

## REAL TIME MEDIA: NATION'S FIRST HOURLY NEWSPAPER

3 yrs old this month, The Latest News is distributed on airlines: US Air's shuttle between DC, NY & Boston; American's shuttle between NY & Chi; is negotiating to expand to the West Coast. 8 1/2 x 11" bound newspaper (28 pgs in the copy prr has) is geared for shuttle fliers -- "a high profile market for advertisers, and this is advertising supported totally," Todd Holzman, deputy ed, told prr. Airlines don't pay to carry it. They can give it to their customers free. "Ideally, as more advertisers catch on, it'll turn a profit."

First issue goes out at 4pm with updates hourly thru 9pm, Mon-Fri. First issue is all new stuff. "Premise is we don't want to reprint anything that the reader would probably have seen in the NYTimes, WSJ or Washington Post. And we've expanded that a bit to acknowledge some other publications -- like USAToday."

**CONCEPT IS PRINT RADIO:** "Our headlines & stories reflect an expanded version of what you'd hear from a rip & read radio station. And of course we pay careful attention to CNN."

## AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT BROADER THAN IT SEEMS

For example, ADA protects people with AIDS or heart disease. "The act, in conjunction with the Civil Rights Act of 1991, significantly broadens the definition of disabled, groups affected, compliance requirements, remedies & penalties," writes San Francisco attorney Arthur Curley. He explains that case law defines AIDS as a disability.

AIDS includes all persons testing positive for HIV & experiencing a T-cell count of less than 200. Also, anyone falsely accused of having a disability is protected as well. "Examples include persons rumored to be HIV-positive & individuals living with an AIDS patient. This category includes persons applying for a stressful job, yet having a history of heart attack."

Very possibly it will be ADA that determines the true meaning -- & definitions -- of **diversity**.

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**HONORS.** Jim Little (pres, Diversified Comms, Findlay, Ohio) receives Ball State Univ Nat'l PR Achievement Award.

Fred Halperin (partner, Hewitt Associates, The Woodlands, Tx) to receive Fellow Award -- IABC's most prestigious member honor -- at its conference 6/13-16 in Chi.

Karen Weiner Escalera (NYC counselor) receives Winthrop W. Grice Award for advancing pr in the hospitality industry.

**DIED.** Joseph Singer (retired dpr, American Hoechst, Somerville, NJ). A longtime respected mbr of PRSA, was its '85 International Cmte chrm.

## EXPERTS SUGGEST STEPS TOWARD DEFINITIVE PR RESEARCH

Our First of the Year Issue postulated the need for pr to develop research modes of its own -- specifically for its purposes, which are different from marketing or politics. And public relations research is on the rise, reports Walt Lindenmann (pr 3/1), so this is an opportune time to codify & promote its usage. Guidelines in response from research specialists:

- "We must go to the extent of thoroughness that good social science research demands. So we have some teaching to do. Younger people coming along are going to be versed in the principles & practices of social science research. If the companies they go into say 'we're not going to do it that way, we can get by with something else,' these young people are going to say 'sorry Charlie, I don't want to be in your business.'" -- Carol Reuss, professor, U No. Carolina (Chapel Hill)

### A DIFFICULT PROBLEM

"I couldn't agree more about the need to differentiate pr research from others -- not so much because of the techniques or methods but because of the uses to which it will be put," says Lauri Grunig. But Lou Williams cautions: "The question is not whether we need our own research modes, but whether we understand what we're trying to research. The problem is that we are measuring very complex 'things.'"

"A lot of practitioners are afraid of research," notes Carol Reuss. Jarol Manheim adds: "Public relations is part art and part applied science. To the extent that it is a science, it must be grounded in theory. Otherwise, we will end up conducting measurement for its own sake, a practice that is costly to clients & largely nonproductive."

- **Theory is a factor in any discussion of applied research in the field.** "In this context, theory refers to an underlying conceptual framework that tells the practitioner what aspects of a given situation are important to measure & how they should be measured. More importantly, it provides a rationale for deciding what specific changes in the situation to promote, for determining how best to accomplish the objectives thus defined, and for setting specific, measurable goals against which the effort can be evaluated. This theory might derive from knowledge about human psychology, institutional behavior patterns, media use patterns, product characteristics, target markets, or other sources. What sets it apart from the atheoretical practice of the profession is that it is systematic, organized, specific and (generally) quantifiable."

