

individual & the good health of our people," reads the conference literature. (More info: 617/351-7831, fax 617/578-8749)

PR RESEARCH SOFTWARE AVAILABLE. Called PR Research, it works on any Apple computer with at least 1 megabyte of RAM memory & with a mouse. Can create or evaluate research plans, projects & proposals. Software design follows a step-by-step progression. 6-step research process includes: 1) **design** the investigation; 2) **sample** the population or public; 3) **observe** the pr phenomena of interest; 4) **measure** those pr phenomena; 5) **analyze** the data; 6) **report** the results. Each area is arranged with additional buttons to take you deeper into the subject if you choose. Many buttons are interactive & will provide feedback to your typed input. Intelligence is built into PR Research to help make decisions about everything from choosing the most appropriate research method to determining sample size, designing the measurement instrument & analyzing the data. Software was developed by John Pavlik (comms prof & dir, School of Comm, SDSU). (\$59.95; Pavlik Research, 12080 Tivoli Park Row #8, San Diego 92128; 619/676-1102; reduced rates for educators, students & bulk orders)

SIGN OF THE TIMES: SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS, from American Society for Healthcare Marketing & PR. "Career Survival" aims to help practitioners teetering on the edge of change. "As organizations reposition themselves & align to form integrated healthcare systems, many traditional positions will be eliminated & jobs will be shifted to new areas," notes the guide. It offers experts' ideas on career planning, management & redirection: 1) tips on reducing your chances of being eliminated; 2) resume rules; 3) preinterview preparation; 4) possible interview questions; 5) phone tips; 6) overcoming interview obstacles; 7) networking; 8) exec search firms & outplacement svcs; 9) severance pay. (Order by calling 800/AHA-2626 & requesting item #C-166300, or call 312/422-3738 & request an order form; \$25; nonmbrs \$40)

BREAK THRU THE CLUTTER WITH A "TALKING" DOCUMENT. When recipient opens the folder, it speaks with your voice via Voice Pack -- built-in recording mechanism that uses microchip technology & ultra-thin batteries, speakers & microphones. Switch plays message whenever folder is opened. Because you can record the message yourself, you can personalize it to your recipient. Shelf life is 6 months, can be played & rerecorded hundreds of times. Useful as 1) a "leave behind" following a presentation, 2) talking invitations to special events; 3) any communication to emphasize key points; 4) press kit. Unexpected voice has dramatic, attention-getting effect. (Info: Structural Graphics, 80 Plains rd, Essex, Ct. 06426; 203/767-2661)

SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION RULES TODAY, but what is the meaning of these signs, seen by counselor Catherine Moss at the Beringer Winery in Napa Valley: "Public Relations ↑ Slow 10 m.p.h" reads the upper of 2 directionals on a single sign post. Then, adding the usual insult to injury, comes the lower sign: "Please No Visitors Beyond This Point". Well, admit it: there are many days when PR wants no visitors!

I'LL SUE! TIPS FOR MINIMIZING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF LITIGATION

A growing issue facing pr pros in all types of organizations is the increasingly negative visibility of litigation -- especially the criminal prosecution of corporations. Counselor Jim Lukaszewski (White Plains, NY) sees 3 powerful, permanent effects caused by **criminal litigation**:

- 1) top management's frustration & fear;
- 2) constant presence of attorneys whose division of information assures that no one really knows the whole story;
- 3) very little gets done within the organization, especially when those under investigation remain in their jobs.

Civil litigation's most significant effect is the combative attitude senior execs tend to adopt, often encouraged by their lawyers. "It leads to a mindset of confrontation: 'Let's not give in or give up anything,' & 'We don't want to look like sissies to our peers.'"

7 KEYS TO MANAGING YOUR LITIGATION VISIBILITY

As always, anticipation is the best policy. Begin by implementing a positive litigation visibility strategy *immediately* on being sued -- if possible. "The reality is that clients often try just about anything else first. The irony is that when a settlement, a plea or the verdict ultimately arrives, it's the very steps & concepts of anticipatory planning, implemented either voluntarily or involuntarily, which bring the proceedings to a close":

1. **Learn the process.** It's helpful when everyone understands the road map & anticipates the milestones & major events ahead.
2. **Develop a message strategy for each phase of the trial.** Because trials often have interruptions & a variety of predictable phases, it's useful to think about & plan for what might be said or pointed out at each stage.
3. **Settle fast.** As unsatisfactory as settlement seems to be at first, it is probably the most potent tool available for managing litigation visibility. The faster the settlement, the less visibility.
4. **Anticipate high profile variables.** Prepare to appropriately characterize those things that can go wrong as litigation proceeds. The communicator often feels like the trial attorney whose defendant shares the worst possible information about the case as he or she rises to give a summation statement to the jury.



