

whether it be relationships with media, neighbors, employees, analysts, shareholders or other key stakeholders.

HERE AGAIN, THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS. In gov't relations, hired lobbyists are at the seat of gov't, you may be located miles away. Journalists change so fast in some media no real relationships can be built, so let a firm be your agent.

MEDIA BEING EVEN MORE CAREFUL ABOUT POLL RESULTS?

AP has begun describing polls it covers like this example, which tells who, when, sample, method, error margin & other error causes:

"The ABC-Post poll was conducted Aug 1-5 among 1,514 adults. The poll was done by telephone & is subject to sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. Error also can result from question wording and practical difficulties of conducting polls."

What nothing can prevent is self-delusion of respondents. One notable example released last week: Asked which of the past 5 decades most reflected American values, almost half chose the 50s.

But this was the era of *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*, McCarthyism, racial & gender discrimination, decisions made in "smoke filled rooms" -- which historians feel may be the most repressive generation in recent history, giving rise to The New American Revolution of the 60s. And if the sample represented the population, over half weren't even alive then.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PR: WATER NOW A NATIONAL ISSUE

Practitioners in the water-starved West know the powerful pr issues around the resource. The new Safe Drinking Water Act spreads them everywhere. One requirement is a plain language, annual notice to all users of what contaminants are in their water -- and the risks.

South Carolina's director of water supply purity, David Price, says this will require a "mammoth public information effort."

Prediction: once staid Eastern & mid-country municipal water systems & water utilities will all hire pr pros or counsel within 2 years.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

NOMINATED. Mary Lynn Cusick (vp-cc, Bob Evans Farms, Cols, O) as pres-elect, PRSA. Steve Pisinski (mng dir, Montgomery Grp, SF) is secty nominee, with Sam Waltz (Wilmington counselor) continuing as treas. New directors at-large are Joann Killeen (Portland counselor), Kathy Lewton (svp, Porter/Novelli, Chi), Craig

Miyamoto (evp, Professional Comms, Honolulu) & Mike McDermott (just leaving Banco Economico, NY).

ELECTED. New IABC chmn is Don Bruun (mpr, Computing Devices Int'l, Mpls). V chmn is John Finney (dpr & fund-raising, Windsor Reg'l Hosp, Windsor, Ont).

GREAT STRATEGY FOR MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUR OPERATIONS

You want journalists to represent your organization honestly & fairly in the media -- to really tell your story? Then invite them inside to "walk in your shoes" -- or in this case, 60-70 lbs of firefighting gear.

The City of Phoenix Fire Department figured journalists can't write accurately about fires -- or firefighters -- unless they truly understand what they do. So:

- Dep't held a 5-day, 40-hr "media academy."
- Participants from local media were intensively trained in fire operations, firefighter behavior & terminology and hands-on experience -- including time in the flash-over chamber where temperatures can reach 2,000 degrees.
- They learned "the mechanics, command structure and strategy of fire & emergency medical operations."

Academy gives the dep't a way to show "the public how we operate & why we do the things we do," notes pio Capt. Bob Khan. "It's a great way to share our profession & department with the people who represent us to the greater population in Phoenix."

CERTIFIED FIRE JOURNALIST

At completion, participants become "certified fire journalists" (CFJ). They are given a green helmet, special identification card & \$1500 worth of firefighting gear to wear when covering fires.

Certification brings privileges: special briefings, permission to enter the "warm zone" of a fire or medical emergency as long as it doesn't interfere with the operation. While other journalists are kept behind the yellow tape, CFJs can go right into the fire area.

Training has been used by the courts, schools & healthcare as a way to improve coverage. For some, the motivation is media turnover. Many pr pros complain they're covered by new reporters every other month! Some deny privileges to journalists who've not taken the training -- since it is available to all. To some degree, this "reverse media training" technique seems applicable to any org'n with a complicated or technical operating procedure -- which today is just about everyone.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **A study group to assess the pr challenges of the Internet**, particularly the WWW & Intranet, is being formed by The Institute. Group will organize meetings, beginning this fall, of top execs in corp pr to assess the challenges & problems of the new technologies & establish an agenda of action for assistance from pr org's. Board mbr Don Bates will chair. "The Institute wants to identify not only what works, but what does not, by tapping the experience of top practitioners & sharing it with the field," he notes. (More from him at 212/661-5300, or The Institute at 352/392-0280)

