

Many communicators make the mistake of showing merely a photograph of their product, without conveying how it relates to the values that actually motivate seniors & consumers with disabilities. (More: 212/807-2637)

## BLANCHARD'S LATEST BOOK SHOWS PR'S ROLE IN EMPOWERMENT

*Empowerment Takes More Than a Minute*, by the one minute manager guru, finds this **culture change** necessary to truly empower workers, at all levels, to use their maximum abilities: "People look up to their bosses instead of out to customers. Their loyalty is to the functional fiefdoms in which they work rather than to the overall company & its goals."

**The new culture?** "When people are empowered they don't look up to the hierarchy for answers; they take responsibility to solve problems where they occur."

- Empowerment is "release rather than control." It pays off big time!
- "Empowerment comes from teaching others things they can do to become less dependent on you."

**The First Key**, says Blanchard, is to Share Information With Everyone -- pr's responsibility & opportunity. "People without information cannot act responsibly. People with information are compelled to act responsibly."

## ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSIONALS

**PRSA has hired another fulltime director of public relations** -- Richard George, ex-mpr, The Weightman Group (Phila). He'll be responsible for: 1) developing & implementing a strategic com'ns plan designed to manage the reputation of the Society & profession; 2) promoting PRSA's programs & services; 3) assisting with chapter com'n efforts. While he is a PRSA member, he has not earned an APR. Perhaps he will take the exam soon. To manage the reputation of the Society & the profession, shouldn't he demonstrate this in his own career? By attaining accreditation from the org'n that not only dispenses it -- but is his employer? Or is this a message that PRSA no longer values accreditation? If PRSA doesn't, in its staffing decisions, why should other organizations?

**This week's tips & tactics has a very different look.** Written & designed by U Missouri-Columbia J-prof Don Ranley, it's an example of his "refrigerator journalism" -- "useful & usable journalism for a time-starved society." Stuff you can put on your refrigerator with a magnet. Do you find this style effective in communicating? Why or why not? Is it easier to read, or an example of "danger: designer at work"? Like so many leaders in the field, Don is working to find a way to break thru the clutter of overcommunication -- so let him know via [prr](mailto:prr).

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**RETIREES.** Barry Brandt (vp investor rels & com'ns) Kerr-McGee Corp, Oklahoma City); Rick Buterbaugh takes over as dir investor rels, Dow Dozier stays on as dir corp com'ns).

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CUSTOMER DELIGHT: PR'S VITAL ROLE

Whether your organization is a product maker/seller, educational institution, healthcare provider, gov't agency or whatever, focus on customers has clearly arrived. It has finally gone beyond the phony "customer first" hype of the 80s to serious attempts at really serving them. VP Gore's reinventing gov't initiative just last week praised another group of customer-satisfying federal activities -- e.g. the Customs Service now answers all calls within 1 minute.

That agency has no competition, of course, so can still get away with merely satisfying customers. Competing org'ns know the goal has shifted to *delighting* them, as the ultimate competitive edge. Even if competitors satisfy customers, you can prevail by delighting them.

We must indelibly impress on the entire organizational family the body of powerful research supporting customer delight -- starting with the study showing that 70% of customers choose you not because of your product/service (which they know they can also get elsewhere) but because of how they are treated!

## ELEMENTS IN DESIGNING CUSTOMER DELIGHT PROGRAMS

1. **The Promise** To form a psychological "contract" with customers, you must state plainly what you will do if they will use your service/product. It's your **vision** of benefits for them. But too often uncoordinated communications -- perhaps between pr & adv'g -- or contradictory actions become symbolic of what is really happening.

Your **statement of how you intend to satisfy customers**, appearing in literature, signage, publications, publicity (your *actual promise*), can be undermined by ad copy that offers the moon, or employee acts/company policies that signal you don't mean it (your *implied promise*).

2. **Their Expectations** These arise chiefly from 3 sources, and must be managed by meticulous research & reaction:

- Your actual promise
- Competitors' delivery of delight
- Internalized perceptions of service quality in general (the satisfaction environment they experience)

The role of pr here is absolute: its ability to manage perceptions.

3. **Delivery** A main reason practitioners must become trainers & counselors, since the gap between promise & delivery is frequently huge. Primary cause may be failure of management to recognize that frontliners -- those who actually serve customers -- are not the bottom rung of the organization, but its most important resource.

