

AS SCHOOL-AGE & SENIORS PROLIFERATE, PR IS IMPACTED

Demographic trends that pose major challenges for public education also affect all organizations' pr activities. Report by Educational Research Service -- *Demographic Factors in American Education* -- notes that due to increases in a) fertility rates, b) number of women of child-bearing age & c) immigration, Census Bureau has dramatically increased its projections of the school-age population.

By 2005, children to be educated will increase by 19% above the last reported number in 1990. This will bring the school-age population to 53.8 million. Between 1990 - 2030, this population is projected to grow by 33% to 60.3 million. This will influence "family values" issues, including employee needs, marketing of most products, programs to reach parents thru children and much more.

Other demographic trends that have important policy implications:

- **Number of persons 65 & over** is expected to rise even more dramatically, reaching 70.2 million by 2030. AARP is already nation's largest activist organization, could become almost all-powerful.
- **Seniors will outnumber the school-age group** by 2020, for the first time in US history -- bringing increased competition for limited financial resources. Report states that "the extent to which this competition becomes a major problem depends on the economic health & the public attitude toward schools in states, in the nation, & in local communities."
- **Poverty rate for children has risen.** Was 14% in '73; 22% in '92.
- **Numbers of high school grads are beginning to rise.** 2.5 million students graduated in '93 -- lowest number in recent years. However, '93 was the first year of a projected increase in the number of grads that will last thru 2004, when the number of grads is projected to be 3.1 million. This will represent a 24% increase over the '93 low point.
- **Gap in dropout rates between whites & minorities** is closing, comparing '72 to '92 -- but major differences still exist. For Hispanics it declined from 34% to 29%. Blacks, 21% to 14%. Whites, 12% to 8%.
- **Racial & ethnic composition of students** will change dramatically over the next 30 yrs. White children comprised 75% in '80; 69% in '90; will comprise 49% in 2030. Hispanics will increase from 8% in '80 to 23% in 2030. Asian/Pacific Islanders will increase from 1.6% in '80 to 9% in 2030. Blacks, 15% in '80 to 18% in 2030.

(More info: Educational Research Service, 2000 Clarendon blvd, Arlington, Va 22201; 703/243-2100; fax 703/243-8316)

IRS' **DESIRE TO BE CUSTOMER-DRIVEN IS APPARENT, BUT...** News releases told of extended hours of phone help on the last 3 Saturdays before the April 17 filing deadline. But desire is only as good as the result it generates. Release arrived April 24, envelope is *postmarked* April 17. Bit late to do any good. How do screw-ups like this happen?

THOSE WHO'VE BEEN THERE TELL HOW TO KEEP YOUR JOB

Bob Berzok, who still has his senior level pr job, gave sound advice in the April 3 *pr* for a number of colleagues who don't -- and all practitioners: "I firmly believe we have to approach senior management as an audience, just like employees, customers & other audiences."

Frank Parisi, ex-vp corp comms, Cray Research, adds this note of heartfelt reality:

"While I thought the value of my group's contributions was well understood by the current management, as it was with my two previous CEOs, it clearly was not. And I must take responsibility for that failure. Perhaps the moral of this story is that we must never stop aggressively selling -- or educating -- others about what we do and why it is important (and a bargain, at that)."

WHY THE TOPIC IS TIMELY

Look at the list of respected senior pr pros who have left their companies, or seen their posts downgraded, within recent weeks. While there are probably a variety of plausible explanations -- including that old bugaboo "chemistry" -- it raises the question whether companies are losing what John Budd terms "real-world experience, accumulated over some years, that roots the wisdom & counsel of our senior practitioners."

GM: Bruce MacDonald
International Paper: Steve Kaye
Dayton Hudson: Ann Barkelew
Readers Digest: Carole Howard
PG&E: Grant Horne
Amoco: Jim Griffith

Electric Power Research Institute:
Dick Claeys
GTE: Ed MacEwen
Allied Signal: Dave Powell
Cincinnati Bell: Scott Aiken
Travelers: Wilson Wyatt

MGMT CONSULTANTS NEED EDUCATING

Real culprit is often some tony consulting firm -- few of whom assign much value to the people factor. To them, the world is economics & technology -- as if people didn't control both. Says Claeys, after recounting that the **electric utility industry** overall is also seeing great elimination or downsizing of pr:

A lot of these places use McKinsey, which has a model of core competencies -- what is your real business...then other things are looked at as candidates for outsourcing.



What does this do to relationships? He says some organizations "try to buy some of the expertise in the form of consulting arrangements." But should any organization permit *outsiders* to be building its *relationships*?

TRY THIS SELF-AUDIT Budd feels practitioners would be well advised in this climate to ask themselves these queries:

1. **Am I discounting my experiences**, not valuing what I've learned?
2. **Have I allowed my role to become largely discretionary** -- a "use me if you like because I'm busy doing my own thing" attitude? If you give assignments that are rightly pr's to others, so what?
3. Have I chosen, or allowed myself to be forced into, **reactive rather than proactive roles**? Joe Nolan's 5-word dictum still rules: Don't wait to be asked!

To that might be added prr's long-running theme: Am I just **producing communication products...or providing strategic counsel**, mentoring managers & associates and suggesting pr models for solving major problems?

TOO BUSY BEING ADMINISTRATORS? Budd wonders whether the growth of pr dep'ts over time led senior managers to feel their job was running the unit -- as would be the case in law or finance. He feels pr "is the only management function that cannot be contained in a structural setup." PR leaders should be:

Opportunistic	Boat rockers
Flexible	Source of fresh, uncomfortable ideas
Entrepreneurial	Issue anticipators
Risk-taking	

He believes dropping "pr" in favor of "communications" positioned practitioners as implementers, not counselors. This is particularly pernicious when "communications" has come to mean the dep'ts who handle computer networking & telephones. Call any office, ask for "communications" -- and you'll get information services, MIS or whatever it's called there.

NEW HOPE: CROSS-FUNCTIONAL WORK TEAMS These forgo old fashioned organizational structure -- no neat boxes, all symmetrical. Teams are formed to achieve specific goals or assignments. Not in broad categories like internal relations or community relations. But concrete opportunities like enhancing morale thru an ambassador program, or building a solid working partnership with city gov't.

The people part of the strategic goals of the organization become team assignments. Teams use the entire realm of tools & techniques -- face-to-face, publications/video, research, advertising, publicity etc. Members come from all disciplines & specialties, as far as possible.

Outside counsel or specialists can easily be added for a project, so cost control is better since large staffs need not be maintained.

PR VALUE OF PLAYING A ROLE IN POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

Dedicated to this idea, The Body Shop Canada (TBSC) targeted the issue of violence against women. 51% of Canadian women have experienced violence, according to Statistics Canada. This statistic moved TBSC to act -- to motivate Canadians to get involved & encourage zero tolerance.

CAMPAIGN "In the Name of Love, STOP Violence Against Women" was launched in all The Body Shops across Canada on March 1, 1994 & ran for 3 weeks. However, to reach the more than 2 million who visit TBSCs over the Christmas season, a bookmark was created which was available in-shop to all customers, beginning Nov. 1, 1993. Recipients were asked to bring the bookmark back in March, thus: a) establishing awareness; b) bringing customers back when materials would be available; c) adding a fundraising element as TBSC donated 50 cents to the campaign partners (YWCA & Canadian Women's Fdn) for every bookmark returned. Additional tactics:

1. Letters outlining the campaign were sent to key women's organizations across Canada to inform & build local relationships.
2. Franchisees partnered with local organizations already working to help end violence against women. Money & other donations have been raised thru more than 36 community events run by franchisees.
3. Posters created for the campaign were put in windows of all TBSCs. Visual was a daisy with half the petals missing -- symbolizing the violence-cycle of *he loves me, he loves me not*.
4. T-shirts featuring the daisy were sold as a fundraising initiative for the CWF & YWCA.
5. Info on the issue, plus shelter cards listing emergency help numbers & shelters, were available at all TBSCs.
6. On International Women's Day (March 8, 1994) an event was held with Margot Franssen, TBSC pres, as keynote speaker. On that same day, all TBSCs gave customers daisies as a symbol of the campaign & to raise awareness for the issue. "Daisy drops" were organized for local media.
7. End of March, began an in-shop fundraising initiative for Outward Bound's Women of Courage program -- a course that helps survivors regain their self-respect thru wilderness training. To date, program has provided funding for 37 participants.
8. In November, TBSC awarded \$100,000 to violence prevention programs run by CWF & YWCA -- each receiving \$50,000.
9. Supporting all of these events were coast-to-coast media relations campaigns. Resulted in copious newspaper, tv & radio coverage permeating all areas of Canada which communicated the message of zero tolerance & positioned TBSC as a caring corporation.

Strategic Objectives (Toronto) designed the campaign, which won an IPRA Golden World Award.