

CLINTON IS NOT REALLY GOING AROUND THE MEDIA

All the coverage -- in the media -- about the White House going around the media merely reflects media's provincialism -- probably based on shock. Clinton's strategy is not the state-of-the-art strategy being practiced by many organizations -- of truly going direct to your publics & opinion leaders when you choose to, irregardless of what media are or aren't saying about you.

Such tactics are labeled constituency relations programs, ambassador campaigns, key communicator projects & similar. The president's strategy is simply narrowcasting.

He targets media that reach specific geographic or demographic segments -- but the way he's doing it still **depends on the media to cooperate**. The local media getting such attention love it now. Any day they could become as intransigent as the White House press corps was felt to be -- which is who he is going around.

CAMPAIGN DID USE DIRECT CONTACT

Then Clinton staffers used fax, fone & mail to really go direct to supporters. Some said it was about as close to "continual communication" they had experienced. Key supporters reported receiving at least a fax a day -- so they were able to use word-of-mouth to combat the vagueries of media reporting & editorializing.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

"**THIS CONVERSATION WILL BE RECORDED AS AN AID TO CUSTOMER SERVICE**" is the message increasingly heard when calling customer service lines. Will the practice make service reps more helpful? Or is the Big Brother element going to anger them -- the way long distance carriers have done with their artificial limits on the time operators may give to any one customer, no matter what the situation? Is it really to protect companies legally against claims of false promises? Can the customer get a copy of the tape if a dispute arises?

"**ANOTHER BIT OF PR JARGON THAT MAY SEND THE WRONG MESSAGE**. Responding to pr's ongoing dialogue about pr research, Doug Newsom of Texas Christian U makes this point: "**I disagree with the term 'audiences'** because it implies 'recipients' of messages instead of participants in communication."

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. IABC Chairman's award to Anne Forrest (mng dir, Forrest International, Hong Kong) & William Herr (ex-Arizona Public Service comms mgr, Phoenix).

Jean Farinelli (CEO, Creamer Dickson Basford, NYC) receives Women In Communication's Matrix Award for outstanding career achievement in public relations.

Vol.36 No.17
April 26, 1993

THE PASSING OF "A GIANT IN THE FIELD"... REX HARLOW AT 100

"Rex Harlow was a giant in the field because he was one of **the first to make public relations a systematic profession that depends on the behavioral sciences**. Thru his Social Science Reporter he was the first to link psychology & behavior with the concepts & applications of public relations," Dennis Wilcox, San Jose State U, told pr.

"His name is foremost as the person who introduced the social sciences into public relations. He wrote the original book on the subject. It was packed with useful applications of psychology & sociology & political science & persuasion to the field," Otto Lerbinger, Boston U, told pr.

A FOUNDER OF PRSA

In '39, he founded the American Council on Public Relations, a national educational & scientific org'n for practitioners. Howard Chase recalls: "I persuaded Rex to combine the Council (west coast-based) with the eastern org'n (Nat'l Ass'n of PR Counsel) to become PRSA. This was in 1947. We moved the Counsel's Journal to NYC to become PR Journal." For 6 yrs he served on its board, focusing the Society's efforts on developing continuing professional education programs.

Chase told pr what it was like to be a pioneer: "He traveled around the country holding seminars with interested pr people. He arranged these meetings. They didn't make him any money but he was spreading the gospel of public relations. **He was a very strong ethicist**. Very early he believed that public relations & ethics were almost one & the same thing. He was so far ahead of some of the publicists. Sometimes people made fun of him simply because he was introducing a new profession, not just trying to raise flacks into somebody useful. He had great dignity as a person. He was a gentleman and a thoughtful pioneer in the field."

Practical Public Relations is his best-known book -- a standard text thru the 60s. In it he wrote the approach that made him known as the father of pr research: "*A business...cannot stop with informing its publics of its purposes & services. It has to take the next step, of diligently searching the minds of its customers to learn what they are thinking and saying about it. This information, which must be most carefully compiled & analyzed, is the only safe guide upon which it can build its policies & carry on its affairs. Expertness in the operation of this part of the public relations program usually spells the difference between success & failure.*"

The first fulltime pr educator (at Stanford) he died April 16 in Palo Alto at age 100. In recognition of his career, Harlow was the first recipient of PRSA Foundation's Jackson Jackson & Wagner Behavioral Science Prize in 1991. He won PRSA's Gold Anvil in '69.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE COMES TO PUBLIC RELATIONS

"Focus groups give you qualitative feedback; Likert-type surveys give you quantitative information. But neither provides you with **actionable results**. They just tell you what is. Artificial intelligence (AI) is able to identify what concepts trigger thinking on specific subjects. It's able to identify hot buttons in people's minds," Michael Rudnick of Cognitive Communications Inc told pr.

