

generally unsuccessfully. When the employee is persuaded to stay, s/he often leaves within 6-9 months anyway. [Training opportunity]

#### TACTICS TO AID RETENTION

- **Tie retention to critical business activities** so managers treat it as an on-going priority, focusing on proactive measures to keep employees committed. Organizations must hold their managers personally accountable for retention. It takes on a new perspective when it's a *business goal*.
- **Manager must be aware of employee needs for career advancement.** "For many years the corporate world has been telling people they have to keep learning because when a company needs new skills, it needs them that moment. As a result, key employees want to be in jobs where they're learning new things to keep themselves marketable. So the manager must be aware of where this employee wants to go in his or her career long term, and how quickly." If these aren't communicated, employee becomes vulnerable when a headhunter calls.
- **Managers need to find ways for employees to become winners at the start.** When they enter their new position, help them build positive momentum. Give assignments that allow the employee to feel initial success, even if it isn't strategic to the work or the group. Appeal to the employee's need for achievement. [Positive reinforcement]
- **Give the potential employee a realistic job preview.** Managers must show the candidate all aspects of the job so he or she can start by making a wise decision. If an employee realizes after accepting a position that he or she wasn't told everything, it starts a negative reaction. "Because of the absence of talent right now & people having a hard time recruiting or finding good people, positions are vacant longer. As a result, there's more of a tendency not to spell out the more controversial parts of a job to fill the slot faster. But the organization needs to realize it's more costly if the employee leaves after 3-4 mos than it is to leave the position open longer waiting for the right person."
- **Provide training for employees to increase their skills.** (See also pr 11/10) Ware casts doubt on the belief of some companies that if you make employees "employable" elsewhere, then you have to be resigned to their leaving. "Some managers say an employee's future career goals are his or her own concern. By providing them with means to develop themselves, we make them ripe for recruitment by another company. Paradoxically, our research shows the opposite. A manager's interest in the employee's development tends to bind the employee closer to the company & retards turnover rather than increasing it." (More from ITS, 330 Purissima st, Half Moon Bay, Calif 94019-1733; 415/726-3373)

Key to retention is the skill of managers -- not salary packages or other financial incentives, says Lynn Ware, ITS pres. Managers play a significant role in influencing employees' commitment level & retention by their behaviors on the job. They must balance the needs of the organization (productivity) with the needs of the employee (creating a climate that builds loyalty). [Fits into team leader-as-communicator]

## EARNING PUBLIC RELATIONS A SEAT AT THE BOARDROOM TABLE

Joe Curley of Curley & Pynn PR Management (Orlando) offers 10 action steps:

1. **Don't wait to be asked.** The CEO won't come to your office for help because he/she doesn't understand the resources of the pr office, hence doesn't know how pr can help. Education, example & action must come proactively from us.
2. **Know what keeps the CEO up at night.** What vexes the CEO vexes the organization. Focus your pr activities to support these issues & you'll align yourself with top management.
3. **Analyze the big picture, not just the snapshot.** Present the CEO with tomorrow's issues, not yesterday's news clips. Anticipate & prepare for what's ahead that may affect the organization & how pr can factor into the solution.
4. **Get involved in the company's policymaking process,** don't just apologize to your audiences for bad management decisions later.
5. **Lead the function of "Environment Scanning"** to detect early signs of emerging issues/trends that may affect the organization. Then bring the CEO solutions, not problems.
6. **Serve as the conscience of the organization** to preserve established relationships & forge new public alliances. PR is the only department with the resources to protect the company's present position during crisis/conflict.
7. **Develop & present action-oriented "decisionmaking" information & strategy** rather than activity status reports. CEOs expect it & manage by it.
8. **Know everything you can about your organization's operations.** We're the storytellers for the organization. If we don't know it, we can't communicate it or plan for it.
9. **Monitor the direct competition & the marketplace.** We can't develop plans without factoring in the outside world.
10. **Focus all your pr activities** with objectives that clearly support the organization's business plan & contribute to the bottom line.

