

## CYBERPULSE OFFERS ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL FOCUS GROUPS

Division of Impulse Research Corp works online conducting CyberGroups & CyberSurveys -- using private e-mail discussion groups. This enables respondents to engage in a higher level of dialogue, company believes.

- Thoughtful comments replace spontaneous, off-the-cuff remarks so prevalent with conventional focus groups or in online "chat rooms."
- For sensitive issues, respondents are usually more candid in their responses as shyness & embarrassment are overcome with the anonymity afforded online.
- Cost is cheaper by a third because there is no facility rental, phone recruitment or travel. Since participants can participate from anywhere in the world, fewer focus groups are required, further reducing cost.

While cyberspace is not yet a microcosm of society, "it is possible to find most consumer, business & professional groups online these days," say founders Bob & Varda Novick. (Info, 310/559-6892; impulse@cyberpulse.com)

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**PEOPLE.** Surviving PRSA founder & issues guru Howard Chase reports he suffered a broken pelvis but is "now almost as good as new. I did have to learn to walk again."

pa ofcr, Smithsonian Assocs); Sheila Gibbons (dpa, Gannett Co). Cole was also named PR Woman of the Year. Awards luncheon raised \$1000 for DC Rape Crisis Ctr.

**ELECTED.** Public Affairs Council ofcrs: chrm, James Hart, Jr (vp-pa, Panhandle Eastern Corp, Houston); chrm-elect, Mack Hogans (svp-corp afrc, Weyerhaeuser, Tacoma).

Kerry Tucker (Nuffer, Smith, Tucker, San Diego) receives the '95 Howard Chase Award from Issues Management Council -- highest distinction for individuals practicing issue mgmt.

Council of Communication Management new ofcrs: pres, Kevin Kelly (independent consultant, Ridgewood, NJ); vp, Alison Davis (pres, Davis, Hays & Co, Maywood, NJ); dirs, David Coburn (comn mgr, Weyerhaeuser, Tacoma), Marcia Berry (mgr, hr comn, Texaco, White Plains), Gary Diedrichs (pres, The Publications Co, Detroit), Larry Gavrich (internal comms & ed svcs, United Technologies, Hartford)

PRSA-NY awards David Bicofsky (NYNEX) the John W. Hill Award for outstanding service & accomplishment; Terrie Williams (The Terrie Williams Agency) the new Philip Dorf Award for her outstanding record of mentoring & helping others to grow.

PRSA-Detroit Hall of Fame inducts Beverly Beltaire (PR Assocs), Ted Mecke Jr (former pa head, Ford) & Jim Tolley (consultant, ex-vp-pr Chrysler) in conjunction with chapter's 50th anniversary celebration.

**HONORS.** Washington Women in PR honors 3: Pat Bario (Patricia Bario Assocs); Joan Macmaster Cole (former

Happy Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas & New Year to everyone! This is the last issue of 1995, giving staff & printer a much needed rest. You can still call us; we'll be monitoring our messages. Our in-depth, special topic, 1st of the Year issue will appear on January 1.

## COMMUNICATING CORPORATE TRANSFORMATION: A CAUTIONARY CASE

During transitions, there cannot be too much communication, advises John Sammons, vp corp comms, Univar Corp, a \$2 billion industrial chemical company still evaluating effectiveness of its own change process.

- The biggest challenge: **Changing the way people work**, i.e. job behavior.
- **Setting expectations** may be the cornerstone of successful reengineering. The company's CEO & COO were dismissed last month by the board because "Massive changes took longer than the board expected." His advice: Before entering a change process, thoroughly assess readiness for change first."

### NEED FOR CHANGE

With sales flattening & costs rising, management realized the company's only genuine distinction was that it was big. Since it had grown by acquisition, with its typical redundancies & cultural diversities, size had become a hindrance.

The entire company was redesigned over a couple of years, with 115 people in 18 teams devoting themselves to the 2-year design process. A two to three year implementation was planned. Goal of the project was clear: *To assure product could be delivered within one overnight truck run.*

### DETAILS OF THE PROCESS

1. Teams began with the facility most adaptable & enthusiastic about the transformation and leveraged experience there to demonstrate benefits to others -- **the pilot approach.**
2. **Buy-in.** Even if unions or other forces wanted to inhibit the process, they couldn't. "People wanted it, so managers couldn't stop it."
3. **E-mail, Q&A & face-to-face** were the most effective communications tools. "People didn't like what they heard but said they appreciated management's willingness to show up."

