

2. "The alternative? Remember the old days of piles of those pink 'while you were out' slips?? You had no idea why an individual called & it could take 5 or 6 rounds of call-backs before you found it was something you could have handled days earlier.
3. "It's not that people were always there in the old days as Carole McLeod laments (pr 2/10). They weren't. Their secretaries were & dutifully said they'd take a message, which maybe got taken down correctly (or not) & then got shuffled into that pile of pink slips.
4. "Voice-mail haters can always press 0 for a human; without voice mail, I'm stuck. Frustrated because my one-step transaction has now become a 2 or more-step process of leave-my-name & he'll-get-back-to-me (maybe)."

## TROUBLING DATA ON HUGE CROP OF ONCOMING PRACTITIONERS

The number of degrees in pr rose 13% in '96, reveals the '97 directory *Where Shall I Go To Study Advertising & Public Relations?* It measures 297 adv'g, pr & joint adv'g/pr programs at 199 colleges in US & Puerto Rico.

Programs are found in 2 areas of universities: 1) journalism/mass com'ns & 2) business (more specifically, marketing).

- Where the program is in journalism/mass com'ns, emphasis is usually placed on creative, writing or media, with additional knowledge & skills in writing & editing -- an extremely limited & old-fashioned approach.
- Within business or mktg, the emphasis is largely on planning & mgmt with additional courses involving general business practices.

Only 12% of the schools listed offered pr outside the journalism/mass com'ns dep't. These other dep'ts include: business/marketing; adv'g or adv'g/pr; humanities & com'ns arts; English; social science; communicative arts & sciences; social sciences & mgmt; telecom'ns.

### MORE GRADS THAN JOBS?

Last year, 4,944 pr degrees were granted; 4,470 adv'g degrees; 5,133 students

enrolled in joint ad/pr programs which awarded 1,740 degrees.

UTexas has the largest degree-granting program in pr with 241 grads. BostonU has the largest joint program with 309 grads.

Directory is primarily for high school students & guidance counselors. In addition to data on students & graduates, it reports the number of faculty, university & program entrance requirements, tuition & fees, scholarships available for majors & a contact for more info at each school. (\$5 from Adv'g Education Pub'ns, P.O. Box 4164, Lubbock, TX 79409)

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**HONORS.** The Miles Agency (Virginia Beach) receives Urban League of Hampton Roads' A. Philip Randolph Award -- to a company which has made

significant progress toward diversifying its workforce, both at mgmt & non-mgmt levels.

## BAD NEWS: ANOTHER STUDY FINDS MEDIA REALLY HAS PROBLEMS

Yet another study, again by a media entity, corroborates the Newseum/Roper Center findings (pr 3/24) that news media are failing. This time from the Pew Research Center:

"Today, public criticism of the press for **inaccuracy, lack of fairness & sensationalism** is even greater than in 1985. At the same time, Americans are **much less engaged by the news itself**, & fewer think that press scrutiny of political leaders is 'worth it.' A sizable minority of Americans now say that press criticism prevents political leaders from doing their jobs, & a growing proportion of the public say they do not look forward to following the news each day. The rising criticism of the press is directed more at the national media -- network news & large national newspapers -- than at local television news & daily newspapers."

### DETAILS OF THE MEDIA'S PROBLEMS WITH THEIR INTENDED AUDIENCES:

- 56% feel news stories/reports are often **inaccurate**, up from 34% in '85.
- Greatest increase in complaints comes from young people, especially young men; & from college grads, highly likely to be **opinion leaders**.
- 64% believe tv news **unnecessarily invades people's privacy**, vs. intruding *only* when it serves the public interest; of newspapers, 57% say so.
- 67% say news org'ns tend to **favor one side** of a political or social issue, rather than dealing fairly with all sides.
- Men more than women criticize the press for **being unfair**. Men under 30 are extremely critical -- 78% say news org'ns favor one side.

The news media cannot do a fraction of the things some old-school practitioners still count on them to achieve, they remain a potentially important **awareness & reinforcement vehicle**. They don't have their former reach, but are as close as we've got to a "mass" channel. And as watchdogs of politics & gov't, their *potential* -- if not their *performance* -- is important to democracy. PR pros who aren't media sycophants could help them regain their standing -- but marketers & Wall Street now rule the media. Consider: who owns the 3 major tv nets? Disney, GE & Westinghouse. Not a journalist among them.

- **News media favorability ratings:**

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1997</u>
Network tv news	84%	73%
Local tv news	84	81
National newspapers	48	41
Daily newspapers	81	74

- A growing **lack of appreciation for the press' watchdog role** is apparent among all demographic & political groups but is most pronounced among older Americans & the less affluent:

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1997</u>
Criticism by the press keeps political leaders from doing their jobs	17%	24%	32%
Criticism keeps leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done	67	66	56

- 89% say the press should wait until formal charges are brought before releasing the name of a criminal suspect. In two cases where names were published (Richard Jewell & 2 Dallas Cowboys), majorities of the public blamed the media rather than law enforcement sources for any harm done to the reputations of the accused. In the Jewell case, 58% blamed media, 24% law enforcement. In the Dallas case, 67% media, 16% law enforcement.

#### **SOME THINGS PEOPLE FEEL MEDIA ARE DOING (MOSTLY) RIGHT:**

- The public distinguishes between press coverage of personal & ethical behavior vs. press criticism of policies & proposals. It is less likely to condemn the media for excessive criticism of substance than for its focus on character. Only 46% say press criticism of the policies & proposals of political leaders is excessive.
- 80% of the public say in general they approve of the news media's practice of uncovering & reporting on corruption & fraud in business, gov't agencies & other org'ns. By a margin of 60% to 28% they would like to see *more* of this type of reporting rather than less. Provided, of course, it is accurate -- see the first item on pg 1.
- Media read/viewed regularly include: local news (72%); daily paper (56%); network news (41%); CNN (28%); 60 Minutes (24%).

#### **JUST WHEN WE FEARED PUBLICATIONS WERE DEAD**

... decline of media value to pr opens the gates for **direct media** -- usually meaning newsletters, info or update sheets, mags or similar; or their electronic counterparts. To be effective they won't look like their predecessors -- more info-mapped, briefer, fewer topics per issue, great attempts to get readers to interact face-to-face with someone from the organization. Editors have a future!

(More from Pew Research Ctr, 1875 Eye st, NW, Suite 1110, DC 20006; 202/293-3126; <http://www.people-press.org>)

¶ **Of Related Interest:** An Internet version of the lapsed mag *Forbes Media Critic* (pr 1/13) will be online in May. It can be accessed via Forbes' homepage ([www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)). "It's going to be media criticism again, but with some changes. The articles will be shorter, snappier, more topical. Along with print & broadcast journalism, we'll also focus on Internet journalism. We'll be publishing daily -- small reviews daily; every Wednesday there'll be a new feature (800-1000 words) & a 500 word column. We're shooting for May 12," Derek Baker, staff writer, told prr. Terry Eastland is editor.

#### **'NEWEST, LARGEST, FASTEST-GROWING MINORITY'**

... is people with disabilities. According to a study by Packaged Facts, 53 million people are in this group. While many have relatively minor disabilities -- difficulty reading newsprint or hearing normal conversations, for example -- about 26 million are "severely" disabled, where routine activities are impossible without personal or technological assistance.

**NUMBERS ARE RISING** They are the fastest growing minority because the disability rate rises with age & the US is an aging population -- as is Canada & most of Europe. More people of all ages are surviving conditions that once were fatal. With the emphasis on shorter hospital stays & more aggressive rehabilitation, most move directly from hospital to home.

**A HUGE MARKET** Mainstream marketers know their target audiences are aging, thus more have some kind of disability. And **they have money to spend** -- \$796 billion in '96, notes the study.

Marketers have also found that marketing to people with disabilities doesn't alienate their products or services from their "temporarily able-bodied" audiences. Northwest Airlines, for example, features champion wheelchair racer DeAnna Sodoma in its commercials targeted to business travelers. (More info: Scott Dempster, 212/807-2637)

#### **YET ANOTHER VOICE RE VOICE MAIL -- THIS ONE VERY POSITIVE**

"I love it!" responds healthcare counselor Kathy Lewton in an e-mail to prr. "I can leave a precise message, know that every detail will get thru, & add nuance to the message by my tone of voice. I can add a personal touch that is difficult to do thru receptionist or phone-answerer person. In one call, I can tell the person I'm calling exactly what he or she has asked me about -- or exactly what I need from them." Her persuasive points:

1. "I get more call-backs from people who might have dropped my pink slip in the wastebasket ('who's she?') when I can leave them info about who I am & what I want in a pleasant, friendly voice. And I call more people back because I know what they want."