

WHY 1-ON-1 RELATIONSHIPS CAN GET TOUGH JOBS DONE

Awareness alone doesn't move people to action. But local contact & involvement with peers can. That's the strategy for National Science Teachers Assn's program "Building a Presence for Science."

Goal is to improve science education. At its heart are the National Science Educational Standards -- formulated with input from more than 6,000 educators & concerned citizens. Standards are a framework for hands-on, activity-&-inquiry-based science. They are "a shared, common vision for what should be happening to our children," explains exec dir Gerry Wheeler.

MUST BE LOCAL TO WORK

But, says Wheeler, the public doesn't like "federally imposed programs & guidelines"

so program can't be run from DC & expect to succeed. Instead it's operating at the local level. Texas is the site of the pilot program -- launched last October.

HOW PROGRAM WORKS

- A state coordinator was named to lead the volunteer network of science educators in the state.

- Coordinator then led school & community representatives to identify more than 250 Key Leaders to head up the program in school districts. Working thru the state's 20 education service centers, she met with the Texas Education Agency, local PTAs, school personnel, & parks & recreation people to select these Key Leaders. This provided involvement.

- Key Leaders then initiated a search for Points of Contact in each school to serve as the local resource people for teachers in their school building -- the in-school leaders in science.

"One reason this program is so successful is the mechanism for networking it offers. That's very important to teachers because they tend to feel isolated in the classroom. It gives them a way to interact with others," Marily DeWall, prgm dir, told prr. (More from DeWall at 703/312-9218 or mdewall@nsta.org)

- Key Leaders were trained at 7 sites thruout the state. They were given an overview of the "state of science education"; led on a "walk-thru" of the Nat'l Standards; discussed the effectiveness of activity-based learning; led thru at least one sample hands-on teaching activity; discussed their role in the initiative & the resources available to them.

- Points of Contact are also trained. But first, Key Leaders target the administrators & principals to educate them about the program. They then respond by selecting Points of Contact & providing substitute teachers so Points of Contact teachers train on school time.

- "It will take at least 3 years for us to permeate the system," says one Key Leader. "Then, ongoing interviews with teachers will keep us on course. It's the regular check-ups that will make the program work." Communication will be maintained thru a regular newsletter, an electronic information service & thru the Points of Contact.

STUDY FINDS CANADIANS ALSO PESSIMISTIC, REINFORCING TREND

A high degree of uncertainty & pessimism pervades both Canada & the US, reveal comparable studies in each country. Findings from Canada's *Shades of Gray: A Study of Honesty in the Workplace* & some US comparisons:

UNCERTAINTY & PESSIMISM, E.G. TRUST RATINGS FOR MOST INDUSTRIES DOWN

- Plus, consumer confidence levels remain low (25%).
- 54% believe things have seriously gotten off track.
- Optimism regarding basic institutions is declining, ie, quality of life dropped 13% from '94 (68%) to '96 (55%); marriage & family dropped 10% (54% to 44%); public education system dropped 5% (35% to 30%).
- Top concerns are unemployment (50%); crime & lawlessness (45%); economy (34%); quality of Canada's public healthcare system (31%); money enough to live right & pay bills (25%); deficit (19%); quality of public education (15%); and, very telling, national unity (only 7%). [This contrasts with US where education sits high on lists of concerns.]

HONESTY: CANADIANS ARE "A SHADE MORE HONEST" THAN AMERICANS

- Decline. 48% believe people today are less honest than 10 yrs ago. This perception cuts across gender, age, occupation levels & regions.
- In the workplace. Comparison of Canadian & US adults who say average employee is likely to be "completely" or "mostly" truthful with:

	Canada	US
Fellow employees	63%	60%
Supervisors	60	54
Customers	58	53
Top management	54	49

- Top mgmt. % saying top mgmt is "completely" or "mostly" truthful with:

	Canada	US
Customers	57%	51%
Owners/shareholders	55	45
Outside auditors	53	48
Mid-level managers	52	50
Other companies	51	46
Average employees	48	48
The press	40	37



- **1/4 feel dishonesty is acceptable.** With supervisors, 26% of Canadians & 23% of Americans say it is. For supervisors to be untruthful with employees, 25% of Canadians & 22% of Americans say that's acceptable.

- **Motivations for dishonesty.** % saying it's "acceptable" to be untruthful in each instance:

	Canada	US
White lie to prevent embarrassment	59%	53%
Prevent losing job	25	31
For good of company	24	24
Negotiate better deal for company	13	18
Negotiate higher wages	12	17
Won't get caught	8	15
Give yourself an edge	4	10

- **Dealings with customers.** Slight majorities say each of these groups is "completely" or "mostly" truthful with customers: average employees (58%); mid-level mgrs (51%); top mgmt (57%). But these are low numbers!

IDEALISTS & CYNICS IN THE WORKPLACE; ACCOUNT FOR BOTH IN STRATEGY

- US & Canada are about equal in the number of idealists (30% Canada, 31% US). But Canada has fewer hardcore cynics (10% US, 4% Canada).
- **Typical cynic** is male, blue collar, no college education, below average household income.
- **Idealists** are found at all levels of society. They are **not** defined by income, education, occupational level or region.
- **Even among cynics, workers stick together.** % that say average employees are "completely" or "mostly" truthful with:

	Idealists	Cynics
Top management	62%	36%
Supervisors	65	40
Fellow employees	73	50

ANTICIPATED BEHAVIOR OF TOP MANAGEMENT: WOULD THEY ...

- **Inform customers of a major mistake?** 42% say definitely; 38% probably; 10% probably not; 2% definitely not; 8% don't know. [In US study, only 68% definitely or probably would vs. 80% in Canada]
- **Answer questions honestly from the press?** 20% definitely; 44% probably; 14% probably not; 7% definitely not; 15% don't know. [US: 61% definitely or probably would]
- **Hide violations of environmental, labor or accounting regs?** 8% definitely; 16% probably; 34% probably not; 30% definitely not; 12% don't know. [US: 29% definitely or probably would]
- **Exaggerate the business outlook for the org'n in speaking with owners or partners?** 9% definitely; 25% probably; 32% probably not; 19% definitely not; 15% don't know. [US 38% definitely or probably would]

PRACTITIONERS HAVE A PROBLEM

"Results show a degree of skepticism & mistrust that need to be addressed with open & transparent public relations efforts. The high level of cynicism will continue to erode the credibility of communications with the public & employees. That's why **we must guard against information manipulations & half truths.** We must be more ethical in our practice of public relations. Organizations will always be well served by telling the truth. It takes a long time to build your credibility & an even longer time to **rebuild it,**" comments CPRS nat'l pres Jean Valin.

(Canada's study, commissioned by CPRS, done by Roper Canada; US study, sponsored by Manning Selvage & Lee, done by Roper Starch Worldwide -- see prr 11/18/96 & 1/6. (More from CPRS, 613/232-1222; Roper Canada, 416/391-2468; Jean Valin, 819/997-2212)

E-MAIL, ONCE SEEN AS ANSWER, NOW MORE OVERCOMMUNICATION

Research shows time spent with e-mail is rising. Institute for Business Technology (DC) has been studying how much time people spend handling incoming info -- mail & e-mail.

- Its study of 30 Fortune 1000 companies in '95 found respondents spent 3.8 hrs/week.
- Jan '97 study found time spent on mail/e-mail rose to 4.1 hrs.
- Time spent looking for data also increased from 1.6 hrs/week to 1.8 hrs.

In general, study shows people are spending more time coping with information inflow & doing it with less success -- evidenced by the increased time spent hunting for data. With increasing use of voice-mail & e-mail, this can only get worse -- additional media lost to overcommunication.

TIPS FOR OVERCOMING OVERLOAD

1. **Schedule specific times** of the day to check your voice mail & e-mail. This prevents you from continually checking thruout the day.
2. **Leave a detailed outgoing voice-mail message on your own system,** letting people know the best time to reach you. Request that callers leave the best time to reach them. This reduces phone tag.
3. **Delete e-mail you know is not relevant** or interesting without opening it if you can determine its content by the author or subject line.
4. **File e-mail you want to keep** in an appropriate file where you can retrieve it efficiently. Don't leave it in your crowded in-box.
5. Set a good example -- use URGENT!, cc: & send-to-all functions rarely.

(More from *101 Ways to Master Information Overload* available from WorkSmart, P.O. Box 5791, Bellevue, Wash 98006-0291; 425/562-9306)