

work? Or spawned a parallel old girls' network? More evidence mentoring & networking are not sex-linked traits.

¶ **CEOs PERCEIVE 5 SHORTCOMINGS OF PR PRACTITIONERS:** 1) performance falling short of promise; 2) superficial relationship with the media; 3) reluctance to be candid with the CEO; 4) immodesty; 5) don't really understand the business or the people, according to a survey of The Omega Group's Chief Executives Council. "Remember these are perceptions, so deeds, not arguments are the only way to change them," says John Budd. On the flip side, these same CEOs feel pr people can be enormously helpful in synthesizing thoughts & ideas, identifying internal problems or opportunities, establishing credibility for the company internally & externally. Their advice: be proactive; understand priorities; get to know the CEO; be pragmatic; remember you are the means to an end, not the end itself.

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**APPOINTED.** Ray Gaulke is PRSA's new chief operating officer as of July 1. He comes from Newspaper Ass'n of America where he was exec vp, chief mktg ofcr since '91. He has held top posts in several pr & adv'g firms, in media sales & mag publishing. In the 70s he headed Marsteller, Inc, working with Harold Burson.

"Gaulke's broad background in management & in several communications fields, including public relations, coupled with his understanding of how ass'ns work, make him the ideal leader for PRSA," says Hal Warner, PRSA pres. Since most of Gaulke's experience appeared to be in 1-way, awareness-building comn, pr queried him about **his view of public relations:**

"At the Newspaper Ass'n, the research function reported to me. I had a lot of information about the consumer pulse. One of the things we were tracking was consumers' attitudes toward brands vs companies. Consumers were saying 'don't tell me about your products, tell me about what you stand for as a company. I want to know how you treat your employees, how you treat the environment. I'll decide on the brand, but my decision will be based on who the company is and what you stand for.'

"**This is going to change the future of public relations.** It will become more powerful than advertising as a communication vehicle. I see the industry on the threshold of a long period of time where mgmts of companies & people in the service industry will depend more on it because people are going to buy based on the reputation of the company and are not going to be snowed by brand advertising.

"**Bonding with the consumer is what it's all about.** Two-way communication comes in here. Consumers don't want to be sold something without also being asked 'are you happy with it? Are you satisfied? Would you like us to do something different?' The after-sales service & the dialogue that comes from that."

**Using opinion leaders to build relationships** "is a terrific idea & very powerful. It's like holding on-going focus groups. What you get

## ARE PRODUCT TAMPERING INCIDENTS TOTALLY LOSE-LOSE?

Lose now, since even the most loyal group of customers will have its cautious segment that figures "why risk it." Lose later, whenever the incident is brought up -- because among those who missed or have forgotten it will be some of these cautious folk who take no chances.

Pepsi's recent needles & syringes cases exemplify again the lose-now aspect. And in reporting that story, media & the grapevine will recount unappetizing historical cases -- as evidence this in the Pepsi coverage:

*"Over the past decade, for example, McDonald's had to combat baseless rumors that worms had turned up in its hamburgers."*

Thanks a lot, McDonald's is probably saying, for resurrecting this stomach-turner. It may be untrue, but it will stick in squeamish minds. Corona beer's urine rumor is another with sticking power. The perpetrator admitted it was false, but the **mental image created** is damaging, per se.

- **Deterrent?** Could it be so many arrests have been made in the Pepsi case, & publicized, that the troubled persons who seek catharsis by tampering will be deterred? Unlikely, say psychologists.
- **Media Fix?** No amount of ameliorating media coverage reaches more than a minority of the public. Not everyone sees the bad coverage, either, research shows -- but larger numbers do, because media users pay more attention to exciting, scary or scandalous events.
- **Different Behaviors?** Could it deter media from frenzied feeding next time? Could it make consumers bolder in resisting the urge to stop buying a product caught in a tampering case?

The answers -- or lack of them -- illustrate why this may be the ultimate risk management issue.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR A DAMAGE CONTROL STRATEGY

1. **Get it behind you ASAP** because each iteration reaches more people. Shakepeare's "he doth protest too much" applies. Mazur's Rule also fits: The more media cover (or people discuss) a topic involving a



threat, the more they accept the threat as real. Pepsi's July 4th ads merely said "Thank You," followed by holiday cliches -- with no mention of what one assumes readers were being thanked for. That was left for each reader to infer, depending on their awareness.

