

"If you're spending a lot of money on your Web site, you really should know what you're getting for it -- whether you're reaching the right people. It's all objectives based -- what are you trying to do & are you doing it? MVP is a tool to do that," Jim Beakey, its developer, told pr.

- Can include many thousands or even millions of Web site visitors in its analysis. It profiles entire populations, not just small samples. This leads to very high statistical reliability.
- Can further analyze variables or subgroups that are found to be significant, because of MVP's capacity to look at thousands of respondents.
- Improvement over survey research. A general premise of survey research is that people who self-select to participate are not representative of a population. They may be more interested or curious, or they may have more to gain or lose. Because MVP uses so many audience members in the analysis, this effect is dampened significantly.
- Can be adjusted to compare different target audiences. For example, Web site visitors can be profiled against purchasers, inquirers, competitive product/service users, people in specific geographic locations.
- Can provide over 200 variables for every analysis. Users can develop custom measurement programs. (More from Beakey at 603/431-0111; e-mail jbeakey@delahaye.com)

## MERGER OF AGRICULTURAL PR FIRM WITH FOOD PR FIRM: TREND?

Morgan & Myers (Jefferson, Wis) merges with S.J. Thoms & Assocs (Mpls) -- creating a firm specializing in food from cultivation (M&M) to consumption (SJTA). This combining of firms to serve an entire vertical industry may be a trend setter, as consumer choice drives away differences.

"While our firm was built on service to production agriculture, M&M has long recognized that the gap between production & consumption has narrowed to the point where we are fast approaching one interdependent food industry. Meaningful expansion into the 'consumption side' of this industry has been a part of the M&M growth plan for several years," explains Gary Myers. "This relationship expands our ability to counsel clients on every aspect of their food communications programs, from farm gate to dinner plate," notes Sara Jean Thoms, who will be pres of M&M/SJTA in Mpls.

## 2 CASES SHOW HOW BADLY 1ST AMENDMENT MISUNDERSTOOD

Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott is undiplomatic, may be bigoted. *Primary Colors* author & Newsweek columnist Joe Klein lied about writing the book. So? **Take this into account when dealing with them & be forewarned.** First Amendment's role & genius is to let how people really feel come out.

But Big Biz Baseball kicks Marge out of her own park. Their rules, they say. But can contracts subvert constitutional Free Speech rights? The self-righteous media want to lynch Klein, saying he besmirched all their reputations & credibility. But this was a novel, a commercial venture -- not info key to the nation. Sure, he handled it poorly, but....

## GE's ANSWER TO A MAJOR PROBLEM: THE 11-MINUTE MEETING

11-minute meetings, initiated at GE almost 11 years ago, begin at 7 & end at 7:11. "They wanted to begin a shift by giving people information about what was to be done; & find out from them any problems on the job. It's a way to bring information down & up thru the organization to solve problems," George Kops of Focus Communications International told pr.

He was brought into GE to teach the meeting process to employees. Tho designed for a manufacturing facility, it is applicable in any environment.

"I found that employees want to do this but they don't know how." Kops teaches how to: a) organize the meeting, b) conduct it, c) keep it under control & d) end with a call to action. Key is to run the meeting "so some specific call to action takes place to make the organization better."

## HOW IT'S DONE

Value added communications is the key concept that's taught. "Concept says we add value to the words when communicating to other people. In adding that value the communication becomes more interesting & meaningful, listeners tend to pay more attention. They participate better, & ultimately you can run a better meeting."

- VALUE IS ADDED...**
1. **Verbally -- with Central Messages.** People are taught to organize info & deal with key elements; to find the **central message** that drives the overall meeting & focus on that. It goes beyond meeting topics. "Topics are fine but if there's a key message about each topic, it makes the meeting much more effective."
  2. **Visually.** Some kind of visual aid is needed to reinforce the key messages. Employees are taught how to design & use them "because that's not easy to do particularly now because it's so easy to generate too many graphics with computers. They need to use these visuals for a specific purpose."
  3. **Vocally.** Vocal energy (raising & lowering your volume, changing the pace, pausing) & visual energy (gestures, facial expressions) are used to support the essential message.
  4. **Listener participation.** Done in a very controlled way. "There are dialogue questions the person running the meeting asks attendees; & similarly attendees will ask questions of the person running the meeting." Meeting facilitator is taught how to keep the meeting on track.



Kops finds it takes 2 days to teach this process. First day is spent learning the process. 2nd day is all practice to build skills with feedback & opportunity to watch yourself on videotape. "When they go back to their environment they're continually running meetings & improving their skills."

