

1. **Listen better** -- identify opportunities to listen better & then DO IT. One example is Revco's CEO. Named 3rd CEO in a short time span, 1st thing he did was eliminate executive parking, took out time clock & had everyone call him by his first name. He listened to what employees had to say, building employee trust & positive attitudes. This translated to customer trust, carrying Revco through Chapter 11 with few scars (see pr 7/2/90). Young also recommends paying close attention to what former employees have to say.
2. **Prevent reputation messes from occurring** -- use reputation radar screen (pr 2/5/96) or a vulnerability audit to identify potential problem areas. Genie garage door openers responded to a series of accidents with another brand of garage door openers by pro-actively beginning a safety campaign -- "Don't Close the Door on Safety" -- educating consumers on installation & maintenance of garage doors & openers. In the words of Peter Drucker (above), "Learn to be opportunity focused, not crisis focused."
3. **Build reputation from the inside out** -- help make employees reputation ambassadors, get them into the act. You can't have a good external reputation without a good internal reputation. Manco's (duct tape makers) objective is to be "the best consumer products company in the world." In the cafeteria -- where everyone sees it every day -- is a large graph charting sales thruout the company's history. Company also conducts "huddles" -- meetings where employees share what's going on, their successes & areas in which they need help.
4. **Set clear expectations** -- train for reputation advantage but value people speaking their opinions. Lyondell Petrochemical believes the more people know, the better they'll perform. Consequently their employees are more receptive to change than those at other organizations -- they are well-informed & trusting of management.
5. **Insist that senior managers be reputational role models** -- make sure their actions match their words. If CEO & sr mgmt don't walk the talk, no one else will. Levi Strauss's CEO is an example. The company has always had the reputation of having good working conditions in this country but after rapid expansion & the opening of numerous new plants worldwide, there was some question -- within the company -- about the working conditions in other countries. Consequently, the company audited conditions in all locations & where they found unacceptable conditions either rectified the issues or even, in some cases, closed the plants. Never once through the process did Levi Strauss pro-actively seek any publicity for their actions. A way to encourage sr mgrs to be role models is to ask them at every meeting what they've done recently to strengthen relationships with someone who counts with the organization.

Benefits from "doing it right":

- Save money on pr, lawyers & other consultants
- Focus on positive aspects of business
- Strengthen relationships at all levels
- Gain & keep customers
- Increased recruitment & retention
- Business referrals
- More profitable
- Scare off rivals
- Greater ease in crisis situation

PRSA CONFERENCE SPEAKERS AGREE: TASK NOW IS TO USE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, BUILD RELATIONSHIPS THAT EARN TRUST

The goal is motivating positive behavior. *Managing Knowledge: Channels, Challenges & Choices* was the theme at the 51st PRSA International (note the change from *National*) Conference in Boston last week. Plenary speakers -- Pres. John Zeglis of AT&T, ex-Labor Secty Robert Reich, Harvard Biz Schl's Dorothy Leonard & Peter Drucker -- as well as numerous professional development sessions -- tied together to keep theme on track (a feat rarely accomplished at big conferences).

For the first time the overall feel of the conference seemed to push the envelope & dig a little deeper -- beyond the stereotypical media relations & marketing promotion role so many conferences have rotated around. PRSA may have decided at last that most practitioners can already do those things!

MANAGING KNOWLEDGE WITH COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS TO OVERCOME INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Information is the raw material of knowledge. Techno-

logy makes access to information easier & faster than ever before. But as Zeglis notes, this can & does lead to information overload -- the average office worker communicates with 24 people each day, using 8 different devices. The challenge is finding a way to sift through all the information & translate it into knowledge.

- Tho it is the cause of information overload -- look at how long distance costs have dropped in the last 20 years; AT&T has half the market share it had before dereg but 10 times the number of calls -- the com's industry is developing solutions with products like phones with priority rings, filters for "blocked" numbers (e.g. telemarketers), & internet search engines that are more intelligent.

MANAGING KNOWLEDGE, KEY TO INNOVATION & CREATIVITY, BEGINS WITH ISSUE ANTICIPATION

According to Leonard -- pr needs to

become more involved with issues anticipation, to "construct strategies for thinking about opportunities & needs."