-- Jarol Manheim, professor of political comn, George Washington U (DC)

- **"Focus groups should be added to the list of 'techniques that meet the pr research criteria.'** Even when conducted with appropriate rigor, they can be accomplished on a slim budget & within a relatively short period of time. They are particularly appropriate when the goal is understanding behavior -- rather than projecting sales (marketing) or votes (public opinion polling). They can be stand-alone research. That is, they do not need to be augmented by follow-up surveys from which one attempts to generalize to a population. (By contrast, in marketing, focus groups frequently are conducted to help develop a survey questionnaire or, after survey research, to help explain anomalies in the data.) In my opinion, **'generalizability' is a mythical characteristic of social science research anyway.** Situations are too context-specific & public change too rapidly for a single study to be generalizable." -- Lauri Grunig, professor, U of Md (College Park)
- **"Public relations seems to be moving away from quantitative methods & toward the qualitative -- or toward a combined methodology.** For example, the IABC 'Excellence' project is moving into Phase 2, which is *qualitative*, after completing an initial *data analysis* of survey research. Together, questionnaires & long interviews develop a comprehensive picture." -- Lauri Grunig
- **Research with a strong theoretical foundation can have immediate application to practitioners.** "I disagree with the contention that academic research is rarely useful in a pr project. What we try to do here at the U of Md is applied/basic research. Further, I believe that seeking 'underlying theoretical causes' does provide 'useful data for immediate application.' Theory provides the 'why'; practitioners waste time basing programs on non-scholarly research that fails to explain why. 'Statistical overkill' may be the current norm, but that, too, is changing if I'm right about our field **moving from the quantitative to the qualitative.**" -- Lauri Grunig
- **Use verbatim responses -- and ask checking questions.** "Sometimes a response hits the nail on the head & drives the point home. But other times it's necessary to interpret what's said to provide a higher degree of accuracy. For example, we just did a study for an environmental engineering firm. We wanted to know what things their clients were happy or unhappy about. A respondent said the firm 'is weak on leadership.' What came to my mind was the chairman of the board & president are weak. But I refused to accept that answer & probed further. What the respondent really intended to say was that in working with the firm he'd found an absence of initiative on the part of project managers. We do this kind of checking a lot. As we go thru the process and see patterns emerging we check it out in subsequent interviews." -- John Lawson, Lawson Research International (Dayton)
- **It's foolish to do your own proprietary research if there's something already in the public domain.** "PR people have to know where to search for these, and know the good companies from the not so good companies. But we haven't looked at what the **quality controls** are. We've got some people in the field who are excellent. Academics need to work cooperatively with them to make sure the young people coming along are learning the things they need to know." -- Carol Reuss

- **"Public relations research should focus on cases.** We are often compared to lawyers and it is my belief that we are more like them than any of the other classical professions. We are also a management function. Both law & management are taught by the case method. Statistics, rules, principles, techniques are of course important but the fundamentals of our practice are to be found in actual cases. For example, one of the most successful cases in public relations annals is the conversion of the US to a nation of non-smokers. The case was written up in detail but it requires research to distill principles. The Tylenol case is another example. Public relations & law are about judgment, not technique, and judgment comes from experience. The crux of legal research is case law, not trial techniques or contract formats. If we are attorneys in the court of public opinion, then public relations research should focus on significant cases which define successful public relations practice." -- Lew Riggs, CEO, Tucson Osteopathic Medical Foundation
- **"All too often we must pay more to measure our work than to do the work.** One of the most common questions I get is, 'How much should I invest in research for any one program?' 'Darned if I know,' I answer. How important is it to you to know the right path to take...or to know if you should take a different path...or if you took the wrong path." -- Lou Williams, pres, L.C. Williams & Assocs (Chi)

## ✓ WHY PRACTITIONERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ISO STANDARDS

ISO registration is becoming popular in N.America "because so many organizations are dealing directly with the European community in manufacturing & service," Russ Cordle of American Society for Quality Control (Milwaukee) told pr. "And European companies are demanding that certain quality standards be met." (See pr 3/8 re Australian pr firms needing ISO accreditation)

**History:** In '79 a French organization called International Organization of Standardization was formed to bring order to the chaos of quality standards. ISO isn't an acronym, but comes from Latin meaning equal to, like *isometric*. In '87 ISO 9000 was introduced -- a program that deals with quality management & quality assurance standards.

"In order for the US to catch up & keep up, companies are going to have to start using ISO standards in their methods for manufacturing & service distribution. A lot of companies are picking this up." The ISO 9000 is primarily a concern for manufacturers now, service firms should stand ready because "it'll be going in that direction."

Qualifying for ISO 9000 has value for organizations operating within N.America as well. "It's a difficult & highly regarded process to go thru. If you're ISO registered, it means a lot. It's the extra mile when people are selecting which company to deal with."