5. *Keep the focus positive.* Ultimately, it's a positive, productive attitude that leads to effective negotiations, a relationship with the jury or a plea agreement. The sooner you can move thru that combative phase, the defensive excuse phase & into negotiating, the sooner things will go away.
6. *Try settling again.* This ought to be primary litigation visibility management strategy.
7. *Fight nicely:*
 - Be relentlessly positive.
 - If you feel like a warrior, act like you're preparing for war & forecast war, there's going to be war.
 - Wars are very messy, very expensive & your side will take the heaviest casualties.
 - If you hire only warriors as lawyers, you'll always be at war.
 - Wars have a way of never ending.
 - You'll regret wars; they leave lousy legacies.
 - Fire the warriors; hire the peace-makers.
 - Avoid war & you avoid a lot of crummy trial visibility.

From Lukaszewski's experience, "the longer a client takes to get to this method of thinking & the longer a company refuses to recognize how the public perceives what 'good company behavior' really is, the longer the pain lasts & the more difficult it is to resolve & settle legal issues."

CRIMINAL PROSECUTION THREAT IS REAL

"It's getting easier to sue & indict corporations & large organizations. In Nov '90, US EPA & Dep't of Justice jointly announced that, because civil action against companies for regulatory violation was not effective, they would give criminal prosecution of corporations, corporate officers & boards of directors the highest priority.

"Since then virtually all other federal regulatory agencies -- & increasingly states & counties -- have adopted & are working this same theme aggressively. When you add 1) juries antagonistic to corporate interests, & 2) broad-based & growing public support for punishment, the last thing your organization needs is lousy trial publicity. The lesson here is that most lousy trial publicity is within the corporation's ability to manage, if it & the people who run it so choose."

Positive side: An opportunity for pr to be taken more seriously.

Of Related Interest:

LAWYERS SEE RELATIONSHIP WITH PR VITAL FOR ORGANIZATIONAL WELL-BEING

Two from one of South Florida's most prestigious law firms are calling for a closer relationship between the two professions, "especially in helping explain things to the public."

The attorneys from Tripp, Scott, Conklin & Smith spoke to the Gulfstream PRSA Chapter urging practitioners to "strategize with attorneys on litigation, drafting responses, releases & other communication." They recommended getting educated on legal aspects of situations in order to adequately explain litigation to the media & other constituencies.

"HAVE WE MISSED THE MARK ON EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS?"

So asks IABC's *Communication World* for March. Answer is of course yes, as lead article by The Larkins emphasizes. What's troubling is the thought that IABC members, still heavily internal communicators, would need to be told these "lessons" based on "a long hard look at the facts":

- Stop advising execs to become more visible & have traveling roadshows
- Give up trying to boost senior mgmt credibility -- there isn't time
- Don't gather big groups of employees together for a grand announcement
- **Instead,** target frontline supervisors as your communications priority

Spend 80% of your time, money & effort to communicate with this critical group, advise the authors of *Communicating Change: Winning Employee Support for New Business Goals*. The role of senior mgrs is to:

- Have regular face-to-face contact with these supervisors

The key: Make supervisors feel like privileged senders & receivers of info

OTHER IMPORTANT ADVICE

- Avoid video
- Make print serve face-to-face
- Among employees, if it's not face-to-face, it's not communication
- Info not touching employees' work area is seen as irrelevant

Controversial -- but probably true:

- Consultants & senior mgrs think supervisors are poor communicators; employees think they're good communicators
- The reason supervisors don't communicate is because they often don't know, haven't been told, anything worth communicating
- We give them info for which there is no employee demand (financial results, mission-vision-values) then wonder why they don't communicate it!

You've read most of this many times over the past decade in *pr*. We are concerned that practitioners haven't figured this out from their own daily experience. But TJ & Sandar Larkin have gathered a sheaf of research from around the world to support every point. (For portfolio of *pr* articles on this approach, call or fax.)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS:

HEALTH COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE, sponsored by Emerson-Tufts (*pr* 3/20) and U Kentucky, will be held in Boston, April 20-22. Conference theme is the role of scholars & the application of health communication principles to better the health of individuals & communities. "The challenge is for community leaders thruout the globe to effectively communicate & involve their constituent publics in practicing 'health' within an ethical framework. To meet this challenge, we must work to develop a synergistic relationship of individuals & organizations to form the New Health Order, directed & focused on positively promoting the vital life of the