2. **Deciding factor: How threatening or ugly is it?** This determines memorability -- unless it's so bad ego defense drives it out of people's thoughts. If it's forgettable, help people do it -- fast.
3. **Memorability damages, long term.** Ok, so NBC rigged the pickup truck coverage. Unfair, wrong, etc. But would you buy one with saddle tanks? If you remember the incident -- and being "right" by exposing NBC's fraud may not be "effective" because it massively added to memorability -- most likely you'll be a cautious purchaser.
4. **Service tampering is also possible** -- e.g. a hospital hit by disconnected intravenouses, mixed up medicines etc.
5. **Lesson learned** is one positive. There seems no excuse for the bolts & parts that were found in soft drink cans because they fell off the machinery. Admittedly, this would have gone unreported except that the needle event made it relevant -- but here's a chance to fix the system. Credibility begins in daily operational quality.
6. **Compared to other potentially damaging incidents**, e.g. accidents, scandals etc., is tampering worse? Probably, because of Grunig's 2nd rule of effective communication: When people can *personalize* a problem, they're more likely to act. The question is, then, whether it's easy to see oneself getting the particular tampered product.
7. **Like boycotts**, could a tampering incident actually raise awareness of a product or organization -- thus at least temporarily increasing purchases? For a *lesser known* product, why not.

## SPEECH COMMUNICATION PROFS BECOMING MAJOR TEACHERS OF PR

With almost as many as journalism or biz teachers. The Commission on Public Relations of the Speech Communication Ass'n has 366 members & is "steadily growing," chair Dean Kruckeberg (U Northern Iowa) told pr. As of last fall, its membership vied or exceeded similar organizations -- AEJMC's pr div (379), PRSA's educators section (305), Int'l Comn Assn's pr interest group (180), IABC's educators strategic interest group (66) & IPRA's educator mbrs (approx 65).

SCA "has been courting public relations for years. They're interested in having public relations as part of the organization. While some of the others have considered us to be the bastard step-children. At the start, some of us were suspect about SCA because of the proliferation. But they're offering things for educators that aren't being offered by the

Re battle between communication & journalism:  
"Rather than competitiveness, we need to cooperate & work together with mutual respect. Then lines of delineation can be removed. There's so much of importance going on in all these organizations that to limit yourself to one is myopic & self-limiting."

others. They have a greater strength in theory & research," Don Wright (U of South Alabama) told pr.

Many pr educators belong to all or several. The "turf" issue that existed 10 yrs ago is fading. "We have more in common as public relations educators than where we're based. All the organizations have something to offer."

Because of its size, Commission on Public Relations will move from being a special interest group within SCA to become a division -- which means a bigger budget & more internal support from hdqtrs, Mark McElreath (Towson State U) told pr. It is presently studying a strategic plan "to see how we want to position ourselves. One of the things we're looking at now is dealing with international areas and becoming a resource for Eastern Europe & 3rd World public relations education."

### RESOURCE FOR PRACTITIONERS

Kruckeberg suggests mid-level & upper echelon execs with backgrounds in journalism/mass comn note what's being done in communication. "There's some really useful research & scholarship that can be applied." (Info from him at 260 CAC, Dep't of Comn Studies, U of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls 50614-0357; 319/273-2501, fax 319/273-2731)

### ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **MORE EVIDENCE OBITS ARE THE THING READERS VALUE MOST** in newspapers -- as research shows, using the question "What would you miss most if you could not get your paper?" -- is the positioning given them by some editors. The State (Columbia, SC) lists all deaths in the state on the front page, adjacent the day's index. Details are given inside.

### ¶ **TEEN GIRLS ARE PRIME COMMUNITY RELATIONS OR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TARGET.**

One with a long payoff -- since women still make so many purchase decisions, now nearing 50% on autos, 75%+ in healthcare, etc. Recent report to Nat'l Health Council forum finds 1) substance abuse, pregnancy, STD, eating disorders, depression, sexual abuse form "an appalling portrait" of this group; 2) solutions are more behavioral than medical -- so ripe for pr techniques. For most organizations, this is a community relations or social responsibility opportunity that is almost totally untapped.

### ¶ **NEW SURVEY OFFERS GLASS CEILING, SEXUAL HARASSMENT INSIGHTS.**

Prevalence of perceived harassment is great: 3 in 5 female execs (vp & above) say they've experienced it personally at some point in their work lives. How they chose to respond is instructive: 57% ignored it; 36% confronted the harasser privately; 26% joked about it. Only 14% reported the incident to a superior; and a scant 0.4% filed grievances or sued. These women who made it to top jobs may be saying that thinking litigiously, or being outraged -- while a legal & moral right -- may not be as effective psychologically as brushing it off...but firmly. Study by Korn/Ferry & UCLA found steady evolution toward senior management but sexism still a barrier. Interestingly, the most common grad schl of respondents was Harvard. Has the old boys' network become an androgynous old graduates' net-