**4 elements of success:**

- A. *Inculcating real teamwork* vs. "not my responsibility" thinking. Customer Satisfaction Modeling is an effective tool here (pr 1/1/90 & 5/23/94 or request a copy of the Customer Satisfaction Model).
- B. *Providing continuous training* -- with ongoing, non-judgmental, lessons-learned discussions led by frontline team leaders.
- C. *Employee evaluation systems* that reward teamwork as well as individual initiative -- & focus on delivery of customer delight above all.
- D. *Measurement & metrics* -- ideally a Customer Delight Index.

4. **Aftermath or Maintenance** This is where reputations are sealed, as shown by the classic TARP study that satisfied customers tell 4 or 5 others -- while dissatisfied customers whose cases are not resolved tell 10 (pr 11/9/81).

**Two pitfalls** are 1) complaint handling -- finding ways to make the situation delightfully right; 2) finding ways to identify those who are not really dissatisfied but their expectations were not met. The latter stimulates customer defections -- very costly to your bottom line.

**An opportunity** is to stimulate third party endorsements -- delighted customers, ideally opinion leaders, who take your case to their groups. Loyalty marketing projects (pr 5/3/93) pay off big here, going after the 20% who provide 80% of your business.

## PR, ONCE SKEWED TOWARD MARKETING, NOW VEERING TOWARD PA?

That appears to be an implication of a new study. Very plausible, considering the finding that most pa chiefs have a direct reporting line to their CEOs. More than half sit on the top mgmt committee of the organization. Survey for Public Affairs Council by Boston U School of Management gathered data from 260 large- & medium-sized companies.

Larger budgets & increased responsibility are the rule. **PA ofcrs can now expect to supervise a number of different dep'ts** -- including state & federal gov't rels, media rels, grassroots programs, comty rels, philanthropy, international pub afrs -- tho frequently without staff increases. And corporate chieftains are more closely monitoring & quantifying their work. Some stats from the survey:

- **Current pa activities:** fed gov't rels (75%); state gov't rels (75%); comty rels (71%); local gov't rels (69%); contributions/philanthropy (69%); grassroots (68%); issues mgmt (67%); media rels (66%); political action cmte (66%); public relations, "a mgmt function interacting with key publics & all that entails, part of which is publicity," pres Doug Pinkham told pr (64%); employee com'ns (58%); political interest group rels (51%); educational afrs/outreach (44%); regulatory afrs (43%); volunteer prgm (41%); adv'g (39%); international pa (35%); environmental afrs (29%); stockholder rels (24%); institutional investor rels (23%); consumer afrs (17%).
- **Recent trends:** reorganized dep't (39%); benchmarking studies (32%); net increase of personnel (30%); changed internal reporting relationship (28%); net loss of personnel (26%); re-engineered dep't (19%); change in senior mgmt (19%); studied by consultant (11%).
- **Political involvement activities:** trade ass'ns (99%); business ass'ns (98%); visits by public officials (96%); grassroots (92%); coalitions (87%); visits by candidates (86%); PACs (81%); voter registration (77%); soft money (70%); direct contributions to candidates (69%); candidate debates (61%); partisan endorsements (49%).

Having public relationships directed by a unit focused on gov't can be as misleading as one focused on marketing. After all, earning trust of stakeholders is a **prerequisite** of effective lobbying. As the fundraisers say, "Friend raising before fund raising". The 3 Arenas must be seamlessly integrated, with no one more important than the others: Sales, Public Policy, Organizational Effectiveness (see pr 2/13/89). (More from Doug Pinkham at Public Affairs Council, 202/872-1790)

## MOTIVATORS SAME FOR SENIOR CITIZENS, THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

Values that motivate mature behavior are equally relevant to people with disabilities, notes the study by Packaged Facts (see pr 4/7). Psychologists find 5 key values motivate behavior in older Americans & those with disabilities:

1. Autonomy & self-sufficiency
2. Personal growth
3. Altruism (or, to the disabled market, usefulness)
4. Social & spiritual connectedness
5. Revitalization

**Note the antithesis of selfishness** in this list, despite some "us first & only" stances by org'ns like AARP that claim to speak for seniors. It is important those marketing to or communicating with people with disabilities -- that large & growing sector -- understand these values for 3 reasons:

1. A large portion of the disabled market is 65 or older, i.e. the two groups blend.
2. The tension between desire for autonomy & desire for social connectedness animates the disabled market as strongly as the mature market.
3. The ability of a product, service or cause to satisfy these values is more important to these consumers than are the specific attributes & direct functional benefits of the product, service or cause itself.