

ROUGH SETS SOFTWARE AVAILABLE

DataLogic/R is designed to perform multiple tasks in data analysis, knowledge discovery & reasoning from data. It can work with any type of data, including symbolic, numeric, categorized or continuous. The larger system, DataLogic/R+, can handle up to 2,000 attributes & 64,000 cases in the training tables. The system also enables the user to build multidimensional models -- that is, the user can generate decision rules with a different decision in each dimension. (Info from Reduct Systems, P.O. Box 3570, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada S4P 3L7; 306/586-9408, fax 306/586-9442)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE FOR PRACTITIONERS

✓ **NEW AUDIENCE FOR ANNUAL REPORTS** is President Clinton & his policy wonks. Most '92 ARs, now being mailed to stockholders, have ignored this important audience, feels Richard Lewis, pres of Conceptual Annual Reports (NYC). "The new administration came into office with terrible misconceptions about business. The Clinton people have praised small business -- for creating new jobs -- and, generally, bashed big business. They don't seem to realize that big & medium businesses provide most of the nation's 'good' jobs, finance R&D, pay big taxes, support their employees in retirement & are the mainstays of communities where they operate." Business has to tell that story (see last week's issue) because "both the media & government are generally biased against business. Corporations are entering an era of public scrutiny. It's not enough to say you're earning money. Now ARs will have to justify the existence of business in terms of how it affects people's lives."

✓ **CLINICAL DEPRESSION AFFECTS YOUR WORKPLACE.** Nearly 1 in 10 Americans will suffer clinical depression, and 15% of those will commit suicide. Employees with this illness are more frequently absent and less productive. They affect the productivity & morale of co-workers. Untreated it costs society \$27 billion a year. But with early recognition & treatment, most employees can overcome it. The Wellness Councils of America has developed "Downtime: A Worksite Guide to Understanding Clinical Depression." It coaches supervisors how to recognize the warning signs & trains them in how to refer an employee who may need help. Includes a training seminar guide & short video. (\$65 from Wellness Councils of America, Community Health Plaza, 7101 Newport av, Omaha 68152-2175; 402/572-3590)

✓ **MORE & MORE IS BEING WRITTEN** about how the Clinton administration is role modeling the strategy of going around the media (see prr 6/12/92, 1/11). Wes Pedersen of the Public Affairs Council calls attention to "The Syndicated Presidency" by Sidney Blumenthal which appeared in The New Yorker (April 5th). Article depicts how the "communications wonks are taking the White House press office into the future and Bill Clinton direct to the people, leaving the Big Media out of the picture." For instance: "The staff attempts to tap every media outlet except the Washington correspondents." Country is divided into 4 quadrants with local radio & tv stations & newspapers within each region called daily to see if they want to interview an Administration figure. Cabinet members are expected to be on call. Future dream: C-SPAN-like channel to broadcast White House events.

PR CAN MAKE REALLY TOUGH CHANGES, LIKE YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS

Change brings resistance. Diffusing resistance is hard wherever it occurs -- internally among employees, externally within a community. At Douglas County School District (Castle Rock, Colo) people's living schedules were threatened as they faced year-round school for their children. "We've built our calendars around an agricultural society of the 1800s. To think that kids might be going to school in summer is hard for some people to take," Jill Fox, communications coordinator, told prr.

BACKGROUND: SELF-INTEREST & CONVINCING NUMBERS

As the fastest growing school district in the state, Douglas County was compelled to find cost-saving options. "We set up a Citizens Growth Committee in '84 charged with coming up with alternatives to accommodate the large number of kids coming in."

Committee recommended asking voters for a bond election and **requiring all new elementary schools or new subdivisions in rapidly growing areas to operate year-round.** "Rationale is you can fit 1/4 more students in the building by operating year round. The numbers are pretty convincing. For every 4 traditional schools you build, you can have 3 year-round schools. And we're building about 1 elementary school every year. We've saved millions of dollars over the past 9 years. That's a convincing message to taxpayers." The initiative passed. Change was mandated at this point.

In '85, the first year-round school was opened. "It was one of those 'try it & you'll like it' experiences." By next school year, the district will have 14 elementary schools running year round -- one of the largest social change successes in the nation. "It has been a relatively smooth transition because **we've been able to pass on experience.**"

But convincing parents this was good for their kids "was very difficult -- because this was *real change*. Lots of confrontation & resistance" was eventually **overcome because of a good first experience.** "A lot of thought went into planning that initial schedule -- making it good for kids, for families & for teachers."

