

WHY COMMUNITY RELATIONS & FOCUSED PHILANTHROPY PROGRAMS WORK

They're part of the fabric of American life -- "paying your dues."

- Over half (51%) of the adult population volunteered in '91 (94.2 million people aged 18 or older).
- They contributed an average 4.2 hrs/wk totaling 20.5 billion hrs -- the equivalent of 9 million full-time employees, at a value of \$176 billion.
- 72% of US households contributed money in '91, averaging \$899/household -- 2.2% of income.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS**IS THE POINT OF VIEW OR VOICE OF THE PUERTO RICAN/LATINO PERSPECTIVE**

needed by your organization? AOC Speakers Connection can provide it. It has access to over 100 Puerto Rican/Latino speakers who are knowledgeable & current in social, political & economic areas which impact its community. It's also a resource for gaining insights from Puerto Rican/Latino opinion leaders -- elected & public officials, civic leaders, artists, professionals, psychologists, personalities. (85 4th Ave, Ste.3-H, NYC 10003; 212/353-9114)

TALK SHOW DIRECTORY by Accuracy In Media is an outcrop of AIM's own use of radio talk shows. "That's how we get our message out. We had all these names from across the country that we call regularly. So we put the directory together," Bob Anderson, an AIM spokesperson, told *pr*. Directory concentrates on shows that deal with political & media issues -- shows AIM approaches. Contains listings by state. Gives station call letters, name of producer, address, phone & fax numbers. Preface explains talk shows' influence: "More than 3,000 radio talk show hosts nationwide function somewhat like an 'audio' editorial page that gauges the national interest & frustration level far better than the nightly news. Talk radio hosts have also spearheaded vigorous populist campaigns about issues ranging from Congressional pay raises to prospective Cabinet nominees. Author Leo Damore credits talk radio with providing him the necessary exposure to raise public awareness that eventually turned his book, 'Senatorial Privilege,' into a long-running bestseller." (\$6.95; \$3.95 AIM mbrs; AIM, Ste.1150, 1275 K St NW, DC 20005; 202/371-6710)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. Joe Epley (Epley Assocs, Charlotte, NC) will be inducted into the Defense Information School Hall of Fame for contributions in the practice of military & civilian public affairs worldwide.

Patrick Jackson (Jackson Jackson & Wagner, Exeter, NH) receives NSPRA President's Award, its highest

honor. First time awarded to someone not employed by a school dist or educational org'n, but counsel to them.

ELECTED. Don Middleberg (Middleberg & Assocs, NYC) as chrm of American Suicide Fdn [ed note: shouldn't its name be American Anti-Suicide Fdn?].

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TECHNIQUE: COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

"We've successfully relied on the 'community case study' approach," Walt Lindenmann of Ketchum told *pr*. It mixes observation, participation, role-playing, secondary analysis, content analysis, formal & informal interviewing techniques in an effort "to determine what makes a community 'tick' vis a vis the needs & interests of a client."

WHAT IT IS Combines ethnography (the study of cultures) with the investigative reporting skills of the journalist, to come up with sensitive intelligence-gathering at the community level.

HOW IT'S DONE

1. Carry out a thorough content analysis of all copies of the community's local newspapers for 2 months prior to "moving into" a community to learn the pressing local issues & to discern the area's "movers & shakers."
2. One or several researchers live in the community under study for 3-6 days, probe in depth to find out what makes it tick (from the perspective of the client's needs & interests). Researcher is immersed as discreetly as possible into the life of the community -- a) eating at local restaurants & engaging customers in casual conversation, b) interviewing people at parks, on the street, at the mall, etc, c) talking with opinion leaders -- mayor, members of city, town or county boards, superintendents of schools, college &/or company presidents, heads of chambers of commerce, local legislators, local PTA representatives, heads of service & fraternal groups, key clergymen, key editors & reporters. Researcher uses a "snowball" interviewing approach where one member of the opinion leader network leads you to another.

"Using an appropriate mix of discretion & persistence, I've found it easy to obtain personal interviews with many of a community's most prominent leaders."

ADVANTAGES

1. **Multidimensional:** Focus groups or one-on-one interviews provide a forum for concept testing or probing isolated, individual opinions. But a community case study enables researchers to examine issues & ideas more deeply.

2. **Builds a profile** of community opinions, gives a shape to the power structure of the community's leadership, & places all of these factors into perspective with events that have transpired in the community.



