USEFUL NEW MEDIA DIRECTORIES TARGET SPECIFIC MARKETS

¶1997 *Senior Media Directory* has a record 1,040 listings, 225 are new. For the first time, 10-yr old directory carries listings for 7 on-line pub'ns that target the 50-plus market, several pub'ns (including the giant *Modern Maturity*) vowing to go after the Boomer market, & WWW sites. Listings include: frequency, circulation, editorial profiles, key personnel, formats, deadlines & approximate adv'g rates. In addition to national, regional & local pub'ns & special newspaper sections aimed at seniors, directory includes tv & radio broadcasts, columnists & syndicates distributing senior-specific info. Lists media in Mexico, Costa Rica, Canada & the US. Special appendixes include 64 senior-specific mailing lists & 24 marketing programs aimed at older No. Americans. **"It has been a shakeout year in the senior press**. Chains of senior papers are getting stronger, & there are new, important players. Age Wave Communications -- the futurists -- are beginning to put together a group of regional senior papers, for example. The Toronto Star's *Today's Seniors* group now stretches across Canada," says editor Gene Malott. ($99 + $4 postage from GEM Publishing Group, 250 E. Riverview Circle, Reno, Nev 89509; 702/786-7419, fax 702/786-7856; available on disk)

¶**Media tracking, clipping & analysis service devoted to US Hispanic press** is available from Latin Reports. There are nearly 30 million Hispanics in the US -- a "burgeoning marketplace." LR's services include: **LatinClips** tracks media info appearing in Spanish-language, English-language & bilingual pub'ns targeting Hispanics in the US & Puerto Rico. **LatinBriefs** offers overviews of placement results -- e.g., media sources, geographical market info, pub'n circulation & placement dates; **LatinReviews** evaluates the content of Spanish-language editorial & adv'g clips so clients can fully understand how their messages (or their competitor's) are being communicated by different Hispanic print media; **LatinMonitor** tracks & monitors competitive activities within clients' industries, & researches key topics & trends pertaining to the US Hispanic & Latin American markets. (Info from Latin Reports, 230 West 41st St, 17th Floor, NYC 10036-7207; 212/730-6036)

¶**Directory of mass media resources serving persons with disabilities** is published by the National Telability Media Center. *America's Telability Media* lists 760 entries: 100 mags, 39 newspapers, 520+ newsletters, 70 broadcast producers, 18 columnists, 13 dial-in newspapers & 10 professional org'ns. Also provides info for writers, e-mail addresses & internet sites. "ATM has begun the process of identifying the broad spectrum of mass media that can be accessed by persons with disabilities & professionals who serve us. We also want advertisers to become familiar with our media so they can use them on a regular basis," notes editor Charlie Winston. Available in print or disk format. (From Telability Media, P.O. Box 1488, Columbia, Mo. 65205-1488; $40; 198 pgs)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. 3 ofcrs to serve with PRSA Fdn pres Joseph Vecchione: pres-elect, Denise Gray-Felder (comns vp, Rockefeller Fdn, NYC); treas, Joseph Curley (pres/partner, Curley & Pynn PR Mgmt, Orlando); sec'y, Luis Morales (pr counsel, Paoli, Pa)

EVALUATION: IS PUBLIC RELATIONS READY FOR METRICS ?

As more organizations adopt mathematical measurement of processes -- "metrics" -- pr is challenged to establish methods that assume it is as consistent & repetitive as, say, manufacturing or accounting. **What in the communication & relationship-building activity can be evaluated in this way?**

OUTPUTS   This most basic measure is nonetheless sometimes useful.

1. E.g., if managers are sticking to their offices & not getting out with their staffs, simply **counting their MBWA, lunch-with, group meeting & similar activities** is valuable evaluation -- since it may change behavior. Similarly with supervisor/team leader com'n efforts.

2. **Checking message clarity** is quite often useful. Fog, Flesch & similar tests are easy now that they're computerized. Evaluating communication outputs on the 3-pt effectiveness scale is rarely done -- yet can greatly improve message delivery (see box). But converting these to a numerical scale requires establishing a baseline against which progress can be numerically verified.

> **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS SCALE**
>
> 1. *Problem/opportunity recognition*: I see it is a problem.
> 2. *Problem/opportunity personalization*: the problem could affect me.
> 3. *Constraint removal*: there's something I can do about it.

3. BUT -- **counting press releases** (for those still using them) or attempted media placements is valueless. And counting clips is still only measuring outputs, since the true measure isn't what media used but what impact it had. Computerized clip counts & "quality evaluation" (location in medium, positive vs. negative, headline or body etc) are just another output measurement, the hi-tech glitz notwithstanding.

