COMMUNICATE

"We previously defined

communication very formally, i.e., as written," Dean Landeche, mgr internal communications, PMI Food Equipment Group (Troy, Ohio) told *pr*. "The focus was on magazines, newspapers, etc., not at all on managers." PMI underwent some traumatic changes -- a corporate "divorce," followed by a merger making it family with former competitors.

"We did a communications audit and found **people were relying on the grapevine** for info. They didn't understand how they contributed to the goals of the organization, they didn't even know what those goals were." Audit also revealed **employees deemed publications as a secondary source, used as supportive info to the grapevine**. At that point, PMI decided to revamp its internal relations system, making **communications a process, not a program**. Components are consistent with other progressive organizations' cutting edge plans:

1. **Managerial Involvement.** "We tell managers to listen to employees, talk to them. Our guiding philosophy is that if an employee hears something about the company from the outside without hearing it from a manager first, someone is not doing their job."

**Landeche:** "Communications people have to give up ownership of their knowledge, transfer it to the managers. They should not latch onto their stuff and say, 'I do publications,' or 'I do videos,' or 'I do programs.' These things will all go away or change. **Practitioners must be integrated into the organization and have a continual, changing role** that involves training, hr, communications, planning & strategizing. They should be asking not what to communicate, but 'What are the organization's issues? How can I help it address them?'"

- 2. **Communicators Should Stop Communicating**, instead **offer communications counsel**. "If I'm doing the communicating, then I'm alleviating someone of their responsibility. That's not the way to get work done." Shortening the communication chain gets a) better contributorship from employees, while b) managers will assume ownership of the program.
- 3. **Customize The Message**. This doesn't mean altering integral components like organizational philosophy or position on issues. Rather, realize that different departments need different types of information. PMI offers a 3-tiered message strategy for face-to-face communication:
  - a) **basics -- what are the issues facing the company?** He recalls a situation involving friction between headquarters & field reps. "There was a lot of 'administrivia' going on, a lot of finger pointing. Managers brought the field reps together and said, "Here is the state of the marketplace, the situation we're in...."
  - b) **impact -- how do these issues affect us, our role?** The discussion then moved to how the issues were impacting the field reps, their roles within the organization, their relationship with hq. Bottlenecks that other departments perceived were brought up....
  - c) **empowerment -- what can we do about it?** "Unfortunately, it's here where many organizations drop the ball, where publications fail." In the case of the field reps, they turned into an action team, putting all their energy into brainstorming solutions. They came up with 16 ideas and decided to implement the top 3 first, then the next 3, then take care of the remainder over a period of time.

**FACE TO FACE REQUIRES FORMAT** Interpersonal communication still falls flat if improperly implemented. Within hierarchical structures, e.g. CEO to manager to supervisor to employee, research shows **20% of the info gets lost with each transmission**. And, as Landeche points out, roundtable breakfasts & monthly meetings are vehicles -- they, too, can be mere mouthpieces of management. "It's important for managers to use them as a means of reviewing organizational goals and objectives while really inviting, soliciting employee involvement."

Organizations like PMI go farther than just adopting the face-to-face concept. They create comprehensive **internal networks that facilitate dialogue & maintain message consistency**. Gathering the entire organization for a forum with the CEO is dramatic but cumbersome, best reserved for big events. In-place networks, however, communicate messages a) with One Clear Voice b) simultaneously c) while framing them according to the audience.

**FEDERAL EXPRESS TRAINS MANAGERS TO COMMUNICATE WITH FRONT-LINE** Fed Ex (Memphis) calls its networks "systems," according to Ed Robertson, mgr management & quality communication. "We have micro & macro systems," he told prr. "Macro involves the entire organization. Micro is manager to employees." Execs rely on managers to convey corporate strategies & issues. Ongoing workshops teach them not to talk, but to listen, probe employees for input. Also to mirror & paraphrase -- not to manipulate employees but to support them. "Managers learn to take charge of the small group dynamic. They are trained to be

leaders & facilitators by becoming aware of what communication is." i.e. a dynamic, symbiotic process that should result in a new understanding. "We tell them it's okay when people interrupt. We try to open a new paradigm of thought."

The feedback loop, however, is not as sophisticated. Execs communicate to managers via broadcast, i.e., managers watch directors meeting live on the tube. Fed Ex says this internal broadcast system is one of the most expansive & developed of its kind. Managers relay info to employees. **Employees are invited to respond to top execs via annual surveys, call-ins during broadcasts**. Execs sometimes drop in at stations. But, in a company that employs 94,000 in thousands of locations, more interpersonal techniques may be difficult.

**WILL IT FLY? NEW BACKLASH AGAINST ENVIRO MOVEMENT AGAIN RAISES ISSUE OF CONSTITUTION, PROPERTY RIGHTS**

Lawyer Perry Pendley, pres of the admittedly right wing Mountain States Legal Foundation (Denver), fears unchecked

enviromania is resulting in lost property rights & Constitutional violations. "Property owners have seen their rights erode with the adoption of laws & policies intended to protect the wetlands, wilderness & endangered species," he told prr. "Yet the Supreme Court consistently has ruled the government cannot take such property without compensation."

Problem is greatest in the West, where most of the land is owned by the government. "What I have seen in the past 3 years is a tremendous anti-Western bias. For 100 years, Westerners have been in control of their own water supply. Now EPA head Bill Riley is taking that decision to Washington." Also, efforts on behalf of the spotted owl are impinging on timber harvesting; expansive wetlands policies flood area farms. "Two farmers, both in their 70s, found it was in their jurisdiction to unplug the stream the government had dammed up because it was ruining their property. They did so and were fined 45 million dollars. I think the government wants to get rid of the exemptions that property owners have by frightening them."

**ISSUES WILL HAVE BROAD IMPACT** Pendley says general public isn't tuning into the issue because most people are not affected. But trend, he says, will soon impact many. "Banks here in Denver are refusing to be involved with properties that may be classified as a Superfund III sites. A rock concert was canceled in Oregon because they said it might affect the spotted owl." Watch for impacts, on recreation, mining, construction & development, roads & farming.

"Most of the communities here depend on natural resource activities for their existence. If the government succeeds in keeping these activities from taking place, they will be forever altered. 2 years ago, we announced 10 communities we felt were in danger because of this trend. Last year, the National Ass'n of Counties announced 10 more. Tourism won't buoy all of them -- there aren't very many Aspens."