

- **Smithsonian Institution**, represented by Dr. Ramunas Kondratas, Curator of the Medical Sciences Division, attended the retirement party & accepted the tin into the Smithsonian's collection in the National Museum of American History. *This connection helped to accomplish the strategic positioning of the tin as a collectible.*
- **Media materials** stressed brand's heritage & uses of the tin -- which earlier survey found to be key to consumers.
- **Consumer promotion for retailers** to involve & reassure them. Tear pads were placed in grocery stores & pharmacies. Prizes offered were retirement related: "retire your mortgage" (\$20,000), "retire from stress" (a vacation), "retire with time" (watches), & "retire with a future" (savings bonds). Contest ran from July thru October.

RESULTS First week of the campaign, sales jumped 40%. For 2 months following the campaign, sales maintained a 20% increase. Most of these sales were incremental to the category, meaning Sucrets grew the category rather than taking them from other brands. The inventory of tins was depleted.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

"ONLINE SERVICES AREN'T ABOUT INFORMATION, BUT ABOUT ENTERTAINMENT," writes Chris Clark, GCI Group (NYC) in *Wired*. He offers this illustration: If you're a car company, pay an online service to start up a sports statistics database that anyone can access as a basic service. Run periodic contests (giving away a car) to maintain interest in the service. Then ask for a weekly tally of the people who accessed it. "Wouldn't this be more fun for consumers than finding 500-plus megabytes of information about toothpaste?" If your target is teens, offer free *Doom XXVII* downloads "instead of an advice forum on makeup." [But is this simple name awareness enough to justify the sponsor's expense -- unless it's a new or little known entity?]

ARE MANUFACTURERS SERVICE CONTRACTS CONTRADICTIONARY SYMBOLS? *If what I just bought was made as well & will last as long as the hype claims, why would I need to buy a contract that covers the cost of repairing it?* "Congratulations on the purchase of your new (brand) microwave oven. Thank you for placing your confidence in us" begins a typical pitch. Granted, the contract begins after the (usually rather short) warranty expires -- so does "quality" really mean "built to last till the warranty runs out"? Like all insurance, this is a "fear" sell. The profit on service contracts is reported to be huge -- & they're not inexpensive.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

PEOPLE. Jack Felton (retired vp corp comms, McCormick & Co) will teach at U Fla (Gainesville) starting next semester.

FIRM. Beverly Beltaire sells PR Associates (Detroit), founded '63, to exec vp Fred Zosel. She remains with firm as sr counsel.

HANDLING A HOSPITAL CRISIS THAT HELD LIFE - & - DEATH FEARS

For 10 days, San Francisco's California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) was the vortex of such a crisis. A blood-drawing technician, employed there 8 yrs, revealed to a friend he had been fantasizing about infecting patients with AIDS. Said that in fact he had -- even had a list of "victims." When hospital was alerted, "There was an incredible sense of urgency. We were dealing with a situation that at its worst could have involved a serial killer. Everyone grasped the gravity of the situation," Larry Kamer told *pr*. His firm, Kamer/Singer & Assocs, assisted the hospital with its crisis response & won a MacEachern Award from PRSA Health Academy.

OBJECTIVES (A) **Remove sensationalism** from media coverage by focusing on responsible safety demonstrations & illustrating the difference between blood drawing & an injection. (B) **Demonstrate candor & openness** to build & maintain credibility. (C) **Reach audiences quickly.** (D) **Control media demands** to maintain patient privacy, prevent disruptions.

STRATEGY 1. **Consult a medical ethicist** to determine whether to alert the public. "We had to balance the need of informing the public vs. the need not to incite a panic. Thankfully, the ethicist validated what the crisis team had decided to do" -- alert the public.

2. **Figure out whether a person could be infected during a blood draw.** A noted private detective was hired. "We quickly concluded it could not happen but there were some procedures that needed to be tightened up" -- i.e. walking patients thru each step of the blood draw, identifying safety procedures. Within 24 hrs hospital had installed sealed containers for used needles where no one can ever touch them.
3. **Alerted the City Health Dep't** before going public. "It had the helpful effect of getting the city's buy in to what we were doing. If there was going to be widespread concern, a panic about this, we felt they needed to be alerted. We're talking hours here, not days."
4. **Graphically depict the blood draw** to illustrate a key point: it requires taking blood out, there is no injection of any kind. "AIDS is an

"Collectively, the crisis team agreed it wasn't enough to say to the public 'you don't have anything to worry about.' Even tho CPMC had the moral authority to say that, we knew we'd be dealing with emotions & irrational fears."

emotional issue, especially here in San Francisco. We needed to counter that emotion with facts & pictures. Recognizing that most people get their information from tv, we immediately did a video B-roll to show the blood drawing procedure."

