

- **A new direct mailer, called The IdeaGram, is 2-ply.** Features include: a peel-off biz reply card; space for wallet-sized phone card/biz card/membership card; pressure-sensitive promo stickers; & a full-sized promo or info panel which is revealed as various surface elements are peeled away. 2-layer card can be printed on all 4 sides with color text & graphics. Variable imaging is also available on 2 surfaces for individualized customer mailing addresses, secret PIN numbers, personalized messages, etc. (More from KoBel Inc, 115 Catamount dr, Milton, Vt 05468; 802/893-6000)
- **In a list of tips for generating more exposure for less money, Kevin Tynan, author of *Exposure! How to Market So Your Message Is Unavoidable* (Dartnell, 800/621-5463) advises:** "One well-written letter can be more powerful than 5,000 press releases. Pitching an idea in a letter that conveys an understanding of the recipient, audience & medium is perhaps the most important element for getting exposure."

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

☪ **The value of acknowledging soul in the workplace** is illustrated in studies reported by The Mind/Body Health Newsletter: 1) Overall job satisfaction is significantly higher for workers with a view of nature -- i.e. a window in their office. Those able to look out on natural scenes report significantly fewer symptoms & medical ailments than their viewless co-workers. 2) A study of workers at Boeing shows the likelihood of a worker reporting a back injury is more related to job satisfaction than physical factors. (The Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge, P.O. Box 381069, Cambridge 02238-1069; 1-800-222-4745)

☪ **Hottest topics in tv newsrooms today**, from a survey of news directors by West Glen Communications (1430 Broadway, NYC 10018-3396; 212/921-2800):

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1) Health (89%) | 4) Medical (63%) | 7) Environment (39%) |
| 2) Computers & hi-tech (81%) | 5) Business (53%) | 8) Entertainment (35%) |
| 3) Consumer (76%) | 6) Offbeat/kicker stories (48%) | 9) Travel (25%) |
| | | 10) Fashion (16%) |

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. James O'Donnell (dir corp com'ns, The Hearst Corp, NYC) Aug 16 after a long fight with cancer. He was 56.

HONORS. David Swanston (pres, pr div, Stackig Adv'g & PR, McLean, Va) wins Nat'l Capital Chap/PRSA's 1st Thoth Award for Outstanding Personal Achievement; John Nash (mgr, com'ns, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Institute, Arlington) receives the Diamond award for chapter service.

ELECTED. NSPRA's officers: pres, Dorian Martin (dir com'ns, Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Ass'n, Austin); pres-elect, Jennifer Wayman Grossman (dir com'ns, Colorado Ass'n of School Boards, Denver); NW region vp, Gay Campbell (coord, com'ns & comty rels, Everett School District, Wash); SE region vp, Barry Gaskins (pub info dir, Pitt County Schools, Greenville, NC).

IF IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO, IT'S PROBABLY THE SMART THING TO DO

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be divided into 3 levels, finds Mark Lee, mgr of CSR at VanCity, a credit union (Vancouver):

1. **Good corporate citizens** -- shoot for basic legal & economic compliance, operate within the letter of the law, generate return for owners or shareholders. "We need good corporate citizens. Milton Friedman would argue that's all we need."
2. **Best practices** -- org'ns that have a niche, that stand out in areas like hiring practices, environmental program, philanthropy etc.
3. **Integration** -- where philosophy & business mix, eg, Working Assets (San Francisco), Body Shop (UK) or Ben & Jerry's (Vt.). Start with principles, structure products & services to achieve those ends.

- **VanCity's goal is integration.** "We made a staffing commitment in the late 80s, having specific people responsible for the environment, social issues, etc. In '91, it became part of our formal business plan. Now it's one of our 3 broad organizational strategies: 1) maintaining financial soundness, 2) improving competitiveness, 3) improving CSR."
- **VC's 5-yr organizational goal** is to model & advocate socially & environmentally responsible business in order to gain national recognition in CSR. "This is our step toward integration. It means CSR has to be everywhere in our business, not just in community programs, or just in volunteerism or philanthropy. It's in **how** we do business -- the impact we have on the community in which we operate."
- **To do this, VC is looking at its operations**, its "environmental & social footprint," the amount of impact it has & how it can be reduced. "We're looking at our products & services and whether or not they do good."

A. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

"With the growing recognition that CSR is about **how** we do business, about our products & services, and that we have to engage staff throughout the org'n on a day to day basis, we brought it into people's performance management. Everyone has CSR as 10% of their annual performance review -- from the frontline to the CEO."

B. MEASUREMENT

If it's built into performance mgmt & it's part of your business strategy, it has to be measured. And it's important to be able to explain how what you're doing is good for the



community in which you operate. "It's a difficult area to measure. We've been engaged in social reporting for several years. Our AR has included a social report section in which we map out 8 areas to tell people about it -- eg, community economic development, affordable housing, job creation.

