

- **Great Advice.** When people ask a candidate a question, they don't want to know what you *think*, they want to know what you're *like*.

(\$22 + \$4 shipping; Pump-Em-Up Publishing, P.O. Box 14934, Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66285; 913/894-9530)

KEN MORGAN'S 5 - PART PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLANNING METHOD

Creator of the 3-legged stool strategy (pr 3/11), in response to a query, describes the simple yet sophisticated technique he uses to be sure he's covered the necessary elements when planning stakeholder involvement:

1. **Situation.** A brief description of the **social environment**. [Similar to environmental scan or projective scenarios.] Should:
 - Identify the nature of your mission, specify likely stakeholders & their concerns.
 - Explain how the mission may affect them.
 - Answer these questions: Who might be affected by your activities? Who has the power to stop you or slow you down? What are the issues?
2. **Objective.** Should be some kind of **behavior change**, either on our part, or on the part of stakeholders. Dialogue leads to change.
 - Will usually have something to do with obtaining consensus among stakeholders for the value of your mission & the means to achieve it or resolve issues.
3. **Concept.** Briefly state how you are going to go about **creating dialogue** that will meet your objective.
4. **Roles & Responsibilities.** Who does what, when & where? This section should have **schedules & time lines**. Resources needed should also be listed here.
5. **Evaluation.** This section should specify **how we will know** we have accomplished the objective.

ITEM OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

Journalism "ain't pr" (pr 4/22 & 4/15) prompts another reader comment: "Wait a minute. You don't earn your right to sit at the public relations table just by being able to write well. I'll admit you probably won't be asked to pull up a chair without that skill. But keeping your seat requires more these days -- a strategic contribution, big picture focus, broad-scale knowledge of the world within & outside your business, & the courage to be the Reminding Voice about ethical conduct, environmental impact, or the personal consequences of economic decisions. I don't much care where or how public relations is taught -- I pretty much learned mine on-the-job -- but I hope the days when we were just 'the wordsmiths with the sharp pencils' are long gone." -- Robert Moulthrop (Scudder Stevens & Clark, NYC)

MORE THAN EVER, PRACTITIONERS ARE MEDIATORS: HERE'S HOW

The skills necessary to turn destructive conflict into constructive, life-enhancing experiences can be learned, write Elaine Yarbrough & William Wilmot in a small-press volume, *Artful Mediation: Constructive Conflict at Work*. Mediation skills are useful not only when problems arise but "also serve as a lens through which to view our ordinary patterns of communication & our relationships." They also set in motion "positive, thriving energy to supplant protective, political, adversarial approaches."

A. MEDIATION IS SOFT, & HARD

- The process begins with a soft, receptive approach -- listening, exploration & empathy.
- As people are heard, problems analyzed & negotiation begins, the mediator begins to use a harder, more directive approach.

Without the soft approach, trust won't be built. But with only that approach, negotiation won't happen.

B. MEDIATION FOCUSES ON:

- behavior that can be changed, not on personalities
- real vs. surface issues
- control of the communication process more than the outcome
- skills the disputants use to help them make their own decisions
- reaching mutual, workable & legally sound agreements (win-win)

C. MEDIATION IS A 5 - STEP PROCESS:

1. **entry** -- establishing safety for the participants & confidence in the mediation process;
2. **diagnosis** -- uncovering the not-so-obvious elements of the conflict;
3. **negotiation** -- assisting the parties in moving toward a mutually beneficial agreement using soft & hard skills;



4. **agreements** -- a more directive stage, helping participants move toward closure, making sure all parties feel settled, finished & treated fairly while pushing for specificity in the agreement to sustain the goodwill generated during the mediation;
5. **follow-up** -- this vital last step supports the disputants, helps insure that agreements will endure & demonstrates that mgmt is serious about supporting constructive conflict.

