

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. Paul Fullmer (pres & CEO, Selz/Seabolt Communications, Chi) marks 40 yrs in pr. Having witnessed sweeping changes in the field, he says the cornerstone of a pr firm's business is still "client service."

Frank Hedge (xvp-pr, American Motors) inducted into the PRSA/Detroit Chapter Hall of Fame.

ANNIVERSARY. Anne Klein & Assocs (Marlton, NJ) celebrates 15 yrs. Celebration included replacing staff mbrs' traditional biz cards with full-color sports trading

cards. Each staff mbr chose his or her sport, wrote creative copy & stats for back of their card. Tailgate party invitations were sent out to client contacts & friends announcing it would be soon & at each recipient's own home or desk. Then sent a red & white 6-pack cooler filled with party goodies: pom pom (to help cheer AKA along for 15 more yrs); AKA-logo sports bottle (to be filled with a beverage of choice); peanuts, popcorn, Cracker Jacks; chocolate footballs, baseballs, golf & tennis balls; Tastykakes; Bazooka bubble gum.

ANOTHER VIEW ON PUBLIC RELATIONS' PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

Alice Collingwood, com'ns & education manager, Puget Sound Air Pollution Control Agency (Seattle) writes:

"I was dismayed to read that Ed Block (plain talk 12/1) believes media relations is our number one priority as public relations professionals. A CEO may take negative publicity personally, but if we're supposed to be making ourselves relevant to the business bottom line, doesn't that speak for making internal communications our number one priority?"

"Without employees understanding the organization's purpose, business strategies & priorities, how can they function as ambassadors for the organization? PR has to make creating & nurturing this kind of internal climate our number one priority if we are to help the organization achieve its objectives."

"Media relations is still an important responsibility, but with today's huge array of information choices -- & serious information overload -- the news media can no longer be our primary communications tool. Therefore, it shouldn't be our number one priority. Relationship building should be, & that starts internally."

"I'd like my title to be public relations manager but the department title existed before I took the job. Rather than lobbying to change my title, I've preferred to focus on building a top-notch communications group to help all employees be communicators & ambassadors."

NGOs' GLOBAL IMPACT FORCES ALL PR EFFORTS TO BE GLOBAL

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can have a powerful affect on what we do, even for strictly "local" entities, Barbara Burns, mng dir, Consultants in Public Relations (NY), told IPRA World Congress. Here's why:

- NGOs are part of the process which is changing world politics from
 - a) exclusive competition among nation states to ...
 - b) a mixed system of nation states & international advocacy.

Since advocacy is the province of pr, this expands practitioners' scope ever closer to the status Ed Bernays so long touted: as a force for human change, world peace & internationalism, the unifiers of the human experience everywhere.

THE DRIVING FORCES OF THIS NEW PARADIGM ARE:

1. **Problems that cross national boundaries** -- environmental decline, terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, ethnic conflict, population growth, human rights abuses, youth & the family. Everyone is affected.
2. **The computer & telecommunications revolution.** "There is no doubt that new technology & access to the Internet has facilitated partnerships among NGO organizations. It has enabled them to create an *international public opinion*. Altho people around the world are *informed* by worldwide media coverage, they are *mobilized* by NGOs, a new & potent international force. This surely is a challenge to public relations."

NGOs' STRENGTH:

- **US NGO's not-for-profit tax category** encourages people to support their work & permits them to create a large base of followers.
- **Latin America & Canada have strong NGOs**, & "the fact that they do not have the advantage of tax-exempt status with their gov'ts makes their adherents all the more adamant."

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS:

- "They must learn to include **issue-scanning & analysis** in their com'ns programs," Pierre Lachance of Optimum PR (Montreal) added. "By doing this systematically, not only can they identify emerging issues early, but also groups or individuals who will get involved."



- "Environment scanning to determine key publics is an essential step in strategic com'ns. Once critical issues are identified & publics are targeted, objectives can be developed & the best approach to building constructive relationships can be designed."