- Periodic communications exchanges held regularly with senior managers & local workers provided most opportunities for face-to-face. "The more in front of people you can get, the better. We would like to have had more managers more involved. Corp com's still drives communications but managers need to be more involved."
- Transition Managers weekly print Q&A newsletter (uncensored but fact-checked by Sammons), a 'no holds barred' e-mail newsletter,



occasional interactive videos (2-way audio, 1-way video) were other communications tools.

4. **Feedback mechanisms** involved lower level employees in the process. Customers were "consulted throughout the process."

**DRAMATIC RESULTS...** 500 of the company's 2500 jobs were eliminated; two levels of management reduced; a hub-and-spoke distribution system created to move closer to customers; a team selling approach adopted using a combination of inside & outside sales reps. New organization produced a needs-based consultative sales process, self-directed workteams in the warehouses and uniform business process allowing leverage of investment in technology. 70% of the employees were relocated.

- ... WITH DISTRESSING FALLOUTS**
1. Marketplace relations were "unnecessarily bruised. It's a real challenge to carry the message to customers."
  2. For suppliers it is now *harder* -- not easier -- to do business with the company.
  3. "We don't know yet if it's paid off. Sales are down. It will probably take another 2-3 years. Expectations were it would take less time."

NOTE: The company used reengineering consultants (at one time 25 were involved) but no communications consultants. Sammons, the first communications professional in the organization, had one assistant.

### RETHINKING INTERNS: STUDENT PROJECT SHOWS CAPABILITIES

Student project at Fla International U demonstrates student abilities in a way that forces another look at what interns could do. Project is a hurricane preparedness booklet put together by members of school's PRSSA chapter. "We're going into a 3rd year now where Amoco is underwriting it. It's expanding to the Dade County Public Schools as well as other hurricane prone areas in Florida; and both the National & International Hurricane Centers are going to adopt it," Bill Adams, faculty advisor, told prr.

Students are currently preparing a concept for the Dade schools -- tracking maps for 4th grade science teachers. Back of maps will contain hurricane info & note to parents about where to get the booklet on hurricane preparedness. Students may also refigure the book for Jacksonville, Tampa, Pensacola & a few other hurricane prone areas. "Then we think years after that we'll do things like help underwrite student tours to the Hurricane Center -- which is on the FIU campus."

**RECOGNIZED AS MODEL** This public/private partnership is a model pr program: a) longterm; b) research based; c) community service oriented; d) has a funding partner; e) conducts post-project evaluation "so we can change the program the next year."

Project won the Teahan Award for Community Service from PRSSA. In the past 2 years, FIU students, working with pr pros from Amoco, researched, wrote (in Spanish & English), produced & distributed over 200,000 copies of the pocket-sized 76-page guide on "family hurricane preparedness."

### HIGHER EDUCATION NEXT TARGET OF SOCIALLY ENFORCED CHANGE

Dartmouth President Jim Freedman joins the list of those who fear so. Accepting an award for exemplary use of public relations, he gave the reasons why in a partial issues agenda:

1. The difficulty now of **diverse class construction** -- a necessary goal but open to attack from all sides.
2. Giving **preference to children of alumni** in admission -- reward for loyalty but seen unfair.
3. Balancing **free speech & political correctness**, when articulating First Amendment values is no longer sufficient.
4. **Quality of teaching**. Finding superior academics devoted to teaching, not research.
5. **Cost**. Dartmouth's total cost of \$28,000/yr appears outrageous -- yet it's only half the actual cost! "Why do we look so rich & feel so poor?"

### ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

**Further Conflicts of Interest for Journalists?** First, cases of commercial conflict in reporting because non-media corporations now own major media. Then CNN's stonewalling an ad that disagreed with Ted Turner's position on an issue. And 60 Minutes succumbing to prior restraint due to lawyers' fear of being sued. Now LATimes has adopted a policy that may motivate more imbalance in coverage. Its CEO told PaineWebber's annual media conference exec pay will be tied to stock prices. Control of content by Wall Street is already a serious factor in Hollywoodization of news. Will this exacerbate the problem? Will the other new plan of giving all employees of a year or more stock options -- assumedly including reporters? Still more grief for pr folks trying to get balanced news: "We have pressed our people & our systems to the limit. Morale has suffered," said the CEO. No wonder pr pros evaluate media & reporters!

**Can We Influence the Tone of Our E-Mail Messages?** After reading the lead article in prr 12/4 about tone of materials, a reader comments that "it reminds me of an issue that has been on my mind as I use more & more e-mail communication. I struggle with wording messages of a delicate nature because I can't use vocal inflection to express sensitivity. It's like the old adage -- don't deliver bad news in writing. I'm never sure if my messages are received in the spirit of my intent. Anybody have thoughts about this?" (Mail, fax or e-mail your ideas to prr. We'll share them here.)