✓ **DIFFUSING RESISTANCE TO MAJOR CHANGE DEPENDS ON INVOLVING PEOPLE**

1. **Set up a representative committee** -- involving people who will be affected by the change -- to make recommendations.
2. **Recommendations should be researched,** well thought out, with convincing arguments. "Try to diffuse concerns before a decision is made."



3. **Involve people in the change -- & make certain the first step is a success.** "In our case, people saw the new school being built. There was excitement about the first one. And that one paved the way for others because it was so successful."
4. **Involve other organizations within the community** so they are aware and buy in to what's happening. They can convey it to others. "We had some difficulty at first when real estate agents didn't make the year-round school program known to newcomers. We had some who were misinformed."
5. **Get groups that are affected to share their story** with others who have similar concerns. "We rely on community members, not just school administrators, to tell the story. Year-round schools send their own teams of parents, students & teachers to schools getting ready to convert. This has worked well for us."
6. **"You have to listen.** It affects people so directly. There are a lot of fears. Convey empathy & compassion. Work with small groups."
7. **To facilitate change, community-wide assistance is needed.** Students go 9 weeks on, 3 weeks off in varying rotations. "Day care providers, rec centers have rallied and offer activities year round. That's something *the market drove*. It wasn't in place right away."

"Since this was a major shift for people, first take was pretty negative. But as we've worked thru it, it has turned out to be very positive."

CREATING NEW CORPORATE ID CAN BUILD EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

Or tear it down. "Some employees & local managers have a keen sense of loss when their name is subordinated in a new organization-wide ID system. Obviously, you have to proceed with sensitivity. But at the same time it can offer one of the strongest arguments for a clear-cut use of a uniform identity across all divisions," explains Dennis Signorovitch, vp-pa, AlliedSignal (Torrance, Calif).

"Executives who want to provide real leadership must work hard at re-energizing employees. We must build on the historical foundations of our business units, but tear down the bureaucratic walls that separate people in ways that no longer make sense. **A consistent corporate identity is a kind of scaffolding that can help build that new sense of purpose among all employees.**" He offers these tips, based on his company's efforts to re-establish its corporate ID:

1. **Get help.** Many execs & managers think it's so simple no outside help is required. The seductiveness of this misperception is even greater when you are not actually changing your name, merely extending its use thruout the organization. Don't kid yourself. It's just as hard to do & probably more emotional for some of the people involved. Outside help will give you the benefit of others' experiences as well as professional distance that can counteract the myopia insiders may have on the issue.

2. **Make this an inclusive process.** Be patient. Do the missionary work out in the field. Listen to concerns. Create a special task force of business unit managers assigned to help you get greater uniformity & consistency in the use of the corporate name. Make sure the divisions most likely to create problems are represented on the task force.
3. **Don't be lured into a situation where the outcome will be determined by research findings.** Using your corporate name at the division level is asking people to give up what they're comfortable with to try something new & unfamiliar. The organization is going to have to supply the faith & courage on this point. If you believe in the longterm value of what you're doing, get out in front & lead the process. If you're not convinced, don't expect research to tell you the right thing to do.
4. **Be flexible & creative** when dealing with special situations. In some cases, the best you can hope for is to separate the unit name from a well-known brand name. This isn't always easy, but you can do major damage to the validity of your process if you simply allow some divisions to opt out of the program.
5. **Try to determine where the market value of a unit or brand name actually resides.** Is it in the unique logo design? The color? Or the word itself? This is a situation where research findings can help.
6. **Total, firm, consistent & prominent leadership of the CEO is a fundamental requirement.** Don't expect your CEO to do the missionary work with the divisions...or slog thru all the current materials to see how identity is used...or to negotiate the problems that emerge. Those of us in public affairs & communications have to do the work. But without complete support at the top, you can't make it happen. In fact, if you don't have his or her support you probably shouldn't start the process. All you will do is annoy the divisions & frustrate yourself.

DON'T BE PUT OFF BY NEW SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGY; ROUGH SETS IS REAL IN AREAS LIKE ISSUE MANAGEMENT

Along with its usefulness in resolving conflicts (t&t 3/29), rough sets works well in public opinion analysis & issues management. By applying this technology, for instance, **knowledge can be gathered & presented in the form of simple decision rules describing conflict positions**, explains Adam Szladow of Reduct Systems. The methodology can also be used for:

- uncovering important issues, patterns & relationships in opinion surveys
- identifying & classifying opinion groups for issues management
- development of information processing models

The logical patterns uncovered with rough sets contain only the essential & most important variables in their preconditions. These features, combined with the ability to evaluate the predictive power of the patterns generated, enable the user to gain an understanding of the existing relationships in the data. [But don't let researchers' jargon keep you from trying it!]