

make improvements. Were able to attract an org'n involved with housing rehabilitation called Neighborhood Housing Services.

CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Mount Sinai got NHS to participate in getting new housing for the many vacant lots. "It's not NHS' primary goal to build new housing, but we got them to participate & encourage the city to come up with an affordable housing program that provides subsidies for first time buyers within a certain income range." Wanted to attract developers willing to build market rate housing. Hospital helped the city with the RFP, then was the first contract awarded under that RFP. "We initiated that a couple years ago. 21 single family houses have been built & occupied. Contract called for 40. There's still enough vacant land to build 70. So the board is trying to encourage another developer to come in & finish off the first phase, then continue on its own or in partnership with the city." Mount Sinai also gives grants (\$1000) to employees if they buy. So far, several have.

Over the decade, \$17 million direct improvements have been made (including those made by NHS, Mount Sinai, homeowners, city & state) & another \$40 million in spin-off improvements -- upgrading 6-lane thoroughfare that runs thru the middle of the community. "Our role is to be a catalyst for change. Our job is to understand & interpret what we hear, develop leadership & constantly encourage & assist in the self-determination of this community," says CEO Benn Greenspan. Mount Sinai received the Foster G. McGaw Prize for its outstanding community service.

SHOULD CALLERS ON HOLD HEAR MUSIC OR INFO ABOUT YOU?

What percent of calls coming into your organization are put on hold? Consider the following data from a study by AT&T:

- 89% of business calls are placed on hold.
- 88% of those placed on hold prefer hearing product & service info to music or silence.
- Of those placed on hold & hear silence, 88% hang up.
- 85% will stay on hold if they hear messaging, & of those, 20% will purchase additional products or services based on the info they hear while on hold.

"In today's business climate, where the consumer is king, MOH creates goodwill by giving the listener valuable information. It also allows an organization to define itself. A small company can sound like a Fortune 500 company, and a Fortune 500 company can sound friendly & caring," writes John Manrique, corp comms.

Plugging a radio station into the phone system is one alternative, but it's illegal unless you're licensed to do so by ASCAP/BMI. [Must be a lot of lawbreakers out there, judging from experience.] Digital Message Systems' (Tampa) Message On Hold (MOH) allows an organization to communicate with its callers while on hold via a scripted message/music mix. Most common format is 6 minutes with 6 - 10 different messages spaced with musical interludes. Messages are changed at users request -- every other month is most common. (More info, 800-526-5355)

HOW 3 BASIC PR SKILLS CAN SAVE YOUR ORGANIZATION BIG BUCKS

All the Quality, rightsizing & re-engineering programs still leave organizations wasting huge sums on inefficient & ineffective internal communications methods. 3 basic skills available to every practitioner can save these dollars -- **and more importantly** increase productivity:

1. BRIEF ACTION-STEP MEMOS

Long, rambling, dull, paragraphic memos still rule. Not focused or reader-friendly, therefore not read, or not clear & not acted upon. This is no joke: the time lost in writing & trying to read these horrors is vast. The cycle time lost in non-action is equal or larger. E-mail notes are no exception. Even relatively short ones require deciphering: wasted minutes.

PR can join the waste-busters by leading the charge for new memo styles, or standard memo forms, or training in writing effective ones -- or all 3.

2. TIME-GOBLING MEETINGS

Too many & too long. Inadequate notice or preparation means bad, amended-later decisions or no decisions. Failure to communicate action steps or to followup leads to system failures, lost time & opportunities. Even allowing coffee adds a hefty percentage of unproductive chatter -- which is different from needed small talk (what psychologists call "the expression required before communication").

Better meetings can do more to aid decisionmaking & free up productive hours than anything -- and pr can take the lead in a better-meetings campaign, then train facilitators & attendees in how to achieve them.

3. IGNORING THE POWER OF FACE-TO-FACE

People on the same corridor e-mailing one another rather than picking themselves out of their chairs & going to talk to a person who's next door. Waxing prolix in a memo -- which takes time to go thru the mail system, reach the top of the pile, get read (if it does) -- rather than walking to the person's office (or even phoning them) and seeing the topic thru to decision in minutes.

Dep't managers sending everyone a memo when a 10-minute stand-up meeting would give everyone the same info at the same time direct from the source -- while allowing questions that achieve clarity.

Everyone knows face-to-face works best -- and pr can provide training, a plan & "substitutes for willpower" to make it happen.