- TACTICS**
5. **Series of task forces** were set up to work on (a) counseling & education program, (b) safety, security & quality assurance, (c) communications & legal issues. A small control group coordinated these task forces.
 6. **Video B-roll** was produced within 12 hours. It served a key function in the press conference & media follow-up which announced the crisis.
 7. **Media training sessions with key spokespersons.**
 8. **800#** -- standard procedure today in crisis situations.
 9. **Free AIDS testing.** "More than 2000 people came in for free AIDS testing (at hospital's expense) & not one confirmed positive."
 10. **Press conference** with CEO, Health Dep't head, private detective & several AIDS experts. Every major media outlet in the Bay area was represented. After one week, media gave story scant attention. "The overall judgment of the court of public opinion was not guilty, well done."

An indicator of program's effectiveness: no law suits, no claims. "We're in an era where people sue for damages & have collected. Hospitals have had to pay for the emotional pain & suffering incurred during those weeks between testing & results. That's how high the sensitivity on this issue is. But there were none of these claims or settlements."

INTERNAL AUDIENCE A number of internal vehicles were used to communicate -- staff meetings, briefings for dep't mgrs, newsletters. "This employee was well known. He'd been at the hospital a long time. Employees needed to know the hospital was on top of this. **In an era of change & crisis, we feel the most important thing to communicate to employees is that you know & are on top of the situation.** Even if they disagree with your decisions, employees' primary psychological need is to know that the people in charge really are in charge.

"Employees also shared the sense that the hospital was going way above & beyond the minimum requirements. Had it only done the minimum legal requirements, it would have been a disaster as far as maintaining the trust of internal & external audiences."

REASON FOR HAVING A CRISIS PLAN IN PLACE

...or knowing a pr firm you can work with when a crisis hits: "The normal modes of decisionmaking, the normal communication patterns, all get short circuited -- we see this all the time. People become disfunctional. They don't want to make decisions. They don't believe what's happening. There's a lot of cognitive dissonance, lots of disbelief that what they are seeing is true."

DIVERSITY: SIGN OF THE TIMES

Museum of Fine Arts (Boston) leads off its December members' bulletin with this box:

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS AT THE MFA

In addition to the annual display of the creche, this year the Museum will also honor the celebrations of Hanukah and Kwanzaa with special installations commemorating these festivals.

[Sidebar: there seems to be no agreement on how to spell Chanukah (sic)]

SUCRETS "EARLY RETIREMENT" PR PROGRAM INCREASED SALES 20%

It "had a direct & powerful impact on our bottomline," modestly explains Frank Dzvonic, associate brand mgr.

BACKGROUND After 62 yrs, Sucrets tin packaging needed to be changed to keep the lozenges fresher. However, consumer tests showed tin was a main differentiating factor & competitive advantage. More than a third of consumers keep the tins to store other items. Changing the packaging risked losing (a) key identifying mark & (b) loyal users.

RESEARCH In conjunction with brand's 60th anniversary communications campaign, consumers were asked what they use Sucrets tins for after the lozenges are gone. 5,000 responded, providing a valuable database & guiding the "Early Retirement" strategy.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) **Deplete retailers' inventories** of tin-packaged Sucrets & promote retail orders of the new packaging.
- (2) **Create consumer demand** for tins by positioning them as a collectible.
- (3) **Leverage the heritage of the brand** to launch the new packaging.

EXECUTION "Early Retirement" program was launched last July. It was the *only* communications vehicle used during the time, so results can be directly attributed to the pr program. Tactics included:

- **Celebrity spokesperson** -- Charles Kimbrough, who plays "Jim Dial" on "Murphy Brown." Historical search found he did a Sucrets commercial in '77. His selection capitalized on the history of the brand, which earlier research revealed is important to consumers.
- **Retirement party & news conference.** Challenge was to create a newsworthy event that (1) retired the tin, not the brand, & (2) introduced the new packaging during the lowest interest period for throat lozenges. Invitation was a 6-inch wooden rocking chair with a tin of Sucrets secured to the arms. When the box was opened, a voice chip was triggered, delivering the message.