COALITIONS WITHIN CONFLICT

As conflicts intensify, coalitions become more rigid, destructive & toxic, write

Yarbrough & Wilmot. "We believe coalitions begin for good reasons & that coalitions are self-justifying -- as is isolation from a coalition." When countercoalitions form, the workplace, e.g., degenerates into "us-them" factions. Coalitions they've seen with the destructive "us-them" pattern:

- new employees vs. those who began with the company
- members of an extended family vs. those not related to them
- mid-level mgmt vs. everyone else
- smokers vs. non-smokers • males vs. females
- straights vs. gays • caucasians vs. minorities

COALITIONS ARE BEST DEALT WITH BY ALTERING COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

1. By doing what is unnatural -- bringing together people from counter-coalitions & helping them recognize & develop joint interests. Differences that are fundamental & deep require a great deal of time to develop an understanding of the other's reality.
2. As a first step, have each group generate questions of the other & then listen to each other's stories about their experiences of being in the organization. "The rules of asking questions & then listening for clarity -- not for argument -- must be strictly adhered to.
3. "Often this produces a kind of heartfelt listening that opens the way to real, *human* connection. Strained & problematic relationships can be healed only by finding something in common -- & that can only be discovered through direct communication."

NOTE how much of "mediation" & "negotiation" is what we term "pr."
(\$29.95; Cairns Pub'g, 1113 Spruce st, Boulder, CO 80302; 303/449-7107)

POLITICS, TOO, IS PR TO THE CORE, SAYS STATE REP.

Get involved because you can change the things you don't like, is the theme of another little-noticed book, State Rep. Rich Becker's *Get Elected, Make A Difference!* His insights, based on experience getting elected to public office & fighting for change, quickly translate to another view, from a

different perspective, of what practitioners do for their clients & employers -- address issues & work for change. Some points from his book:

- **Emotions.** Voters are guided by 4 important emotions: fear, anger, frustration, hope. Elections are won or lost on emotions, not on logic.
- **Spin.** Don't be afraid to take the blame when things go wrong. On occasion they will. We all have heard about "spin." And here is how to do it. When you have a problem, admit it. By doing so you have established credibility. Then use this credibility to define the problem in a way that keeps the political damage to a minimum. The joy of this spin process lies in telling the accuser he is dead right & then getting the personal satisfaction of delineating what he or she is right about. It is important to admit your failings, not in order to gain ground on your opponent but to put the issue behind you. Having admitted your weakness & your opponent's strengths, the only things left to debate are *your strengths & your opponent's weaknesses.*
- **Opinion Leaders.** You would do well to make sure the opinion leaders in your community know about your ideas. Stay in touch in person, via a letter, newsletter or fax. These people talk to many other people, & if they believe in you & your ideas, they can help you in your campaign. You don't know who the respected community leaders are? Here's how to find out & maybe get some good publicity at the same time. Send a survey to all the people you know who would be considered to be a community leader & ask them to anonymously list 10 people who they feel are the true "community leaders." Tell them that you are taking an anonymous survey for the newspaper article you are writing. Thank them for taking the time to answer & include a stamped envelope addressed to you for the return. Not everybody will answer, but you will get a pretty good idea of who is well thought of. Take the information you have received and write an article of a couple hundred words about who the community feels are their leaders. Call the paper & tell them about the survey. If the paper is on the ball at all, they will welcome the article with open arms. And you will get some free publicity. [A sociometric survey]
- **Trust.** Probably the most important relationship a campaigner must build with the voters is trust. If they don't trust you, they won't vote for you. If they do trust you, they will at least be willing to take a look. A person is considered trustworthy when he or she is predictable, caring & faithful.

"The voters want to personally meet & look the candidate in the eye. That can be done only by you. Personal contact is especially important & expected in most local races. Don't be fooled into thinking that your stories in the paper or your mailings or the short blurb on tv is just as good. These things aren't. **Nothing beats personal contact,**" writes Becker in a section on "Some Basic Thoughts About Grassroots Campaigning."