

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Food Lion v. ABC Verdict** is, predictably, being attacked by most journalists. But it reveals an above-the-rules, even above-the-law arrogance similar to the GM truck case. No wonder "no comment" & ducking the media are becoming favored responses. The idea that anything goes to get at what persons labeling themselves "journalist" see as wrong counters 800 years of jurisprudence. The tape released by Food Lion after the verdict apparently aired only on Fox News Channel. But it is chilling for practitioners. "We're going to get these guys," says an ABC staffer. Two wrongs don't make a right.

¶ **Principles of symbolic com'n are important in print media**, as well as in managerial behavior, org'l actions etc. U Tennessee alumni assn's current fund appeal is a "final exam." The booklet which makes the pitch & personalizes it to the reader is a typical "blue book," with exam questions. Official looking cover (with university seal) completes the analogy. "Exam" questions include: What percentage of assistance does the state provide?" with multiple answer choices. (31% is correct, making UTenn a "state-assisted, not state-supported, institution"). Envelope boldly announces "Your 1996 Final Exam..."

¶ **Leave it to Nordstrom to bring health concerns of shoppers right into its stores.** Most customers are women, breast cancer is a major fear -- so the retailer tucked a mammography center right in among the shoes & fashions. It's operated by local healthcare providers, offers several advantages: 1) more convenient way to get this vital annual x-ray done; 2) less fearful environment than in clinic, hospital or other places for "illness"; 3) instead of hospital "johnny" gowns, which barely cover you, store provides a fluffy robe to wear for the exam. Everyone wins -- especially Nordstrom.

¶ **Earliest recorded use of the phrase "public opinion"** appeared in Gibbons' *Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire*, notes historian David Fischer in the footnotes to his best-seller, *Paul Revere's Ride*. Gibbons' famed work appeared in 1776 -- an intriguing coincidence with US history. If you want to look it up, it's in chapter xxxi, III, 257 (at least in the 1781 edition which is usually reprinted). First US use of these words was by Thomas Jefferson.

¶ **If you're unable for any reason to identify the actual opinion leaders**, then at least locate those folks who talk to a lot of people. Hair stylists, gas station operators, mom & pop store clerks, beat cops, etc may not be trusted by others to guide their thinking. But they can put topics on the agenda -- which is about all that news media can do. Word-of-mouth from folks who are known to talk to everybody has an authority of its own -- like polls, it implies the majority is thinking a certain way.

ALL-OUT STRATEGIC PLANNING GETS MANAGERS TO UNDERSTAND

Their lack of understanding can be practitioners' own fault. "Like many communicators, we were jumping right to strategies & tactics based on our gut instincts," explains Pam Krider, who heads Motorola's Semiconductor Products Sector Employee Communications group.

STANDARDS & DISCIPLINE

Her team, located at different sites & representing different elements within the industry, meets quarterly to tackle big issues. Group decided to **formulate a standard by which to do its work** & to help customers (upper management) understand the process used to develop a strategic com'ns plan.

"What we wanted to do was create a discipline for ourselves that would make us go thru a total analysis process with our customers -- so whatever strategies we put forth we'd know **why** we were doing it," she told prr.

HOW THEY DID IT

1. Began with an information dump. "Each of us put on the table the approach we used in developing com'ns plans. We also had consultants come in & share how they did com'ns planning. For one whole day we put it all out there to see where everyone was coming from & what opportunities we might have."
2. 2nd day, broke into teams of 2, each attempting to develop a model that incorporated the most essential elements gathered from the day before.
 - "We defined what we actually need as parts of the process, how they fit into a model & how the process works. We came up with our models & took the best from each."
 - "It's an evolving model. We continue to add pieces to it -- I don't think it will ever be a final document. It should continue to evolve as we better understand how to do what we need to do within employee communications ... or any communication discipline."

CREATED A WORKBOOK

...that moves step-by-step thru the development of a strategic com'ns plan. Workbook accomplishes 2 key things:

1. **Analyzes the product/project itself.** "We need to have a clear understanding with our customer about what the project is, what are we trying to achieve, how can com'ns help achieve it. Then we create a hypothesis which is plugged into the model."



2. Next, using the workbook, an analysis is done **step-by-step from the communications perspective.**

WHAT TAKING CUSTOMERS THRU THE PROCESS ACCOMPLISHES

A. "Strategies fall out very naturally" after walking thru the process.

B. "Gives them a foundation from which they can get other people to help with what they need -- training, marketing, or whatever it might be."

C. "Helps them understand why we're doing what we're doing, how we got to that conclusion. They feel confident about the process, the standard by which we deliver our communication plan."

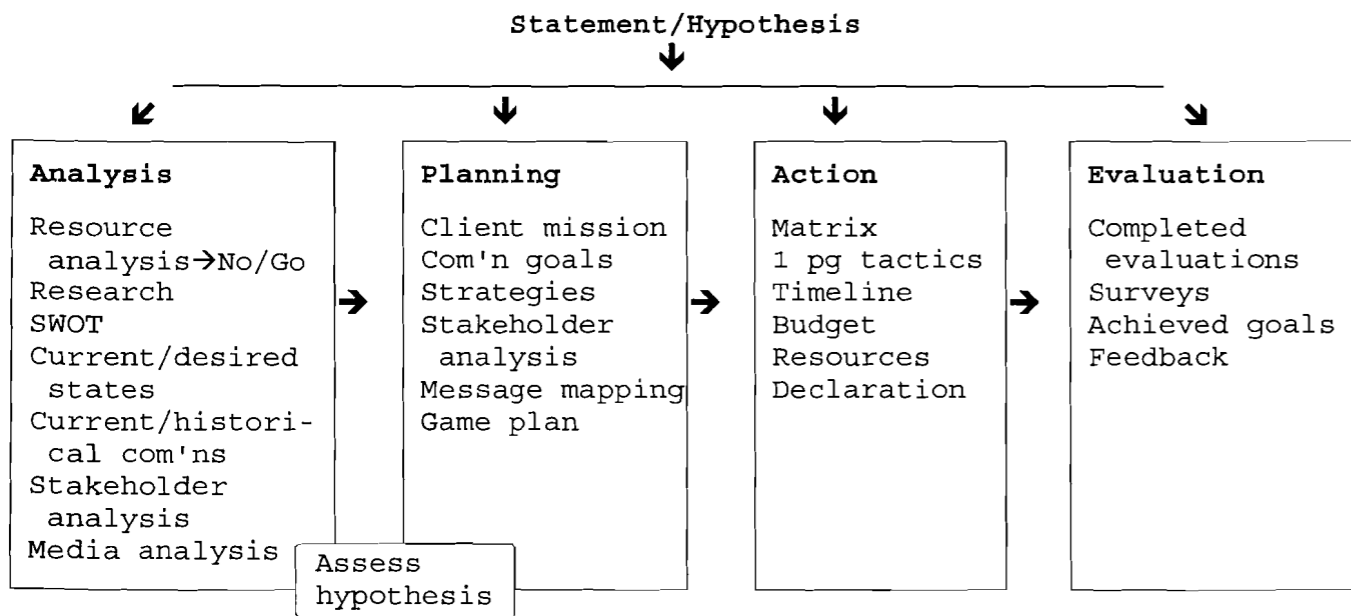
D. Helps them understand, at a future time, "what we're presenting because we will have already educated them along the way."

E. Allows those customers who've been taken thru it the freedom to use it on their own "& we can work with them in a light consultative role."

F. However, customers who have tried to use the model on their own have realized "there is in fact an expertise in communication. They often come back to us & say 'Oh, I didn't realize it wasn't as easy as writing a memo.' **They begin to value us & see us as strategic vs tactical, as experts in communications vs somebody who just knows how to write well.**"

RESULTS "Positioning of our function has dramatically shifted because of the workbook. Not only our sector but the entire corporation has adopted it as the model to be used thruout Motorola within the communications realm. And it's starting to leak into other areas."

COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS



-- from Motorola Semiconductor Products Sector Employee Com'ns Workbook

A RITUAL THAT KEEPS A PR FIRM FOCUSED

Research shows that rituals are essential to create & maintain organizational culture -- another integration of anthropology into pr. Curley & Pynn PR Mgmt of Orlando applies this tenet to keep everyone on staff mindful of the firm's operating principles & core values.

CURLEY & PYNN'S FOUR STEPS TO PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

- Focus on what keeps the client awake at night.
- Analyze the big picture, not just the snapshot.
- Bring our clients solutions, not problems.
- Anticipate ... don't wait to be asked.

At staff meetings, someone is called on to recite the 4 points -- a sure way to get them committed to memory. They hang framed in every office, of course.

LEARNING ABOUT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FROM THE RETAILERS

In an era when just about every type of organization at last realizes it is operating at a "retail" level -- whether healthcare, gov't services, education, financial services, biz-to-biz products et al -- much about customer satisfaction can be learned from the actual retail industry.

Britt Beemer conducted several surveys for his book (pr last week), and this one about what **dissatisfies** shoppers is translatable to all who are attempting to satisfy or delight customers -- the single most important competitive advantage today. It describes the purchasing experience.

WHAT SHOPPERS DISLIKE MOST ABOUT SHOPPING

Men's Top 10 Shopping Dislikes

1. Long lines at cash register
2. Rude salespeople
3. Price scans differently from that marked on item
4. No prices on items
5. Pushy salespeople
6. Advertised item not in stock
7. Can't take things back if not satisfied
8. Dirty restrooms
9. No one in store to help
10. Unorganized store

Women's Top 10 Shopping Dislikes

1. Long lines at cash register
2. Dirty restrooms
3. Rude salespeople
4. Pushy salespeople
5. Advertised item not in stock
6. No prices on items
7. Price scans differently from that marked on item
8. No one in store to help
9. Can't take things back if not satisfied
10. Dirty store