¶ **An expanded & revised Issue Management Bibliography** features over 150 entries including books, newsletters, articles & unpublished scholarly research papers written exclusively about the issue management process. Individuals who have written articles or papers about issue management & wish to have their work included are asked to send their publication to IAP for consideration & inclusion in the next update. (15-pgs, from IAP, 207 Loudoun st, SE, Leesburg, Va. 20175; 703/777-8450; \$12 + \$2.50 shipping)

¶ **Gebbie Press introduces its WWW home page** (<http://www.gebbieinc.com>). Gebbie publishes the All-In-One media directory. On its home page are selected links to top public relations firms worldwide, as well as a link to Kidon Media, which has a wealth of general media home pages, foreign & domestic. Webmaster Mark Gebbie invites any pr, marketing, adv'g, media & journalism reciprocal links. (Please e-mail to gebbie@pipeline.com)

¶ **Important service, US Trademark Library, now available on the Internet**. Offers access to every text trademark registered with the US Patent & Trademark Office -- 1.9 million in all. The Trademark Checker can be used to: 1) protect against trademark infringement; 2) brainstorm & check new product names; 3) verify other companies' trademarks (correct spelling, whether it needs a ™ or ®, & which company owns the trademark); 4) track the competition & identify new products before they are announced; 5) identify new customer prospects by industry &/or region. Available as a subscription service on the WWW (<http://www.micropat.com>). Single-user subscription is \$50/wk, \$100/month or \$995/yr. Also available on CD-ROM at a one-time cost of \$199 & updated monthly. (Info from MicroPatent at 1-800-648-6787)

¶ **43% of Fortune 500 companies have Intranet sites**; 85% are planning, piloting or rolling them out, finds an IABC study -- 1996 Employee Communications & Technology Report. 165 corporate communicators were queried. Other findings:

- 81% use Intranets to enable employee feedback;
- 78% to enable cross-functional communication;
- 76% to provide existing employee communications electronically.

(Copy from IABC, 800-776-4222; \$150 + shipping)

¶ **One way to bring newspaper coverage in line with real life** would be to rename the sports pages the business section, and the business section the sports pages. Read 'em regularly & you'll know what we mean.

BIZ-TO-BIZ STRATEGY: "SCHOLARSHIPS" FOR EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Quill Corp celebrates its 40th anniversary by offering "The Quill \$200,000 American Dream Business Scholarship Sweepstakes." It will provide over 500 **smaller-sized businesses** with resources to train & develop employees.

TRAINING TODAY = SUCCESS

"We have discovered firsthand that continuous learning & employee training is not a luxury but a necessity," explains pres Jack Miller. Dep't of Labor survey of 12,000 US companies shows that the larger the employer, the more likely it is to have a training program. *Nearly 1/3 of companies with 50 or fewer employees have no formal training.*

And employee training is a common characteristic found in companies that are thriving. A study of companies experiencing profitable growth reveals nearly 9 of 10 report increased spending on employee training.

WIN - WIN - WIN SITUATION

"Employers should realize their employees look for a level of commitment from them. When they see an employer making an investment in their future at the company, they become more loyal. As workers become more loyal, the quality of their work inevitably improves & the investment carries over to the customer." (Entry forms from Quill at 100 Schelter rd, Lincolnshire, IL 60069-3621; 1-800-789-0056)

OUTSOURCING: WHEN IT MAKES SENSE, WHEN IT DOESN'T

With senior managers caught in the "cut, don't create" mode (mgmt guru Henry Mintzberg's description), pr downsizing forces many org's to consider outsourcing. But there are positive reasons as well, including:

- Moving routine or unusual tasks out to specialist vendors
- Using staff for more effective, value-adding work
- Applying dollars where they get more behavioral results

DANGEROUS TO OUTSOURCE IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

From all the turmoil around this issue over the past few years, one rule at least arises: **It's dumb to outsource anything that involves relationships.** The org'n ought to own them, not a vendor --

Longfellow gave the reason long ago in *The courtship of Miles Standish*, which every student once read. The Pilgrim elder wanted to woo Priscilla Mullins, but instead sent John Alden as his emissary. She had eyes for Alden, so when he touted his sponsor she responded, "Speak for yourself, John Alden." Speak for your own organization personally, pr pros -- or better yet, have folks who manage or do the work speak for it -- not an outside "representative."