

FIRST CHECK IT OUT: DON'T ACCEPT ACTIVIST'S SIZE CLAIMS

Everyone talks as if the religious right were huge, and therefore must be heeded. This phenomenon has been seen many times before, when a group has a) a strong message b) which it knows how to communicate c) with One Clear Voice -- as organizations like the Christian Coalition do.

One intimidating piece of info this particular entity trumpets is its membership of 1.7 million conservative-voting churchgoers -- & growing every day. For an activist group, that's large. But is it factual? An org'n on the opposite end of the political spectrum checked it out and found:

1. CC's required statement of circulation for its *Christian American* -- which every publication using second-class mail must publish annually in its pages -- was 353,703 in '94. That's a bit less than the 1.7 million the org'n uses when touting why elected officials should listen to its positions on issues.
2. Assuming there are duplications in the subscriber list, e.g. married couples, it still raises the total to maybe 500,000 plus or minus a few. The newsletter was sent to everyone who paid the modest sum of \$15/yr.
3. By '95 the publication was reporting 42,000 fewer readers, down to 310,726. CC explains the drop by noting the newsletter became a magazine & the fee went up to \$20/yr -- but tip-in subscription cards in the publication offer it at \$14.95, while CC's home page offers it for \$24.
4. Pinned down, CC says the difference between roughly 300,000 & 1.7 million is that the larger figure covers "both members & supporters who do not pay dues." In short, a pie-in-the-sky guesstimate.
5. When all that's required is \$15-24 to be a member, the supposedly hard-charging nature of a large committed membership fades quickly away. Such inflation of data raises questions of credibility on other matters.

This is not to pick on CC, just to remind us that **unchallenged claims of strength can give perceived power when it is not really there.** Case:

- A vocal trio of microphone-grabbers harassed a Midwest school board for 2 years. They claimed the community was behind them, that they touched base all over town regularly.
- Those opposing their 6-point agenda for improving education stopped attending meetings, as did ordinary folks who didn't want to witness the shrill demands & vilification of teachers & board members.
- Finally the pr dir set to work checking on their real support. Tho they had an official sounding name, their agenda was so far on the fringe that one had to be dubious.
- After weeks of investigation, it turned out there were **16 identifiable members.**

Don't forget the corollary: **if we overstate our orgn's size or strength, it debases everything else we say.**

"3 - LEGGED STOOL" STRATEGY MAXIMIZES STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

At the Fernald Plant 20 miles from Cincinnati, not just pa staff but all managers & many employees are personally involved in identifying & getting to know "folks who are likely to interfere with the accomplishment of our mission. And then dealing with them up close & personal," Ken Morgan, dpa, Dep't of Energy office in Miamisburg, O, told prr. DOE works with operating contractor Fermco on public affairs for the Fernald site cleanup.

As a result of this focus on stakeholder relationships, at a time when the DOE budget was receiving big cuts, the office got an extra \$70 million. For 2 reasons: 1) "We have good engineering & have marked a clear path forward"; 2) "We have stakeholder alignment. Everybody is singing in 4-part harmony."

3-LEGGED STOOL MODEL

To achieve stakeholder alignment, Morgan uses this model:

Seat of the stool: **public trust & confidence.**

The 3 legs are:

- 1) **pa program** -- a public information resource;
- 2) **management involvement**, including meeting cascades to employees;
- 3) **envoy program** in which employee volunteers carry on 2-way comm (see & listen, not tell & sell) with key constituents & stakeholders.

The rungs (supports between the legs):

between legs 1 & 3 is **training**;
between legs 2 & 3 is **info management**;
between legs 1 & 2 is **counseling**.

These supports strengthen the legs which secure the seat (public trust).

"When I'd talk about the 3-legged stool, engineers/mgrs would say 'that sounds good but what do I do?'" So Morgan created a series of visuals that explain what he calls "Value Alignment Process." "It's a means to get managers to understand specifically how to involve themselves."

"Most people think in terms of nice straight boxes, that everybody is working on the same mission -- which in fact is not true." Once Morgan brings managers to this awareness, they can begin to "actually manage people." But the real task, notes Morgan, "is all those external people who don't give a hoot for your organization."



PROCESS IS WEATHERING A SEVERE TEST

& then quote that person. That's how they do a story. So I quit worrying about the media & am focusing on stakeholders. Most people are pretty happy with us. There's hardly anybody left to quote. We fell out of the news because we're boring."

Morgan sees stakeholder alignment as the ultimate **media management tool**. "The way media work is to find someone who is angry

Now a new investigative reporter for the Cincinnati Enquirer is stalking Fernald. "They ran a series of fallacious stories, making allegations. It's the worst case of yellow journalism I've seen in my career. The interesting part is that it has been like teflon, no other media are picking it up. The only thing being reported is that the Enquirer has made this claim & nothing more." An alternative arts & entertainment weekly, in a section it calls "Media Watch," is running a 4-part series lambasting the Gannett-owned Enquirer's story.