In coming issues & t&t's, prr will carry case histories, research, & how-to suggestions to alleviate the 3 damaging conditions described on the preceding page. Readers with success stories, or failures, are urged to share them. Probably no other opportunity to contribute directly to 1) the bottomline & 2) organizational effectiveness exists for practitioners.

**GREAT & RELEVANT SUMMER READING FOR PRACTITIONERS:
SCOTT CUTLIP'S HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

The Unseen Power: Public Relations (Erlbaum) informs & counsels present-day pr pros even as it entertains. Its 776 pages live up to the jacket promotion:

"...the first detailed history of public relations from 1900 thru the 1960s. Based largely on primary sources, it documents the tremendous role public relations practitioners play in our nation's economic, social & political affairs -- a role that goes generally unseen & unobserved by the average citizen whose life is affected in so many ways..."

Beginning with the first pr firm, Boston's Publicity Bureau of 1900, Cutlip employs his personal relations with the pioneers or their immediate successors to give insight into "a vocation becoming a profession."

Much of the story is as fresh as today's news -- like the history of pr at GM, how vp-pr Tony DeLorenzo actively opposed his CEO employing counselor Earl Newsom, & the subsequent downgrading of the function.

Exciting as a narrative & a human story, the book covers such well-remembered & unfairly forgotten names as

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Ivy Lee | Steve Hannegan | John Hill |
| Hamilton Wright | Harry Bruno | Carl Byoir |
| Pen Dudley | Wm. H. Baldwin | Whittaker & Baxter |
| Ed Bernays | Ben Sonnenberg | and Newsom |
| John Price Jones | Clarke & Tyler | |

The latter, who stood for deeds, not words, & only counseled senior management, seems to be Cutlip's choice as the precursor of ultimate professional status. The chapters detailing the controversy within the field over Bernays pose again many unresolved issues among practitioners.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

REALIGNMENT. Harry Pearce, GM legal counsel who forced NBC to apologize for its rigged footage on saddle tank explosions, named evp with responsibility for corp comms & industry-gov't rels & urban & comty afrs & corp governance, plus much more, as part of this week's management shakeup. Bruce MacDonald (vp corp comms) & staff will report to him.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS BIG TIME: REHABBING NEIGHBORHOODS

Hospitals are adopting neighborhoods & helping to rehabilitate them. It's "enlightened self-interest," Jay Canna, vp inst'l afrs at Mount Sinai (Chi), told prr.

BUTTERWORTH'S APPROACH

Butterworth Hospital is located in downtown Grand Rapids. An area next to its main campus "is known for crime, people don't feel safe there," Martha Quist, comms coord, told prr. Homes there were once beautiful but are in disrepair; landlords are absent. "We're interested in (a) helping the community improve the neighborhood & (b) investing in our staff members."

Butterworth took the lead in creating the "BHOME" program: staff members purchasing a home in the area receive a \$5000 loan from Butterworth. They must live in the home. Each year the loan is forgiven 1/3. After 3 yrs, it's forgiven in total.

3-yr pilot began late '93; so far 1 person signed on. To promote the program, Butterworth recently did a tour of homes. Held an open house for general public & staff. Invited mortgage & insurance companies to give presentations. Had someone available to talk to employees about BHOME. Then offered guided or self-guided tours of the homes available for purchase.

MOUNT SINAI'S CHALLENGE

In '78, hospital's board formed a community development committee. "It's charged with looking at the non-medical needs of the community, using board's & hospital's influence to encourage betterment of the community around the hospital," Canna told prr.

Mount Sinai is in Lawndale, in Chicago's West Side, which was the scene of the worst riots in '68. Many city blocks are still vacant, never replaced. During 60s & 70s, major employers left. Population went from 200,000 to 80,000. "What we're trying to do thru various org'ns is encourage employers to come back, & encourage homeowners to stay, live & work in the community -- for the betterment of the community & the hospital."

Initially wanted to improve all of Lawndale "but it became apparent that was too big a bite." Now focusing on area immediately around the hospital. "When we narrowed our focus, we zeroed in on housing rehabilitation & ultimately new housing." Still worked with city to get them to look at the greater community of Lawndale & with other org'ns, primarily churches & the few remaining employers, to develop efforts to

It shows how broadly healthcare reform must go. HUD Sec. Henry Cisneros recently told urban hospital CEOs: "What I'm asking you to do is come out of those institutions you manage on a day-to-day basis...and get into the communities that depend on you for their health & economic welfare." Many urban & rural hospitals "have a unique opportunity to engage in the process of social reform & economic development ... to become agents of change in the lives of real people." HUD is looking for partners & has called for a doubling of federal resources, making \$1.7-billion available.