#### COMMON MEETING PROBLEMS

1. **Not having a clear idea of what you're trying to do or accomplish.**
2. **Losing control of the meeting.** "The way to keep control is to use an agenda, referring to it continually. Sometimes, tho, the information you get from the group might indicate the need to go down another path. Then situationally & judgmentally the facilitator has to decide what to do. We recommend going down the new track if it seems appropriate."
3. **Not demonstrating to participants that you believe in the material & want to resolve the issues that get raised.** "If attendees don't sense your commitment, it's hard for them to buy in & go back to work to accomplish what needs to be done for the organization."

(More from Kops at 135 Millrd, New Canaan, Ct 06840; 203/966-0282; e-mail georgekops@aol.com)

#### STUDY DETAILS BUMPS TO WATCH OUT FOR ON INFO SUPERHIWAY

The major problem is nerds, often from in-house MIS or IS dep'ts, finds research on the "information superhighway technologies," funded by MCI & conducted for The Institute by John Pavlik (Columbia U) & David Dozier (San Diego State U).

1. **Culture wars: MIS v. pr/pa.** Few org'ns have placed control of their WWW sites in the hands of pr or pa pros. Most have placed primary responsibility in MIS (Mgmt Info Systems) dep'ts (because it's technological & mystifying to many), sometimes including marketing & possibly pr. Most org'ns see the Web as primarily a marketing opportunity, not as an interactive communication medium. "Most org'ns are missing a fundamentally important opportunity to use the unprecedented capability of the Internet to effectively manage relationships with their most important publics: those with an active interest in the org'n."
2. **Monks in the digital scriptoria.** These MIS or IT (Info Technology) system administrators have become the 21st century equivalent of medieval monks in today's digital scriptoria. Some promote the mystical nature of technology in order to maintain their power.
3. **The loose cannon employee.** Employees with technical skill have created many personal Web sites -- sometimes useful for the org'n, sometimes useful only to themselves, & sometimes damaging to an org'n's carefully cultivated public image. State & federal court decisions give legal permission to employers to monitor all employee activity online. Whether an org'n wants to create a culture of "big brother is watching" is another issue. Clearly articulated written policies, developed with employee input, should be established on employee use of the info hiway.

4. **Unofficial sites & rogue messengers.** Anyone can create an unofficial Web site. Hundreds, thousands, exist on everything from celebrities to politicians to corporations. McDonald's fanned the flames of discontent by reacting strongly to an obscure site lampooning the company. In response, an agitated Web meister created McSpotlight, which invites Web surfers around the world to post their criticisms of McDonald's.
5. **Public mobilization.** Educated & active publics are capable of rapid & powerful issue-based mobilization, domestically & internationally -- influencing everything from votes in the US Congress to organizational decisions. [Unless org'ns are strategic enough to count heads]
6. **Wild & lawless frontier of legal issues.** Legal challenges to com'n professionals include liability for the Web activities of employees, intellectual property rights & copyright, libel, privacy, piracy & the Telecommunications Act of 1996.
7. **Lessons from the response to this online review.** Of the top 50 US corp's, 48 have Web sites. 3 questions were asked of each Webmaster. Virtually all responded with "thank you for visiting our Web site ... we'll get back to you with a reply." About half answered the questions; half said they were too busy. Responses received suggest MIS & IT personnel frequently are setting the rules for the management of com'n in this realm -- & building relationships isn't their mindset.
8. **Effective message design.** Should follow many of the same rules of message design in any other environment, including creativity, quality, consistency with overall organization image. Keep content fresh, interactive & uncluttered. Those with the most effectively designed Web sites were most likely to respond to the online query, reflecting their commitment to use the technology to its greatest potential.
9. **Intranet concerns.** Can be a vital means for keeping employees abreast of internal news, corporate policy, employee benefits & events. Web-based com'ns, e-mail, list serves & chat rooms, each can be used effectively to communicate with employees, shareholders, volunteers & other "internal" publics.
10. **Preparing for an uncertain future.** One of the best strategies is to form partnerships with organizations in a variety of fields that are facing this same uncertain future -- including partnership affiliations with the academic community involved in new media research & development. Benefits include not only learning, but also shaping its future.

(Full text from The Institute, UFla, Box 118400, Gainesville 32611-8400; 352/392-0280; <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/iprre/homepage.htm>; \$50, pr tchrs \$20)

#### ARE WEB SITES COST EFFECTIVE? MVP SYSTEM SEEKS ANSWER

Are they achieving their marketing objectives? To find out, *Measurement of Visitors Profiles* takes info gathered from Web site registration fields (name, address, zip code or first few digits of a phone number), analyzes it (thru a giant national database) & provides the demographic, geographic, psychographic & lifestyle profiles of Web site visitors.