

## 1. Most important criteria used by clients to evaluate firms were:

- Meets deadlines, keeps promises (75%, down from 84% last year)
- Client service (74%, down from 81%)
- Honest accurate billing (65%, up from 56%)
- Creativity (56%, up from 47% -- moving from 7th to 4th place)
- Knowledge of my industry (48%, up from 36%)

## 2. Top services sought by pr firm clients:

- Primary research -- surveys & focus groups -- (65%)
- Media relations (63%)
- Counseling (63%)
- Graphic design (62%)
- Special events (54%)

(More: 708/266-1020)

"Access to the Internet/on-line services" was named by only 5% as extremely important in evaluating pr firms. "Multi-media capabilities" -- also new to the survey -- ranked near the bottom as well (6%). "Apparently there is a discernible gap between client interest & the well publicized scramble to the information highway by pr firms," notes Tom Harris.

## ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

"Eschew sesquipedalianism," advises Steve Shapiro of Rowan College (Glassboro, NJ). That means "avoid the unnecessary use of large words." As a teacher of public relations, Shapiro advocates clarity over an impressive vocabulary. In a fax to *pr* he writes: "Large vocabularies are generally perceived as desirable. They help writers [& speakers] find a single word or phrase to express a nuance that gives power & life to a thought. But unless you are planning lunch with William Buckley, Jr, clarity, brevity & meaning are better served by keeping words short & simple. Powerful writing [& speaking] is active, concise & comprehensive."

"Lawyers' Bane ... PR's Future? Commenting on a disability lawsuit involving an attorney, a labor lawyer says that, for lawyers, "The prevailing view is that you can't be professional & competitive if you're not willing to work virtually all the time."

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**HONORS.** Edward Gottlieb (consultant) receives Amelia Lobsenz/Pinnacle Worldwide "Legends of Public Relations" award for his contribution to the growth & professionalism of pr.

**ELECTED.** Women Execs in PR '95-'96 ofcrs: pres, Marilyn Castaldi (sr

vp, Fleishman-Hillard); pres-elect, Claire Coleman (Coleman Communications); vp, Valerie DiMaria (pres, GCI Group); sec'y, Margaret Warder (Warder Communications); treas, Judith Cohn (Judy Cohn Public Relations).

## REACHING THAT RICH BUT ELUSIVE PUBLIC, SENIOR CITIZENS

Investment marketers, travel & leisure industries, schools, organizations seeking volunteers & many others pursue the growing, financially capable, time-available senior segment. A Michigan educator offers a program which highlights strategies that work.

## 1. They Want To Learn, Grow, Enjoy -- Not Be Sold "I'm a community educator at the core. I

believe education keeps people alive, makes them healthier & knits them together," Mary Weber, comms & comty educ dir for Big Rapids Public Schls (BRPS), told *pr*. She saw a tremendous need to bring seniors together, & for the past 7 yrs has helped bring them into the high school for an annual day-long conference -- with a big-band dance at night.

## 2. Relationship Opportunities Key Tho it didn't begin with public relations motivations, it's building positive relationships. "People can't wait for this event. Men &amp; women

alike speak enthusiastically about it. We have to cut off registrations because we can only hold 500 people. They're coming from as far away as 250 miles."

- Bottomline benefit: school board passed a bond issue this year -- "one of very few to pass in the state; the climate here isn't favorable."

"This is a great way to get seniors into the building, to show them we're interested in servicing them." Luring unfamiliar publics inside facilities is a basic psychological necessity, so semantics can change from "the school" to "our school."

## 3. "Make It Fun" That's key when working with seniors, says Weber.

She liberated a 2-yr old event that was like "here's your ticket to the rest home" by turning it into a full blown conference with 90 speakers & an 18-piece big-band dance at night. Tho some on the planning committee had reservations, thought it "wouldn't fly," attendance went from 150 to 350 that year.

## 4. Multi-Organization Sponsorship Along with BPRS, participants include local hospital, Commission on Aging, RSVP (Retired Sr Volunteer Prgm), hospice, home healthcare groups. Ferris State U sociology dep't helped for the first time this year.



- It's supported by fundraising with gifts from corporations. Two biggest are ANR Pipeline & Michigan Consolidated Gas. Chamber of Commerce contributes advertising in its newsletter.