C. EXTERNAL VERIFICATION

"In '97, we're taking it one step further -- bringing in an external social auditor to sign off on our social report, do stakeholder consultation, focus groups & surveys with members, staff, other credit unions, community org's, to ask them if the impact we're having on them is good. That will feed back into our planning cycle so we can serve these stakeholders better."

CSR MEANS APPLYING AN ORGANIZATION'S CORE FUNCTION IN THE SERVICE OF THE COMMUNITY

In '46, VanCity was founded to provide healthcare insurance (which didn't yet exist) & credit with the emphasis on character rather than collateral.

CSR is also about taking risks. For example:

- In '50, VC gave mortgages for homes in a geographically discriminated area of Vancouver. "This risk doubled our business because half the city lived there. It established some early member loyalty. We still have strong roots there."
- In the 60s, women in British Columbia couldn't get credit in their own name. VC was the first in the province to offer it to them. "It increased our business & now we're seen as women friendly."

"If it's the right thing to do, it's probably the smart thing to do. Sooner or later, everybody is going to figure it out. So you have to be willing to risk, to open up some new markets & serve them in ways that fit their needs. That's both common business sense & CSR. In the 50s & 60s those issues needed to be challenged. We challenged them as a financial services provider by offering a product where no one would give it & in the process began to make social change as well."

WRITTEN PR PLANS NOW COMMON -- BUT MANY NOT INTEGRATED

99 of 100 survey participants say they have a written *corporate communications plan*. 50% of these have been revisited within the last year. In contrast, only 65% say their *org's* have written plans for achieving corp goals, according to *Planning, Goals & Measurement* -- Section III of the Corporate Communications Benchmark - 1997 (pr 3/31 & 6/16) from Edelman PR, Opinion Research Corp & Northwestern U. Other findings:

- Only 40% have a corp communications mission statement. 50% of these have been readdressed or updated within the last year.
- 75% have a corp mission statement. Only 33% have both a corp and a com'ns mission statement in place.
- But only 50% address alignment or integration with corp mission & goals in their written com'ns plan. [Ouch!]

- A majority are doing little to measure the effect of their com'ns efforts on the achievement of corp goals. More than 75% ranked *measurement of com'ns activities* as an "important" trend, but only 27% indicate that the programs currently in place actually emphasize or have implemented research & measurement components.

OLD PREJUDICE AGAINST EMPLOYEE COM'NS SHOWN TO BE EXTREMELY SELF-DEFEATING

When asked to rank the overall effectiveness of their corp com'ns efforts across 6 functional areas, respondents ranked *employee com'ns* 4th. But -- more importantly -- when ranked according to the functions' importance in achieving business goals, *employee com'ns* ranked 2nd.

Previous data analysis ranks employee communications as a less important trend to consider (ranked 7th of 15 trends in Section I) & receiving lower budgetary allowances (ranked 5th of 10 in Section II). But *this* data shows it's the **2nd most important com'ns function to achieve corporate goals**. "Yet it's being relegated to the lower end of the corporate 'radar screen' & possibly neglected in terms of necessary monetary resources. It comes as no surprise that *budgetary constraints & lack of management support* are the 2 biggest barriers to executing & implementing corp com'ns programs." More from Marianne Swallie, Edelman PR, 200 E. Randolph st, Chicago 60601; 312/240-2685)

HOW DO YOU CUT THRU THE CLUTTER TODAY? SOME EXAMPLES

The **creativity** quotient among press kits we're receiving is rising. Is it a trend? Or just a way to vitalize the summer doldrums. Some examples from what we're seeing:

- **Rubin Barney & Birger PR** (Coral Gables, Fla) announced its new creative services dep't by sending a baby bottle filled with animal crackers & tied with a blue ribbon holding a tag that reads: "A new dep't is born!" Explains Sherri Pfefer, the firm's newly appointed creative director: "**Creative departments aren't very common within pr firms**. We believe it's appropriate to place more of an emphasis in this area. With people being bombarded by more & more messages every day, it's become critically important to figure out a way to cut through the clutter." Explanatory news release is bordered in primary colors of tiny hand prints & the alphabet.
- **Fruit of the Loom** (Bowling Green, Ky) sent a manila folder stamped "confidential brief." Included inside, along with the printed info: 3" mini brief (& a list of 10 humorous ways to use it, i.e., "the latest piece for the politically correct Mr. Potato Head"); 1½ x 2" post-it pad imprinted with logo & the words "brief notes"; small brown envelope labeled "comfort brief patented design," filled with shredded paper. "Promotional campaigns need to be uniquely creative to grab anyone's attention in today's marketplace," notes the enclosed letter. One part of this campaign is a 4-pg insert with tongue-in-cheek copy that plays off a "trial of the century" theme & includes a mini-brief in 1.25 million issues of Rolling Stone mag.