WHAT IT IS

About 20 years ago, two profs from SUNY-Buffalo set out to prove **you can measure human thought**. They put together a complex AI program that had to be run on a mainframe. For 20 years it was used in consumer research by big companies -- Ford, PG&E, Upjohn. And by US & European gov'ts, political campaigns. It identified what politicians or companies have to say, in what order, to shift perceptions or sell products.

With the advent of powerful desktop computers, "we're able now to use it cost effectively for employee communications." Which CCI has been doing for about a year -- an artificial intelligence neural network which drives its strategic planning for employee communications.

HOW IT WORKS

- A. It operates at about 20 dimensions in space. But since the human eye is limited to 3 dimensions, computer "plots concepts involved as balls on a 3-dimensional grid.
- B. **You can then see how people clump certain concepts together** & how close or far they sit from other concepts." If trust sits far from management "that would tell you employees don't trust management so you can work to see how you could move trust closer to management in their minds."
- C. **AI works with text as opposed to numbers.** "We can work with verbatim responses and then identify, for instance, what employees perceive their corporate culture to be.
- D. If it's not in alignment with what the organization would like it to be, we can help **craft specific messages for campaigns to influence the employees so their attitudes shift.**" That's its real power, believes Rudnick -- the ability to affect attitudes & change behavior.

"One of the bigger successes in the 70s was when Ford came up with 'Quality is Job 1.' This was before 'quality' was a buzzword in industry, much less in the consumer's mind. The AI program was able to a) determine that consumers felt quality was lacking in cars, then b) do some forward-thinking projections on how people's attitudes would shift & come closer to perceiving Ford cars as something they would buy."

RESEARCH USING AI REVEALS GAPS IN EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

CCI's study, "Employee Communications In These Nanosecond Nineties," is a snapshot of current thinking on the role of employee communications. "We found that altho the industry has been talking for a while about integrating communications -- weaving it thruout the organization & making it an organic part of how the organization operates -- that's not the case right now.

"Employee communications is still perceived to be something outside the natural movement of information thruout the company." To remedy this, says Rudnick, "employee communicators need to involve employees more in the process of communication. Rather than speak down to them, 2-way communication is needed. Employees must be part of the process rather than recipients of the results of the process."

When asked about the future role of employee communications, almost all participants felt it will become increasingly important. With "change" so prevalent, they feel a strong need to inform anxious employees & involve them in more aspects of operations & decisionmaking. Tactical implications:

- **Electronic vs. print.** Electronic media excel as vehicles for interactivity, bottom-up & lateral communication & fast dissemination. However, print is still more appropriate for "fine print" data such as a service manual.
- **Line manager as communicator.** Still the preferred source of info. Technology may help them, but employee communicators must assist them in becoming better communicators.
- **Off-site employees.** Often out of the communication loop. As technology such as teleconferencing & video-phones become more prevalent, employee communications will need to adapt to the off-site employee.

Study finds responsibility for employee communications is divided primarily between two dep'ts: public affairs/corporate relations (this includes pr, pa, employee rels, corp afrs, corp rels) 46%; human resources 35%.

NEWSLETTER WITH CATCHY NAME, STRATEGY GRABS YOUNG & OLD

The Small Street Journal is a quarterly, 8 1/2 x 11", 8-pg newsletter published by Eggleston Children's Hospital (Atlanta). Its strategy:

- 1) Design is "colorful, very childlike. We want it to be appealing & very **approachable**," editor Rebecca Rakoczy told pr. Primary colors of hospital's logo (a rainbow) are also used in newsletter.
- 2) Information is **targeted at parents** (how to prevent injuries in the home, sleep disorders & how to handle them, etc.).
- 3) Each issue includes puzzle for **children** based on info in stories. Info-entertainment mix speaks to 2 levels of understanding.
4. "Childlike" appearance equates to **easy reading**.
5. Newsletter is mailed free to 36,000 subscribers. It's also sent to a) doctors' offices where they get distributed to patients; b) schools; c) daycare centers. "It **reinforces our identity** within the community."

In an era of declining value for publications, this one appears to beat the odds by adding value upon value in a single format.