RECEPTION   Measuring this interim stage can be done on 2 levels:

1. **Knowledge or understanding** can be measured by querying target audiences directly about the content & intended information transfer of messages delivered via any medium or combination. Did they get the point?

2. **Memorability** & longterm duration of key points simply stretches the timeframe of questioning. Is the point embedded in their consciousness -- and therefore more likely to be acted upon?

Applying metrics here is usually done on a percentage basis. Example: dipstick research of content retention is graded on whether 70% can recite the key point(s).

RESPONSE   The real measure is whether communicating or building relationships stimulated action. What **desired behavior** occurred (doing something, refraining from doing something, letting the organization do something).

While turning this into a metric can be relatively easy, since it is basically counting or figuring percentages, *measuring* behavior is usually the most difficult.

- Self-assessments by respondents can be highly untrustworthy.
- Observing behavior thru sociological research can be costly.

METHODOLOGIES FOR MEASUREMENT   While traditional survey or action research methods can be used, they are often too costly or too slow. As a result, 2 more modern methods are coming to the fore:

1. **Dipstick research**. As the name implies, this gives a quick reading without extensive sampling. 30-50 calls or interviews will do, and person-to-person questioning is the norm.

   - First, a simple mathematical model of the organization is constructed. This can be done by units, dep'ts or location; by types of workers; employee characteristics such as sex, age, length of service; or any useful differentiation of the universe being studied.

   - Then a random method is employed to select the sample from among the cells of the mathematical model. As long as every name on the list has a roughly equivalent chance of being selected the sample will be sufficiently representative for the purpose of dipstick measurement. However, in ongoing dipsticks, the same persons are not queried again.

   - Calls or interviews, using a brief line of questioning, can often be done by support staff or interns.

2. **Group meeting surveys**. During a routine group session, questionnaires are passed out & collected on the spot. Result: far larger response.

TURN METRICS INTO AN INDEX FOR MAXIMUM USEFULNESS   By measuring at regular intervals, say quarterly, an index of progress over time is constructed. That is probably the ultimate evaluation -- *if* you can get the bean counters to consider it sufficiently mathematical to qualify as "metrics" (and in reality, most will agree it's excellent measurement).

¶ There are many other aspects to metrics, and some evolving opportunities. prr will review them in a future issue.

ATTACK AT COMPETITORS' STRONG POINTS, NOT THEIR WEAK ONES

"Marketing is always an offensive weapon. You can't capture market share by taking a defensive position," points out consumer-behavior researcher Brit Beemer in *Predatory Marketing* (Morrow; $25).

This principle applies to all products or services:

"Knowing that today's consumer shops at only 1.8 stores for major purchases, you must go after the customers of the number one store.... If you attack your competitors' weaknesses, you won't take many customers away from them. That's because those customers don't shop your competition for its weaknesses. They are driven to shop your competition for its strengths. This means that if you want to take customers away from the guy across the street, you have to give them a better reason to do business with you rather than with your competition that presently has their business."

HOW THEY REALLY FEEL ABOUT VOICE MAIL   Beemer bases his advice on original research & surveys. For instance this about voice mail:

- 40% of Americans are strongly against it (they either hate or dislike it very much).

- 25% can tolerate it, which means they are not enthralled with it.

- 35% say it's okay, they can live with it.

The numbers strongly opposed to voice mail have risen from 20% to the present 40% in the past 5 yrs. "This sizable increase in a relatively short period of time indicates that within the next 5 yrs, the number can be expected to rise to 70%."

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION REIGNS   Ritz-Carlton Hotels empowers every staff member to use his or her best judgment to handle customer complaints -- & **can spend up to $2,000 per incident!** With permission to think on their feet, employees are constantly looking for ways to keep customers happy.

Another relationship builder is R-C Hotel's Repeat Guest Program. The likes & dislikes of more than 500,000 repeat guests are tracked in a computer database. If a guest in Palm Beach wants soft-scrambled eggs on a slightly burned English muffin & 3 newspapers delivered each morning, this is duly noted & becomes part of the program -- whether his next stay is in Sydney or Kansas City.

"If you expect to survive in today's highly competitive marketplace, you must understand what drives your customer.... It doesn't require deep pockets to find out what your customers think -- but when the feedback comes, you have to be willing to listen, not defend." And your research must reveal answers that are actionable -- how to get & keep customers...for life.