(More from him at 801 N. Magnolia av, Orlando, Fla 32803-3842; 407/423-8006; fax 407/648-5869)



## "PEOPLE POWER" FILLS GAP OF POLITICAL / INSTITUTIONAL FAILURE

To affect public policy, pr professionals must understand & deal with "people power" -- a global phenomenon precipitated by the failure of political & institutional leadership & the revolution in communications technology, believes Bob Dilenschneider (The Dilenschneider Group, NYC).

### MELANGE OF ISSUES IS BARRIER

"As a result we have a passionate debate going on -- about everything:

- military funding
- education
- environment
- human rights in China versus investment in China
- protection of intellectual property
- shouldn't we adopt a softer form of capitalism
- has immigration reached its peak
- what type of medical care should the nation be paying for
- is capital punishment revenge or a deterrent
- what responsibility does the gov't have in helping families cope
- is dying your own business?"

1. **How do you have input** into the debate today? Not by sending a letter or a lobbyist to Washington, Dilenschneider says. "*Washington doesn't matter any more.* The playing field has moved to wherever the people are."
2. **To reach them requires going "beyond the traditional media,"** relying "more heavily on alternative media" -- ie, neighborhood newspapers, shoppers, talk radio, black & Hispanic radio & tv, the Internet, media geared to specific demographic groups including the elderly, the young, women & ethnic groups.
3. **To be effective,** pr pros must be willing to go public, to raise their visibility & speak out on controversial issues of public importance.

*"There's a myth that bearers of bad news get shot. Wrong. More often the wimp who isn't telling the CEO what's going on gets fired."*

### IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING, OR RECONSIDERING, USING VNRs...

1. **Watch your local tv news.** Don't trust your memory. See how simple the mechanics are, because local news segments must be shot & produced *quickly.* Know your target media.
2. **Have the courage to be NOT different.** The local tv news producer is looking for some filler that fits in with the standard style, NOT a new cinematic & commercial star on the horizon.
3. **Focus on the public interest, not self interest.** The most common cause of death for VNRs is being too blatantly commercial & self-serving.
4. **Sharpen your story hook.** Summarize your angle in one simple sentence anyone can understand -- & find interesting.

5. **Get visual.** Talking heads don't impress the local tv news producer. If you're going to provide your own footage, it had better be worth watching. Visually interesting action & location improve your chances.
6. **Use a recognized authority** or expert to verify the claims being made in your news story.
7. **Make it short & sweet.** Present one basic idea. Resist the temptation to add more. Your target length is 90 seconds. The closer to 2 minutes, the closer the bullet to your foot.
8. **Merchandise the results.** Like a magazine article reprint, the first appearance of the VNR may not be its most important. Think direct mail, new business presentations, trade shows, company/employee meetings.

(More -- a white paper on VNRs -- from Hammond Farrell Inc, 257 Park av South, NYC 10010; 212/995-5680)

### NEW PR OPPORTUNITY: HELPING TO RETAIN THE BEST EMPLOYEES

Managers interviewed by Integral Training Systems (ITS) say they receive, on average, 2 calls/month from exec recruiters. Finding & keeping valued employees is a struggle now because of a) less than 6% unemployment; b) changing workforce demographics (ie, shrinking of the most desirable labor pool -- 25-34 yr olds); c) negative impact of downsizing on employee loyalty.

#### I.T.S.' RESEARCH FINDS...

1. **Cost of attrition can be staggering, but often unseen.** One Silicon Valley company estimates it costs \$70,000 when an employee leaves. Others estimate productivity losses of 65-75% in the position the employee departs.
2. **Attrition has an often unrecognized impact on customers.** When key employees leave customer contact jobs, customers often experience: a) discontinuity in the relationship; b) negative impact on their own productivity; c) time wasted reorienting the new employee to their operation. [PR is responsible for customer satisfaction]
3. **The reasons employees stay are not the same as why they leave.** In exit interviews, employees often do not report negative reasons associated with the job they're leaving, but instead report what is attractive in the new job. These interviews fail to surface the real causes of an organization's attrition problems.
4. **Manager's role in attrition is paramount but underplayed.** Most mgrs fail to take personal responsibility for loss of employees. But, a large number of retention factors are *within* the mgr's influence.
5. **The only time the average mgr thinks about retention** is when s/he receives a resignation. Most try to talk the employee out of leaving,