

ANOTHER REASON FACE-TO-FACE IS VITAL COMES FROM INTRANET

Ironic but instructive is the way people are attracted to pull documents from an Intranet system. Are they watching it all the time, eager for new material? Not if they want to get any work done & keep their jobs! What motivates them, then, to log on & retrieve data or documents there?

- It's word-of-mouth, passed along face-to-face, as in: "Did you see what the CEO wrote in that sales report?" "What do you think of the new policy?" And so on.
- Personal comments are also the major driver for use of Internet sites (pr 8/12).
- Ditto for e-mail, which as volume proliferates is becoming as thoroughly ignored as printed memos are. People pull up your e-mail when you call & ask, "Did you get my e-mail?"

The electronic revolution is hitting the same barriers print faced in the old, pre-computer days. Reason? It isn't the method of message delivery that's a problem, **it's too damn many messages!**

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

Most popular database passes billion documents online, about double its contents a year ago. Lexis-Nexis reports it adds 12 million more each week. That's the equivalent of the total current World Wide Web every 3 months. (WWW adds 300,000 documents/wk & now totals 140 million.) L-N's 800,000 users logged 64 million searches the first 9 months of '96. Despite this huge size increase, the service has been available 99.87% of the time -- which is 365 days/yr, 24 hrs/day except for a brief period after 2 a.m. daily for maintenance & loading new documents.

Looking for political information? Project Vote Smart is a free & valuable resource. You can call the Voter's Research Hotline (1-800-622-SMART) with questions about candidates & elected officials. Or access its Web site (<http://www.vote-smart.org>) which is anchored by its database on nearly 20,000 political candidates & includes links to "every known political site & document of interest -- hundreds of places that Web users may not be aware of, categorized by issue areas & described as to content." Also publishes helpful guides:

- *Voter's Self-Defense Manual* contains Congressional contact info, position statements, performance evaluations, voting records & campaign finance contributions.
- *Vote Smart Web Yellow Pages* gives URLs for info on federal & state gov't, presidential campaign, issues, political parties, advocacy groups & think tanks, research & statistics, gov't pub'ns, online news, directories of political info. (Free from Project Vote Smart, Ctr for Nat'l Independence in Politics, 129 NW 4th St, #204, Corvallis, OR 97330)

TOUGH JOB: GETTING STRATEGY & VISION REALLY UNDERSTOOD

After developing a 4-year strategic plan for Mercy Health Center (Dubuque, Iowa), "We wanted it to come to life for people, not end up being a wonderful document that sits on the shelf. We wanted it to:

1. Provide guidance for managers setting priorities for their dep'ts,
2. Help individual employees gain a sense of what direction Mercy is going,
3. Show how to contribute to that evolving part of the organization."

Another essential, dir of planning Art Roche told pr, is a brief strategy document. This one is 3 statements. People can't grasp pages of material.

"STRATEGY FAIR"

After completing the planning process (internal & external publics had already had opportunities to contribute input), intent was to get the 3 strategy statements in front of people & offer an opportunity to respond to & better understand them.

- Held a 3-day Strategy Fair (or "poster show") -- 50-60 posters on stands grouped in thematic sections:

- 1) basic statement of Mercy's mission & values;
- 2) groups of 10 posters on each of the 3 strategy statements "identifying the issues of concern to us in selecting each strategy & the means we're choosing to implement that strategy to make necessary changes over the next 4 years";
- 3) operational &
- 4) infrastructure issues.

- Posters were mostly text, some bar charts & maps -- something people could walk thru without interpretation if they chose. But members of the exec team & planning dep't staffed the exhibit, sometimes giving tours, sometimes stationed at specific places. "If people chose to have someone accompany them & talk them thru the process, they could. It gave people a chance for face-to-face conversations with those involved in the final steps of strategic planning & members of the senior executive team."

A recognition program tied to values, called "Knock Your Socks Off," is used by Mercy Health Center (Mason City, Iowa) to honor employees who do something in the course of their work that spotlights the organization's 5 values:

- 1) mercy, 2) human dignity,
- 3) service, 4) justice,
- 5) preference for the poor.

Anyone may nominate an employee for this award.

- **Invitations** were sent to employees, medical staff, board & board committee members, & key community leaders. A general invitation was issued to the public thru the newspaper. About 350 people, each spending from 20 minutes to 1 hour, went thru the exhibit.
- At the end of the exhibit an opportunity was available for people to **offer written feedback** "about the ideas for *implementing* the plan because that part of the process was still open." From that came 45 pages of "substantive, constructive comments."
- Strategy Fair **wasn't as well attended by medical staff**, tho some did participate. "It's hard to get them involved in things that take them away from their obligations to patients. When we do this again, we'll have to think thru how to get them more involved."
- Mercy continues to focus on the 3 strategies in its **internal & external publications**. "Whenever there is a logical tag between the news item & one of the 3 strategies, we put a strategy logo next to it."

VIDEO USED TO LAUNCH INTERNAL DISCUSSION

A 7-minute video explains why the 3 strategies were selected. "Purpose is to get immediate attention focused on these 3 memorable statements of intention. Then shut the video off & go into a discussion."

- 15 copies were distributed around the hospital. Every manager had an opportunity to **use this at a dep't meeting** to open the discussion & then talk about what this means for that dep't. "We had preparation sessions getting managers ready for questions they might get from their staff. We wanted one clear voice to be expressed around the hospital to our employees, our medical staff & board members about our intentions & plans for the next few years."

MERCY FAIRS CONTINUE A SUCCESSFUL IDEA

Because of the success of the Strategy Fair, Mercy is continuing the idea by holding other "fairs." "One of our 3 strategies is to improve

community health status, which lends itself to employee health fairs" -- holding 3 Mercy Fairs per year.

- **Each focuses on one of the 3 strategies.** One coming up Oct 22 focuses on the strategy to improve community health status. It will have 4 sub-strategies: 1) diabetes, 2) breast health, 3) older adults community health, 4) smoking cessation & alcohol/substance abuse for both school age & working adults.
- **Any hospital dep't that can address these areas will be involved.** Booths are interactive, highly staffed, using quizzes, prizes, musical entertainment to entice people to stop, healthy snacks & beverages as employees come during breaks. "These are done at low or no expense."

EVALUATION

"We consider it a great success. There is much greater sense among employees now (a year after the Strategy Fair) as to what the strategies are & how their dep'ts fit into them. Evidence is by the input we receive from employees."

WATCH OUT, ANTI-SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY GANG IS AT IT AGAIN

This time it's a book, *The Heroic Enterprise: Business & the Common Good* by John Hood (Free Press). It's the ends justify the means polemic that claims everyone for him/herself is a good way to operate the universe. Entrepreneurs may be robber barons, but somehow we all benefit in the long term. Fairness, justice, quality of life, sense of community & common destiny -- do they matter? Or is the goal to make a buck and provide jobs, pay taxes, & contribute to the economy along the way?

PR philosophy & strategy make the case -- the very hard-headed, research proven case -- in favor of social responsibility. To recite a few items:

1. **Org'ns seen as caring about quality of life are more appealing to customers & other stakeholders, therefore do more business more profitably.**
 - In this era when customer loyalty is the linchpin of success & even survival, why risk policies & actions that might possibly turn them away -- by appearing uncaring about the community or society?
2. **It is difficult to do business in a society that is threatened from within or falling apart.** Witness Russia today, or our inner cities.
 - Org'ns have to be concerned about what's going on around them because the organizational family & all its stakeholders inhabit that world.
3. **Publicly-held corp'ns are more profitable & have consistently higher share value when they have reputations as socially responsible.**
 - Johnson & Johnson's post-Tylenol study and Philip Morris' "Double Bottom Line" research both found this to be true. Neither of these outfits have ever been accused of being anything but rigorously pragmatic. Social responsibility is wise because in addition to being "the right thing to do" it pays off -- a double winner.

Hood's book, and the resurgent support for it by the group that argued this way in the early 80s, can help sharpen pr's arguments about the many good things business & other org'ns add to our lives...*provided* management realizes that, as Arthur Page said 70 years ago, "All business in a democratic country begins with public permission & exists by public approval."

THE ROLE & WORLDVIEW OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IS CLEAR

- Someone has to stand for caring about others vs. selfishness & greed; for the Golden Rule -- which has made modern civilization possible. Without it no one could be successful or make a buck, so *everyone is* indebted to *others*. Practitioners are that "someone."
- Practitioners can take pride that the pr philosophy stands for, attempts to bring out, the best in humankind. We debase the profession when we knuckle under to the quick-win types among clients & managers. If they prevail, all managers will have nicknames like "Chainsaw."