POWER OF NGOS:

- **TOPPLED COMMUNISM.** "Grassroots activism on public policy issues flourished in the Baltics before WWII when the 3 small countries of Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania were forcibly assimilated into the Soviet Union. In the late 80s, a resurgence of environmental activism protesting the building of a hydroelectric plant on the Daugava River in Latvia & abuses in handling toxic waste in Estonia have been cited as the dominoes that started communism tumbling," Linda Scanlan, a counselor specializing in pr training in Eastern & Central Europe, told the World Congress.
- **ARE DEMOCRATIZING LATIN AMERICA.** "NGOs have contributed enormously to awakening of citizenship in Latin America. Recent episodes of human rights violations & degradation of nature in several countries evoked strong public response. Changes in the conscience of the people & the increased awakening of citizenship are due specifically to efforts of NGOs in social communications. They have become, each day, more powerful & have hugely contributed to activities of many gov'ts.... All of this makes us believe in the power of NGOs searching each day for a closer contact with society, & demanding from gov'ts, parliaments & political systems better listening, analyzing & working with society for greater interaction," Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salles Ferreira (Brazil) told World Congress attendees.
- **POSESS CREDIBILITY.** Scanlan says NGOs everywhere "can have great potential impact on public policy" -- as they do in US & Canada. "The leaders have indigenous knowledge of language & culture &, quite likely, built-in credibility. NGOs are potentially major players in countries undergoing rapid change." In developed nations, they're heavy hitters. "To build a team with them, pr practitioners must understand them."

INTERNAL RELS PROGRAMS MUST NOW COVER POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES

In today's competitive labor market, high level employees are being pursued by exec recruiters (see prr 12/1/97). While good employee relationships are necessary to keep them engaged (& thus have happy customers & other stakeholders), building relationships with prospective employees is also important, a new study finds.

1. **Hiring practices a turnoff.** "Hiring: The Candidate's Perspective, an Interview Process Study," a survey of 897 com'ns pros (with 21% response rate) by Integrity Search, reveals how to attract top talent in a tight labor market.

- Some top pr pros are highly critical of companies' interviewing skills & hiring practices. Employers are sending discouraging signals to top talent they are trying to recruit.

- Their hiring & recruiting practices are causing top com'ns candidates to withdraw, resulting in the hiring of candidates who are available, but not necessarily best qualified.

2. **The interview as symbol.** 70% say the interview process is an indicator of how the org'n operates. Candidates translate such interviewing factors as (a) what kinds of questions they are asked, (b) the look & "feel" of an office environment, & (c) intangible signals about an orgn's culture into a snapshot impression of what it is like to work there.

- 82% would prefer to **start the interview process with a phone call** prior to an in-person interview.
- 40% withdraw from the hiring process because of negative impressions or perceived poor fit with the **culture & values.**
- **Frustrations during the interview process:**

1) Interviewer not prepared/focused (39%)	4) Kept waiting an unreasonable time (24%);
2) Lack of feedback/status (38%)	5) Next step is unclear (23%)
3) No concrete or inconsistent position description (27%)	6) Process too long & complicated (17%)
	7) Interviewed by 2 or more people at same time (14%).
- Fewer than half think prospective employers appreciate the time & energy candidates put into the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Treat job candidates more like prospects than applicants.** Let them know you appreciate their time & energy. Keep them informed about how the process will proceed, where they are in the process, & where they stand in consideration, if possible. Return phone calls.
2. **Establish a strategy early in the process** that is known & followed by all who meet with job candidates. Be certain that interviewers -- particularly when hr people do the interviewing -- are fully briefed on the position, expectations, salary range & timing for a decision. Avoid having more than 1 person at a time interview the candidate, if possible.
3. **Interviewers should be straightforward & as specific as possible.** Hold an initial phone conversation briefly outlining the job & the hiring process, & assessing the prospect's interest.
4. Remember, the interviewer is **selling the organization.**

(More: Integrity Search, Victoria Business Ctr, 1489 Baltimore Pike, Springfield, PA 19064; 610/543-8590)