- The core capabilities of the pr function, she notes, are the multi-dimensional aspects of knowledge assets -- know-how, know-why, know whom to go to; interpretation of specialized knowledge; ability to inform & persuade; recognition of changes in stakeholder aims & the ability to adapt quickly when changes occur; message design.

- This means pr is at the heart of the knowledge management trend.



To increase innovation, organizations need "creative abrasions" and "spicy intersections" -- what is now termed "conflict management" (not resolution). Get groups of divergent thinkers working together, to challenge one another & bring in all perspectives. It's important to have a "whole-brained" group to be successful. One example would be Issue Anticipation Teams.

"Innovation occurs at the intersections of previously unconnected thought."

- She uses the example of the new director of IRS who purchased out of his own pocket office equipment to encourage communication within the offices -- rubber door stops!
- Another example is from Fisher-Price. A product designer was determined to get into the action figure market. But moms buy most toys & most moms don't want to encourage violent behavior connected with action figures. The solution was a line of action figures like "Gil the Gripper," a scuba diver & "Billy Blazes," a fireman.

Using empathic design is key to getting into people's heads, to find unarticulated needs -- just asking questions isn't enough.

- L.L. Bean example -- Instead of just asking bird hunters what they like or don't like about its boots, researchers went into hunters' homes & asked them to tell their best hunting story. By doing so, Bean was able to find out that "squeaking boots chase birds away." Not until customers began to tell their hunting stories did this come out.
- Another example concerns walkers for the elderly. When asked in a focus group, participants said they loved their walkers & wouldn't do anything different to them. As the group was breaking up, however, & participants went to retrieve their walkers, the facilitators noticed that one person had a bike basket attached with a shoe string, someone else had a cup holder fashioned from duct tape & another had a car cup holder attached. Consequently, a mesh pouch was developed as an accessory for the walkers.

"PR can become more pro-active in putting together innovative groups." Bring together groups with different perspectives. Encourage empathic observation to aid organizational innovation.

THE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION & TECHNOLOGY CAN ONLY BE HANDLED BY RELATIONSHIPS

An org'n, according to Reich, now distinguished prof at Brandeis U, is

a web of relationships. These relationships will determine whether or not the org'n will be of value. Guiding these relationships are globalization & technology -- which are beneficial to people with the right skills & education to use them to their advantage.

Those without the right skills & education will be displaced. He asks, "where have the bank tellers, gas attendants & phone operators gone?" It's possible now to buy movie tickets over the phone & pick them up from a machine when you get to the theater. How will the displaced workers afford to purchase goods & services that will be advanced by the same globalization & technology?

WHAT ROLE WILL PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAY IN THIS? REICH BELIEVES:

- Given that the company of the future will be global & technologically driven, pr must enhance the quality of communications between various levels & constituencies. **We will be responsible for developing relationship TRUST.**
- Technology will create a much broader resource base for consumers &, given all the available choices, consumers will eventually go with whom they trust & have confidence in.
- **The role of public relations will be that of educators** -- we'll need to advise our clients & customers on how to enhance trusting relationships & how to build & maintain trust.
- The time to do so is not after a crisis. We need to be issue anticipators -- to pay attention to the storm clouds. Unless we build trusting relationships we'll just spend time on defensive transactions.

90-YEAR OLD PETER DRUCKER GERMANE AS EVER; SOME QUOTES:

- "Business & management schools are not yet *professional* schools -- they're still vocational/technical schools," which is why business schools spend so little time on teaching about relationships.
- The first job of pr is to understand the knowledge worker. "Knowledge is the asset to set us apart." The more employees know the less they need the job -- & knowledge can "walk out the door."
- "The greatest contribution pr can make is to get across to the outside what the message is." Bring the outside in.
- "Learn to be opportunity focused, not crisis focused."
- Drucker's response to the question what does a CEO expect from pr counsel -- "What do you *make* him expect?"
- Regarding upholding morality -- use the mirror test, "what kind of person do you want to see when you shave or put on lipstick?" Need to learn to say "No, it's not our value system."
- Asked if a pr person will ever be named a CEO: They already have been -- Catholic bishops & academics. It could be coming in business & gov't, but depends on pr persons establishing themselves as "the one that brings the outside in; who gets out of the swivel chair & looks out the window."

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT ATTEMPTS TO PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Davis Young, Edward Howard & Company (Cleveland), says it "applies to every organization of every type of every size." In his session at the conference he offered 5 steps to building a good reputation: