

AS WOMEN 35+ GO BACK TO JOBS, IS UNPAID WORK VALUED?

More women 35 & older are entering or re-entering the workforce. Doing research for her master's thesis on this subject, Ann Houston-Jenkins queried practitioners & employers thru focus groups & questionnaires: do acquired skills from volunteer positions transfer to paid positions in pr? Do prospective employers ask about volunteer experience? Some findings:

- Differences were found between employer & practitioner perceptions of volunteerism. Most of the **employers** surveyed say they encourage inclusion of volunteer work/skills when hiring. All of the **practitioners** interviewed & more than 3/4ths of those surveyed were community volunteers. *But less than 1/4th of those surveyed & 1/5th of those interviewed were asked about volunteer experience during the hiring process for their current position.*

Volunteer experience -- both doing it & getting it recognized -- is vital to these practitioners, since current hiring conventions are against them:

- Preferred age group to hire practitioners from is 30-34; 45-54 is least preferred.
- Careers of those age 23-29 & 55+ are most hurt by their age; the 23-29 group is also most helped by age.
- Practitioners 35-55 believe mgmt expects more from older women practitioners than younger women or men; those age 23-34 disagree.

TO WOMEN JENKINS RECOMMENDS:

1. Keep track of your volunteer equity.
2. Find a way to use the information on a resume, during an interview, even if not directly asked.

To employers: "Ask job applicants about volunteer work experience." If skills gained from volunteer work are marketable, then org'ns using volunteers stand to gain as well. "If not, the option to volunteer may be lost as men or women are pressured to keep their career current via the traditional paycheck." (More from Jenkins at 405/743-5112)

ITEM OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ *The Green Book of Public Relations Service Companies* is free from PRSA. Lists 120 companies in 70 categories offering products & services that fit the need of public relations professionals. Also spotlights the 25 winners of PRSA's '96 Bronze Anvil Awards. Competition recognizes innovative uses of pr tactics in a variety of categories ranging from advertorials, brochures & direct mail programs to pub'ns, press kits & new applications of technology. (Free copy from Brenda Vargas, 212/460-1462)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ANNIVERSARY. Fleishman-Hillard celebrates its 50th this year. Full-pg ad in WSJ acknowledged anniversary, listed all 865 employees. Held a celebration & world-wide meeting for 600 of its staffers in St. Louis, HQ city.

WHY PR PROS ARE NOT & SHOULD NOT BE THE COMMUNICATORS

Our employers & clients are competitively disadvantaged, vulnerable & weakened if we are the ones who must send the information & engineer all the symbolic messages or triggering events. Those communicators should be:

1. **The CEO** as ultimate *personifier of the org'n* and its values, strategy & culture; or a surrogate "face" for the org'n if the CEO cannot or won't.
2. **Other senior mgrs & key personnel** who are the *subject matter experts*.
3. **Frontline supervisors** as the most effective & credible *source of internal communication & team-building*.
4. **Employees, retirees & their families** as *believable ambassadors* for their workplace and its values, culture, products, services, positions on issues et al.
5. **Opinion leaders** who form the *third party line of defense* against attacks & rumors, and the *line of opportunity* for positive portrayal.
6. **Customers** who are so satisfied & delighted that they become loyal -- and share this experience with others to *create & sustain a good reputation*.
7. **Neighbors** in the communities where we operate who know from experience we are open in our communications, willing to listen & let stakeholders have a voice, & that *our policies & behaviors deserve their support*.

INSTEAD, THE ROLE OF PRACTITIONERS IS TO:

- A. **Assure that our organizations deserve a good reputation**, even when powerful elements propose cutting corners or fail to see the implications of their actions/policies;
- B. **Devise strategies that make these key communicators want to do this job** for our organizations, despite the overbusyness & apathy of so many;
- C. **Counsel & train & champion & reward them for doing it.**



D. The critical tactic is building relationships with these, our true communicators, that create trust & motivate mutually supportive behaviors.

IF DUBIOUS, REMEMBER ONE BASIC FACT:

These groups & individuals are already communicating about the organization informally. They talk, plenty -- to our vital publics. The only question is whether we want to influence this natural process.

COOPS! MAYBE THERE'S HOPE FOR PRINT DESPITE COMPUTERS

As a letter-to-the-ed in Los Alamos Nat'l Lab's employee pub puts it:

Thank you for removing one of the few real pleasures in life -- being able to take the Newsbulletin home, read it in the comfort of my living room (as I do my daily newspapers), let my family read it & discuss items of interest to us all.

I spend most of my day in front of a personal computer. Absolutely the last thing I want to do is get my news on-line sitting in front of a terminal -- be it at work or at home -- or have to go to the trouble of printing it out on high-quality paper.

There are still some of us who believe that not everything is best served by being "computerized." Perhaps we will go the way of the dinosaurs & become extinct.

- Is the writer part of a minority that will go away? What a loss -- an employee who not only reads the publication but discusses it with family! And a newspaper reader to boot.
- Or could this view prevail, since few like to do the same thing incessantly -- including squinting at a computer screen?
- While this issue is working itself out in the hearts & minds of Homo Sapiens, the prudent rule for practitioners seems to be **giving target audiences their choice of multiple media availabilities**. Ultimate reader friendliness for now means offering info via

¶ print ¶ fax ¶ e-mail ¶ voice-mail ¶ database

THE TRICKS OF MULTIPLE MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS ARE TO:

1. Get individuals to state their preferences -- tough with a large group;
2. Design a relatively simple system that sends the same info by multiple channels, tho the extra effort may be vital to communicate successfully;
3. Information map messages so they come across pre-organized for the audience(s) regardless of the medium used.

C AND STUDY OF BELLWETHER AUDIENCE TOUTS PRINT NEWS MEDIA

Despite the recent Orange County bankruptcy, relatively few residents say they closely follow local gov't news (19%) or local community news (18%), finds the Media Use Survey from the 1996 Orange County Annual Survey. Yet last year's survey found 73% of county residents felt the bankruptcy adversely affected their lives. You'd think they'd want info ...

- Based on these findings, the *assumption* is drawn that those reading are doing so because they are *involved* locally -- elected officials, scout troop leaders, Little League managers, active volunteers etc.
- Therefore it is reasonable to *further assume* they are opinion leaders in the community, explains Annette McCluskey, vp of Nelson Communications Group (NCG) which sponsored the 10 questions in the Media Use Survey.

CONCLUSION: 1. Thus "a one-day story in the newspaper is likely to reach a relatively small but influential readership -- if the assumptions are accurate.

2. If the objective is to extend a story to the general public, other vehicles & tactics must be employed," explains NGC's Larry Tenney.

OTHER FINDINGS: • 35% are highly attentive to Washington print news.

- Residents are more likely to get world news from tv (45%, up from 40% in '86) than newspapers (31%, down from 43%). 2.7% use the Internet. 4.3% get their news by "talking to people," 1.4% use mags (down from 3%).
- But residents choose to get local news from newspapers (60%, down from 74% in '86) over tv (21%, up from 11%). "Talking to people" is the source for 10% (up from 9%).
- 80% say they regularly watch tv news; 73% regularly read a daily paper (22% of these read 2 or more); 55% regularly listen to radio news.
- 2 in 3 respondents say keeping fully informed about the news is a very important obligation. Over the decade, this number has declined. Nearly all (97%) say staying informed is at least somewhat important.

(More from NCG, 18401 Von Karman av, Irvine, Cal 92715; 714/957-1010, fax 714/474-7738)

Both newspaper reading & radio listening are highest among older, higher income & college-educated residents. Older residents are most likely to regularly watch tv news, while there are no differences in tv watching by income, education, ethnicity & race or gender. "For communicators dealing with high concept issues, products & services, it would be a mistake to glance at this data & write off print," believes Tenney.