

customers do interact with your site, they pay attention -- as opposed to tv, print ads & radio.

- 6. **Has it improved customer relations?** It should be a tool for communicating with customers -- where they can read updated info & actually do business.
- 7. **Is it aesthetic?** Or does it have blotchy photos or poor graphics?
- 8. **Are you getting a substantial number of hits?** If not, it's time to rethink your marketing strategy.
- 9. **Does it take too much staff time?** It should be designed for easy maintenance & quick updates.
- 10. **Are you embarrassed to show off your site?**

A survey commissioned by OTN found only 27% of respondents believe the primary purpose of a commercial Web site is to increase sales. "Based on our experience with customers, the results are not surprising. Everyone knows they should be able to make money on the Web, but they have no idea how to do it," notes Carmi.

Too often, sites become flat, on-line brochures. "By combining detailed information with on-line order & tracking, org'ns can utilize the Web to its full potential. From that standpoint, it's not an on-line brochure, it becomes a place to do business." (More info from Carmi at 800/200-2974; or <http://www.otn.com>)

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

"The nature of marketing is to try to get away with whatever you can." That's the critique of marketers offered *USA Today* by Gary Arlen of Arlen Com'ns (Bethesda, Md). Is public relations complicit? Or can most practitioners honestly say such a view offends them?

This week's supplement is the final issue of managing the human climate, written by Phil Lesly just prior to his death. Unformatted document was found in his computer by his wife, Virginia, who kindly forwarded it to prr so we could share it with readers. Virginia writes, "In many ways Philip was ahead of his time. Even in death he had one more message to give to his confreres. My many thanks to all of you who salute his life-time work."

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

PEOPLE. E. Bruce Harrison named to the newly created position of exec dir, Arthur Page Society (NYC). Sold his D.C. firm to Ruder & Finn 3 yrs ago but continued as an RF exec, now retiring from practice after a long & distinguished career in corp com'ns & pr consulting.

NOW COMES THE GOMBY SYNDROME -- GET OUT OF MY BACK YARD

Even if your organization began operating in areas that were remote & unpopulated at the time, once people move in, you must build relationships with them, seek their approval to continue doing business. Or face the GOMBY gang.

Trans Mountain (TM) began moving petroleum thru its pipeline from Edmonton to the west coast of Canada in 1953. Back then the pipeline was in remote areas. Today it's not. To TM, "community relations means issues management & public affairs at the grassroots, local level reinforced at the 'retail' level by ongoing pipeline safety & public awareness programs.

"These are planned strategic programs that support our business goals. And our primary goal -- safety -- is aligned with community interests," Ann Gilbert Hopkins, comty rels mgr, told the CPRS conference.

RESEARCH & EVALUATION TM uses a research firm "because it's easier for people to say how they feel to a 3rd party."

Two types of research are done: 1) Formal -- com'ns audit & social profiles; 2) Informal -- questionnaires at open houses, stakeholder interviews, landowner questionnaires. Evaluation is ongoing -- "a never ending process. It's easy to measure what goes out. But we try to measure success by what comes in."

"All communication products -- brochures, videos, newsletters, etc -- are substitutes for 1-on-1 communications."

GETTING RESPONSIBILITY SHARED

Results show #1 issue for community is safety, also TM's "most important issue. So we have common ground. It provides an opportunity to dialog, to educate the community about our safety programs. But also an opportunity to ask our neighbors to take some ownership of the issue."

COMMUNICATING RISK "We don't want things to stop because people are angry or scared. We believe in open, ongoing communications. Our neighbors need to trust us. Trust is earned over time. One way we earn it is by being out front about risk associated with our business."

TM manages risk with communication. "Our communications about safety are really communications about risk. They don't create panic. They fill a communication vacuum. You can't overcommunicate at the grassroots level. In fact, the more we communicate the less negative feedback we get from neighbors."



- **Lesson learned:** An information vacuum is always filled. "If we don't provide the info, then media or some other group will fill that information vacuum for us with misinformation or worse, and bingo, we're back in the news dealing with the GOMBY syndrome."

For instance: Latest brochure says up front that pipelines can be dangerous. "We emphasize to the community that they are living with that risk & that we have to manage that risk together." Brochure includes a return postcard for input to start a 2-way dialogue.

COMMUNITY BECOMES PARTNER IN SAFETY

1. **Using routine operations as a relationship opportunity.** TM conducts ongoing com'ns programs about routine operations projects i.e. when doing water pressure test, will open temporary com'n office if none is there. "Projects are an excellent way to build relationships because they give us good reasons for knocking on doors to introduce ourselves."
2. **Landowners safety kits distributed twice yearly:** 1 is mailed, 1 is hand delivered for face-to-face contact.
3. **Personal letters from local community contact person.** "It doesn't do to have a head office person send the letter" if he or she has no relationship with the people receiving the letter.
4. **Open houses** are held to a) personally tell TM's safety story, b) recruit new partners in safety, c) demystify the facilities. "It's important to demystify because people are intimidated. They want to know about the tanks & what's in them. It's an opportunity to confront those issues." At the last open house in Burnaby, 150 people responded to a questionnaire. Majority said TM safety policies were "very satisfactory."
5. **Localized info package** was sent to residents, & guided tours of terminal offered when TM began to recommission 2 tanks. "We listened to the community. It became clear only a handful opposed the project. We were able to obtain the necessary city approval. Now we have a list of key names -- the chronic complainers. I call them to let them know when we're loading tankers. I'm having very good conversations with them."

OVERALL GOALS

1. Help residents change from seeing TM as a giant, monolithic industry to "an org'n that tries to be a good neighbor, that cares about practical things like community gardens, school baseball fields."
2. Find common ground in safety issues. "People feel our concerns are their concerns." (More info from Hopkins, 900-1333 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6H 4C2; 604/739-5251)

"Napoleon said, 'Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than 1000 bayonets. The problem is still around,' notes Hopkins. She tells about a Port of Vancouver proposal to develop some waterfront property as a marine terminal. It catapulted into the political arena with highly emotional headlines. Project is on hold. "Lack of information & community consultation are the key reasons. How do I know? I read it in the papers."

STUDY SEARCHES OUT INNOVATIVE FEATURES OF WEB SITES

"Communications Effectiveness of Corporate Web Sites," by Public Affairs Group, looked at 310 companies to determine if they have web sites. Sites found were analyzed for 28 com'ns criteria -- e.g., ease of use, timeliness, hyperlinking, vision statements, values statement. 55 sites met 20 or more of the criteria. These 55 were then analyzed further based on 23 in-depth effectiveness criteria. Among innovative features identified:

Executive Communication:

- **IBM:** a downloadable video clip of a recent speech by CEO Lou Gerstner.
- **Microsoft:** users can hear & view a speech by Bill Gates -- at the exact moment it is happening.

Timely Nature:

- **AT&T:** home page -- which is updated daily -- features a ticker running across the top with the latest AT&T news.

Financial, Investor Relations, Global:

- **EDS:** annual report is offered in 9 languages.

Product Information, Electronic Commerce, Interactivity:

- **American Express:** users can check account balances & apply for credit cards on-line.
- **Staples:** users can type in their address & get back a detailed map of the location of the Staples store closest to them.

(More info from Tom Moore at 202/463-8209; or check the sites on the Web)

ANOTHER WEB CONCERN: IS YOUR SITE DYSFUNCTIONAL?

In need of a makeover? Aura Carmi, co-founder of Over The Net -- a Web site design company -- suggests asking these questions to determine if your site needs remodeling:

1. **Has your site made you any money?** It should be positively affecting your bottom line. If not, you have a problem.
2. **Is it saving you money?**
3. **Does it have bugs, bad links or garbage?** If the links on your site connect you to incorrect pages or nowhere at all, then you have a problem.
4. **Is it impossible to navigate?** It should be created for the non-technical user. If it's tedious & complicated, the common user is left powerless & frustrated. If visitors can't find info needed & are forced to wander to other Web pages, they will blame your company for wasting their time.
5. **Is your site truly interactive?** The Web is the first medium since the phone that enables you to interact directly with customers. And when