3. **Catches respondents where they live.** Because the researcher has injected himself into the community setting & become a participant, the approach allows for a thorough look at opinions & attitudes in a natural context."

However, warns Lindenmann, "case studies ought never to be viewed as substitutes for other types of opinion data-gathering. They are supplements," he feels. Others may argue that qualitative research needn't be supported by, say, polling -- since it will measure opinions of people who aren't likely to take any action, whereas case studies home in on the activist element of a community.

IS IT ETHICAL?

"Probing is done in total confidence. Those who are interviewed are never told the name of the research sponsor nor do they ever get a sense of the 'real' purpose of the 'intelligence-gathering.'" In a hypothetical example, Lindenmann explains how he refers to himself at an interview: as a "researcher with a NYC survey research organization that's doing a study in the community in an effort to find out where people in Pleasant Gardens get their information about what is happening in the business & governmental world in downtown Metropolis."

Can codes of ethics be followed when using this research technique? "I feel that a researcher can, but it is not that easy to do, & some researchers may interpret the 'camouflage' approach more negatively than do others."

In '89, Nissan was sued by a couple claiming a researcher from Tokyo invaded their privacy while renting a room during a temporary assignment to study US living & car-buying patterns (advertising uses ethnography, too), in part by observing this couple. They charged the "spy" misrepresented & concealed the real reason for his stay, reports Ad Age. Charge was dropped 7 months later.

SOFT INFORMATION IS EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR CHANGE

"The biggest threat today is not competition. It's change. Understanding change; coping with it; adapting to it," believes Seena Sharp of Sharp Information Research (Hermosa Beach, Cal). **The problem is that change in its early stages isn't quantifiable.** She points to the history of the minivan:

"Hal Sperlich proposed the minivan to Ford. Ford didn't believe a market existed, because if it did, the product would already exist. Interesting reasoning. The auto industry conducts many consumer studies. Since no one had requested a minivan-type vehicle, management didn't believe there was any interest. Sperlich couldn't convince Ford of the changes he was observing. He didn't have any hard information. So Sperlich took his idea to Chrysler. Ten years after Chrysler introduced the minivan, and saved the company, it still owns half the market."

Same thing happened to American electronics manufacturers with the fax machine. The point is, **numbers are very important, but they are just not enough.** What we really need is more & different information on which to

base a good decision. We need to learn to be more open, to be more aware. Indications of change are in our face every day. We see them, but we just don't recognize them." Places to look:

- Gather information from outside your sector or industry;
- Look for abuses or unusual uses of your product or service;
- Frequently, valuable info will a) be surprising or off-the-wall, b) challenge your assumptions, c) make you uncomfortable, d) send up a red flag, e) seem all wrong.

"When we pay attention to information that we want to ignore or deny, we are plugging into the clues, hints & signals that warn us about changes. This is the very information that demands our attention & further investigation. If it's plausible, then we have to accept it & figure out what are the implications. What does it mean -- now & in the future? **Soft information indicates changes long before they become trends or facts.**"

ONE-STOP RESOURCE FOR INFO ON THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

National Center for Charitable Statistics, housed at Independent Sector (1828 L St NW, DC 20036; 202/223-8100), is a repository of info on giving, voluntarism & NPOs -- gathered from public & private sources. Databases are available on computer tape & IBM compatible PC disks. A sampling:

- IRS statistics of income on a sample study of private foundations & 501(c)(3) org'ns. 153 financial variables per org'n.
- IRS business master file of nonprofit entities (data from '87-'92). Contains name, address, tax status, major purpose code of the over 1 million US tax-exempt organizations. Updated annually.
- IRS tax return database of NPOs (data from '92). Contains the most recent financial info on the over 400,000 exempt org'ns that file federal tax returns. Cannot release data on individual org'ns, but does make the database available for research on & marketing to nonprofits.
- National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) provides a system for classifying nongovernmental, nonbusiness, tax-exempt org'ns with a focus on IRS section 501(c)(3) philanthropic org'ns.
- "The Nonprofit Almanac, 1992-93"
- "Giving & Volunteering in the US" ('88, '90, '92 editions) -- pub'n & database. It's a series of surveys conducted every 2 yrs to provide trend data on how, how much, to whom & why Americans give money & volunteer time.
- "Volunteering & Giving Among American Teenagers 12 to 17 Years of Age" ('90 & '92 editions) -- pub'n & database.
- "From Belief to Commitment" ('88 & '93 editions) -- pub'n & database. Provides info on the community service activities & finances of America's religious congregations.