ULTIMATE MEDIA IRRESPONSIBILITY

Story broke on a Sunday

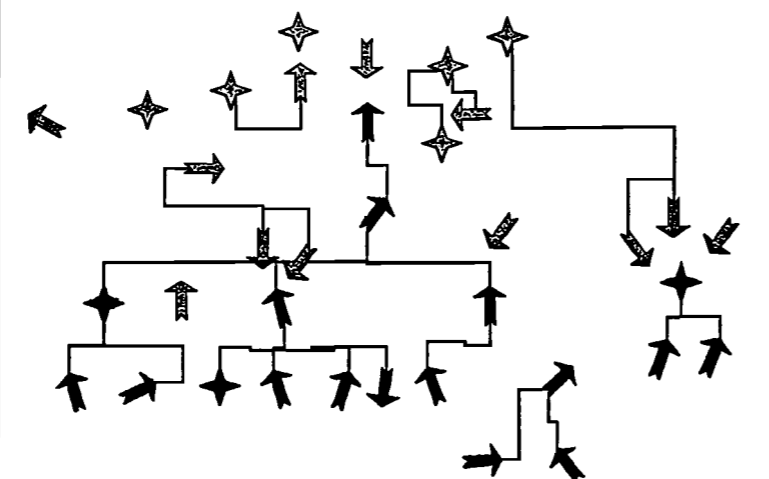
-- the day before a scheduled meeting with the reporter to respond to his changes. Gannett-owned tv station headlined its Sat. evening news with the Enquirer's Sunday story -- a virtual circulation promotion posing as news. Fox tv's response on Sunday was "hard to believe." Even the head of the citizen watchdog group on Fernald informed VP Gore when he arrived for a political visit that the story was untrue, to which Gore responded, "I know, my people briefed me." Stakeholder relations pays off.

On Monday "we held a press conference. We felt we needed to stand up for ourselves or our stakeholders wouldn't stand up for us." Media covered it. Fox tv tried to interview the investigative reporter afterwards -- but he refused. Fox thought the reporter was the story, which makes a statement about its accuracy.

"Area Congressmen's public position is to have a GAO audit. We expect to get a clean bill of health & are communicating those expectations with our stakeholders directly. We're more credible than the newspaper."

(More on the 3-legged stool model in *The Art Of Framing: Managing the Language of Leadership* by Gail Fairhurst & Robert Sarr; Jossey-Bass, \$25)

THE REAL - REAL DECISIONMAKING PROCESS (and why things don't get done)



- ↓ Values of a stakeholder.
- ↑ I'm interested in this & this is the direction I'm going.
- ★ I don't care about this issue or this process. I am preoccupied with other things right now.

ANOTHER BOTTOMLINE EMPLOYEE ACTION: SELF ESTEEM TRAINING

For each dollar invested in self esteem training for employees, companies get back \$18 thru increased productivity, LATimes reports (2/12/96). But self-esteem training isn't cheap, costing about \$500/employee for a 2-day seminar.

Interest in this is surging "like a tidal wave," says Bob Moawad, chmn, Edge Learning Institute (Tacoma), who has been working in this field for 20 years. Companies are recognizing "it's not only the right thing to do but also helps the bottomline."

When businesses all have the same technology, networking systems & software, the only way to get an advantage over the competition is enabling your workforce to be more innovative, argues Harvard Biz Schl's Shoshana Zuboff in *The Age of the Smart Machine*.

900 AT&T employees have been taught self-esteem enhancement. Training has paid off in lower absenteeism, increased productivity & a dramatic rise in workers' contentment with themselves & AT&T -- tracked in company surveys. (See related programs in prr 2/26 & 11/27/95)

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶**One Way To Find Out What's Going On In Canadian PR** is to access CPRS' new web site. Bilingual site is partnership with Canada News Wire. At launch time, site services include programs being held across Canada, links with its national resource library, access to its 14 chapters as well as its Consultants' Institute, internat'l connections & mbrship info. "Calls from around the world have increased rapidly for CPRS as off-shore groups rely more heavily on the organization to give them a foot-hold into the Canadian business community. The web site will greatly ease that introductory process," says CPRS. (Address is <http://www.cprs.ca>)

¶**Attempt To Remove Labor Law Restrictions On Teams & Involvement** is Senate Bill 295, the TEAM bill. Present law restricts mgmt from meeting with non-unionized workers to establish work conditions -- which is often part of the end product of Quality, productivity & culture change teams. Bill specifically promotes employee involvement. Unions say it's an attempt to weaken them -- even tho many unions have actively supported worker participation efforts. (See prr 7/20/92 for Polaroid's difficulties with the situation; copy of bill from prr)

¶**Selling Stock In The Company Via Coupon In The Product** is the strategy of Annie's Homegrown, Inc -- Hampton, Ct food producer. 600,000 shares @ \$6 a share, min. purchase 50 shares. So says coupon inside product boxes offering prospectus. Targeting purchasers may work, since box also offers free Be Green bumper stickers, notes that a portion of sales are contributed to "programs that help Children, Women, Education & the Environment." Letter from Annie herself on box is double marketing tool: 1) company offers to ship a case (24 boxes) to a friend, presumably as a gift idea; 2) also to send a 50¢ coupon to names customers send in, with a similar coupon to the person sending the names. Company doesn't advertise, uses these methods to market -- & stimulate w-o-m. (More from bernie@annies.com)