

**MONEYMAKERS WITH RATINGS
INFLUENCE REST OF TV**

In the latest ratings period, 60 Minutes ranked 1st, 20/20 2nd, Dateline NBC 4th & Prime Time Live 5th among all shows on tv.

None of those singled out by Hewitt made the top 10. But investigative tv -- looking for scandals whether real or imagined -- is clearly at its high point. This is already seen in the way many local stations are handling their news programming.

The GM truck & other cases show tv news has fallen -- to the point of faking it. Do Joe & Jane Watcher care? Perhaps. Or at least they seem able to separate the "better" newsmagazines from the trash (tho practitioners attacked by any of them may find it hard to differentiate).

Is this voyeurism the industry thinks will keep it alive in fact its death knell? When there are 500 cable channels (coming soon) will such network shows be the National Inquirers of the tube -- & devoid of the advertising tv must have to survive?

**IT'S ABOUT \$\$, NOT
SERVING THE PUBLIC**

Hewitt again: "I think 60 Minutes may have done the greatest disservice to broadcasting anybody's ever done. Because of us, you can't do news on television anymore unless it's profitable." (See last week's issue re MBAs in the newsroom). 60 Minutes has generated more than \$1 billion in revenues.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

One Place Faxes Don't Work is With Congress, says a Western Union study of House & Senate staffers. These folks who handle the incoming communications feel faxes, postcards & phone calls demonstrate less sincere interest than taking the time to think thru & write a letter. But form letters don't count, either. Truly personal mail rates a response -- and may even get forwarded to the member. Other forms of input just get tallied & tossed. Telephone trees have reduced the value of phone calls. Staffers say they sometimes get so many calls it's an annoyance. Findings tally with '92 survey by Burson Marsteller. It found personal letters tops with 90% of staff -- much more important than media (pr 7/13/92).

Now -- Radio In the Schools a la TV Channel One. Star Broadcasting (Mpls) will pay schools for the right to broadcast music & commercials in the halls. Claims 1,000 schools across the nation have signed up. Expects to reach 10 million student listeners by '95. Programming will air before classes, between classes, during lunch & after school. A school of 1,500 students could make \$20,000/yr from national ads, according to published reports. In addition, schools can sell local ads & keep the proceeds. 3M supplies the satellite link & hardware. Song lyrics will be policed.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. Judy VanSlyke Turk, pres-elect, Ass'n for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication. When she assumes presidency next year,

she'll be one of only 2 pr educators to hold the top position in the 81-year old AEJMC. (Doug Newsom is the other.)

HOW LATEST MANAGEMENT FAD, REENGINEERING, AFFECTS PR

Start with the fact that none of the long sequence of fads -- 50+ since the 50s -- offers much of anything new. Each is a **repackaging of basic, often commonsensical ideas** by one or more management consultants for the primary purposes of promoting their practices & selling their book(s).

The Quality movement was & is people-friendly, and thus an opportunity for pr. Its underlying theme is a) continuous communication to b) build relationships that will c) enable the organization to deliver quality products or services d) in a way that satisfies customers. What it added was an emphasis on measurement to ascertain that this was occurring.

Reengineering has some of the longtime pr philosophy, also, such as cooperation instead of turfing, individual decisionmaking responsibility instead of over-the-shoulder supervisors, self-managing work teams -- all old ideas long espoused but little practiced. In addition:

- **At heart, reengineering is zero-based restructuring.** Not tinkering with the present way of doing things. But starting from scratch & seeking the best way -- whatever upheaval that brings. If we were just starting the organization, how would we do things?
- **Its stimulus is the renewed drive to increase productivity.** Many in pr (see pr 1/4/82) argued against the belief of engineers & economists that hi tech machines would improve productivity -- since people still operate or program them. Thus *people must become more productive by working smarter not harder.* Reengineering faces this reality & in that way reinforces pr's vital motivation & behavior-change role.
- **Its emphasis on eliminating narrow specialists** & substituting people broadly skilled (& trained) in many tasks -- the very generalists many pr leaders have been calling for -- could particularly impact pr dep'ts.
- **Its major contribution is taking most of the good ideas of preceding fads & giving them unified application.** As the Wharton School dean told the Washington Post, "It integrates a number of ideas that have been around for a number of years. What's new is that it insists you do them all simultaneously."

Boiled down, reengineering means questioning things "we've always done that way." Given their process oriented, print driven, journalism approach, many pr dep'ts are prime candidates. Question: will practitioners adapt? Or, like middle managers who can't give up being "boss," go.

- **When successful, it ends up achieving the original goal of organizational redesign, QWL (Quality of Work Life).** Jobs are redesigned & enriched, workers are their own bosses, pay is up, turnover down, organizations meet their financial & other goals. Individual success is measured not in climbing the ladder, but in bonuses for achievement & in challenging, meaningful work. Those objectives were first formulated by the 30s labor movement prophets & the Tavistock OD group's wartime endeavors in the Welsh coal mines.

Managers, being slow learners where human nature is concerned, will need more pr counsel than ever as they tackle this one.

Saturn, GM's crack at reengineering which, among other things, put set, non-dickering prices on its cars, illustrates how the process may affect pr strategy. Its recent recall of 350,000 cars was turned into a **pr opportunity to demonstrate customer service** (see this week's purview). A spokesman said that despite the obvious angst, "We're smiling because we're doing the right thing."

¶Of Related Interest:

A SIMPLE MINDED QUESTION ... & CALL FOR HELP!

- The solution to our problems is to grow the economy,** say the gov't, Wall Street, economists, CEOs, everybody.
- If all the restructuring, reorganization, downsizing etc end up **laying off workers & reducing profits** & other bottom lines, how are they contributing to this solution?
- Every job lost harms, not helps, the economy** -- right? Remember Henry Ford II's invitation to the UAW's Walter Reuther to visit a new automated plant. Ford showed him around, carefully noting how few people it took to operate the factory. "Well, Walter," he crowed, "where are your workers?" Reuther replied, "Wrong question, Henry. Where are your customers?"
- Only employed workers can buy cars, or anything else.** Global competition is cited as the driver of reducing costs -- which today always means reducing heads. North American Free Trade Agreement provides a glimpse of the probable future: of every 5 children born in Mexico (with one of the highest population growth rates in the world), only one will find a job.

Eminently successful P&G announces it had big losses for the quarter & year "**due to costs tied to restructuring the company.**" It will lay off 13,000 & close 30 plants. Without the restructuring, it would have earned 47 cents per share. So who's really paying for the restructure? Is it needed, or "the current thing to do"? Management says it's an investment, which will pay off in future. Does this mean long range planning is in at last & short term, profits-per-quarter is now behind us?

- The outlook appears dire.** PR pros are the ones who must explain all this to employees & external publics. **Will someone please give us some sensible, maybe even hopeful responses to the fears wracking these key publics?**

DUBIOUS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL SCANS, ISSUES ANTICIPATION ?

If you need to be persuaded of the importance of investing in these activities -- or persuade someone else, like a budget officer -- use this dramatic example from Maryland's tourist promotion materials:

- "On the 4th of July, 1828, in Georgetown, amid much hoopla & rhetoric, President John Quincy Adams lifted the first shovelful of earth for the construction of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, intended to link Baltimore, Washington & Pittsburgh by water.
- "On the same 4th of July, 40 miles away in Baltimore, amid no less hoopla & rhetoric, 91-year old Charles Carroll, the last living signer of the Declaration of Independence, officiated at celebrations to initiate construction of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Baltimore would be linked by rail to the rest of the rapidly expanding nation.
- "When the 380-mile railroad was completed it was one of the longest in the world, an engineering triumph. When the 185-mile canal, with 74 locks, was completed it was already obsolete."

Now as then, organizations that don't pay intense attention to what is happening technically, financially, socially & politically will suffer.

TV NEWSMAGAZINE SHOWS CALLED TRASH -- YET RATE HIGHEST; WATCH FOR LOCAL TV REPORTING TO TURN UGLIER

Conundrum for media users: Nielsen's highest rated tv shows are also ones you want to avoid for your product, service or organization. Don Hewitt, 60 Minutes creator who led it to become the most popular program in history, devoted the inaugural William S. Paley lecture at the Museum of TV & Radio to denouncing the networks' compulsion for newsmagazine shows:

"In the rush to put more (of them) on the air...taste & integrity and all the intangibles that made (tv news) respected the world over get lost. America's tv sets (get loaded) with the same garbage that weighs down supermarket checkout counters.

"There's a line that separates the news biz from show biz...and I think it's being crossed all the time now. The Hard Copies, Current Affairs and Inside Editions do all the things we would never even flirt with."