5. **Watch Out For Ticket Pricing** Seniors pay \$5 to attend which includes lunch. "Originally we made the conference free & charged \$5 for lunch. But they would say, 'Thanks, we'll pass on lunch.' So now we say \$5 for the conference!" Seniors may be rich as a segment, but they tend to be cost-conscious.
- To hold costs down, 90 speakers donate their time. "We make no assumptions. Anything we'd like as younger planners, we know seniors would like. I tweek the titles to make them fun." Four sessions of 25 concurrent workshops, each 45 minutes long, cover such topics as: computers, arts & crafts, history, massage therapy, country line dancing, golf, veterans' benefits, prescriptions, Medicaid, travel tips, how to participate in an auction, car repair, how to buy a used car. "Cheap Thrills" was a class on low cost, no cost ways to have fun. "Duct Tape 101" & "Duct Tape the Sequel" taught house repair & what's new at the hardware store.
  - Dance is free (completely paid for by MichCon) & open to the public -- tho "mostly seniors & those who love big bands come." Gymnasium is turned into a stardust ballroom. "We hang a mirror ball, dim the lights, cover the tables with paper. One year I didn't do the mirror ball. Big mistake. I'll never skip that again!" The past 2 yrs a caricature artist has also been present all evening. People line up to get their caricature drawn & "have a souvenir to take home."

6. **Include Serious Community-Based Element** Awards are given (usually 5 or 6) at lunch to those who do "quiet philanthropy" -- people who give their time but aren't usually recognized. Mary Pine Elder Citizenship Award is named after a "neighborly, contributing" elderly woman who would make meals for her neighbor 2 or 3 times a day & deliver them, but was shockingly murdered in her home. Award is given in her name. Winners get an engraved plaque & their pictures & accomplishments are featured in the local paper... "a first for most."

7. **Be Prepared For Committed Attenders** Seniors come early. Many at 7:30. Sessions start at 9am. Coffee & muffins are provided & 25-50 exhibitors are present in the hallways. Weber's nightmare the first year was that sessions would begin & the hallways would remain full. But not so. When sessions begin, the hallways are empty. "Seniors are there to learn. They are all business, don't get in their way! They are the most wonderful audience to teach." (More from Mary Weber, 616/796-3489)

Of related interest: Median networth of households in the 50-65 age group is \$68,749; 65 & over is \$73,471. Currently, 43% of all US households are headed by persons over 50 (pr 8/2/93). By 2030, there will be 70.2 million people aged 65 or over -- outnumbering school age groups (pr 5/8).

## NEXT MGMT FAD, "GROWTH IMPERATIVE," LOOKS GOOD FOR PR

Ernst & Young's mgmt consulting practice identifies The Growth Imperative as the new management initiative. In Toronto Globe & Mail, Michael Brodie describes it as:

- Characterized by the **holistic management of people and attention to human change, but with an eye on process & technology.**
- Constant change will be superseded by **sustainable growth.**
- It will be a back to basics movement focused on **trust, responsibility & continuous learning.**

Ushering it in, says Brodie, is "failed re-engineering initiatives (that have) taught management the need to plan & manage change." To which pr would add: Such as concentration on communication -- symbolically from the top, locally from supervisors/team leaders.

- ✓ Has someone been listening to what practitioners have been shouting during the era of failed flavor-of-the-month initiatives, which always seems to result in slash-&-burn?

- ✓ To make this work will require the highest skill levels of pr.

## DOUBT THE POWER OF PHEROMONES? TRY IT FOR YOURSELF

With a perfume/after shave additive marketed by the co-discoverer of human pheromones. They are the subtle scents animals emit that send olfactory messages to other animals. Psychologists have long talked about "dog sniffing" by humans -- but until human pheromones were isolated this was more metaphor than fact.

Now Athena pheromones "increase attractiveness; they are not aphrodisiacs," says an ad for the product. Sense of smell is the current frontier:

- Lack of it is cited as the **reason video-conferencing does not have the same relationship-building effect** as true face-to-face -- even tho body movements & eye contact are visible, smell isn't available.
- Japanese industry reports a **huge productivity increase** by spraying factories with certain scents, as pr reported last year.

This field is where color psychology was in the 40s. But watch for developments that may be vital to behavior motivation. (More from pr)

## STUDY: REFERRALS IS HOW PR FIRMS GET BUSINESS

Word-of-mouth from colleagues & fellow employees is the most important way clients learn about pr firms, reveals the 3rd annual survey by Thomas L. Harris & Co. 1,021 pr, pa & corp comms dirs responded. Some findings: