

2. "Storytellers will be in big demand for creating virtual-reality games & other digital media for education & entertainment," predicted *The Futurist* last Dec. For pr, this means presenting messages in story form works better now.
3. **Intangible assets** are becoming more valuable than hard assets -- the move to non-financial indicators. Widsom of execs or loyalty of customers tends to grow, rather than depreciate as bricks & mortar do. (More from World Future Society, 7910 Woodmont av. Bethesda, MD 20814, 800/989-8274)

HELLO, IS THIS THE PARTY TO WHOM I AM SPEAKING?

Letter to the editor of the *The State*, Columbia (SC), says it all about the importance of personal relationships & the damnation of voice-mail:

"When was the last time you ever got anybody on the telephone at a business?"

"I recently called a major US corporation to make a simple request. Press 1-5, press 1-3, get a different phone number, press 1-3, press 4, speak to actual human being. Twenty minutes of a busy day wasted."

"Do these people have the slightest idea how frustrating, time-wasting & just downright annoying this can be? I say bring back the good old busy signal. At least you would know someone is actually there, maybe even using his or her desk."

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

- ¶ **NY-area pr pros believe pr doesn't have a good image**, finds survey by NY Chapter of PRSA. Altho members are positive overall about the profession, they believe their self-image isn't shared outside the profession. Survey of more than 900 members found 89% consider pr self-satisfying, 93% enjoy pr work, 68% are proud when describing their profession. However, 67% believe pr doesn't have a good image, 65% believe they aren't as respected as members of other professions, & 92% say most people don't understand what pr is. PR should be ranked among top professions, say 66% of respondents. However, asked to rank pr among 9 professions in terms of status & respect, respondents ranked pr at the bottom -- along with performing arts, journalism & gov't. (More from NYPRSA, 150 5th av, NYC 10011)
- ¶ **Communication skills are now the top personal quality sought by employers** when evaluating job candidates. Work experience & motivation/initiative rank second and third, according to a survey by Nat'l Ass'n of Colleges & Employers (more from NACE, 800-544-5272, <http://www.jobweb.org>)

Happy Holidays to everyone! This is the last issue of 1998, giving staff & printer a much needed rest. Our offices will be open for business, however, so call, fax or e-mail your requests. Look for our in-depth special topic, First-of-the-Year Issue on January 4, 1999.

ONLINE NEWSLETTERS: ARE THEY READABLE? ARE THEY READ?

As e-mail addresses proliferate, so do e-newsletters (or ezines, as some call them). Does this format work -- on the screen, or printed out?

Reviewing a few of those received at pr, some tentative answers appear:

1. **On-screen reading is nigh impossible.** You can't scan but must constantly scroll, which makes it difficult to refer back to earlier portions etc -- the limitations of computer screens users know so well.
2. **This means printing out the ezine**, which is usually intended, making the sole purpose of the medium speedy delivery. This assumes fragile, highly time-constrained content which must get there right now. But the newsletter medium, in whatever form, is not capable of such timeliness.
3. **Printed-out material is far less readable or inviting than print.** Page design is impossible unless recipients have the same or compatible software. Typical result is pages crammed with small-type copy.
 - Internal newsletters *shouldn't* have this problem, yet few workplaces seem to have fully compatible systems or be fully computerized.
 - When it comes to a broad audience, until software becomes as uniform as keyboards, senders must be aware their product may come out looking different for different recipients.
4. **As always these days, brevity is critical.** The Herman Group's Weekly Trend Alert sticks to a page or slightly over. (They also offer to "unsubscribe" readers in every issue -- or to add the names of those to whom readers may now be passing along copies). IABC sends multi-pages which, despite relatively short paragraphs, have to be ploughed thru. That is more typical.

We seem to be retreating to the notion that readers are interested, have the time to read -- and by golly they'd just better do it.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

It's unlikely on-line newsletters, or ezines, will ever completely replace their printed counterparts (as Dave Hilty predicted in a t&t 1/19). But with books now also going on-line, the publishing landscape may be changing.

For the moment, practitioners face obvious design differences.



DESIGN DOS/DON'TS FOR E-NEWSLETTERS

Because e-mail programs differ widely, an on-line newsletter must be designed simply and briefly. For instance: Ziff-Davis TV (San Francisco) has a large subscription list so uses another company -- a vendor with software to handle mass mailings -- to distribute its weekly newsletter. The editor composes the newsletter in MS Word, then pastes it into the Web-based interface the distributor company designed for ZDTV.

On the other hand, producers of newsletters with smaller distributions often compose the newsletter in Word or a text editor & paste the text into the email program. These different methods are why you'll sometimes find uneven margins or spacing & bad line breaks in an ezine (or e-mail).

Kelley Williams of K. Williams Resources offers these design tips:

- Never type a line longer than 65 characters as it tends to cause bad line breaks for many recipients
- Keep everything spaced out, so that it's easy on the eyes
- Keep the size below 27K, since some systems can't handle large messages
- And, of course, no boldface, underlining or italics

Williams says she has 15,000 subscribers to her 7 e-newsletters. "I don't believe they (on-line newsletters) are replacing printed newsletters. I believe on-line newsletters provide a new medium. Not everybody has a computer."

IS IT E-MAIL OR EMAIL?

Both are used -- as we have done in this story. Language conservatives may prefer the hyphen, since the full text is, of course, "electronic mail". Increasingly, however, the hyphen is disappearing.

LOCAL TV NEWS #1 NEWS SOURCE FOR AMERICANS? DEPENDS

Surveys for the last several years indicate that most Americans get their info from local television news. But there is an increasing trend towards getting info from more than one news source:

1. A survey conducted by NFO Research for Ogilvy PR (NY) says that local tv news is the most frequently used & most influential source of info for most Americans
2. However, word-of-mouth still has the most impact on purchase and spending decisions. 54% surveyed said they spend more time talking to other people than watching tv

ARE THE PEOPLE INFLUENCED BY LOCAL TV NEWS THE RIGHT AUDIENCE TO REACH?

Depends, says leading media scholar Guido Stempel of Ohio U (Athens). In '95, he conducted a survey for Scripps-Howard News Service that also found more Americans preferred local tv news to other news sources. But Stempel cross-tabbed respondents by household income:

- In the under \$25,000 bracket local tv news was the #1 medium
- In the \$25-40,000 bracket newspapers were preferred
- In the over \$40,000 bracket local tv news, newspapers & network news tied

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER, TV-STYLE

50% of those who watch local tv news say they pay only partial attention; 11% give it minimum or no attention. 33% say they do give full attention, finds the Ogilvy study.

STAY TUNED, HOWEVER

A soon-to-be-released survey for Scripps shows that most people get their news from more than one place -- newspapers, tv, radio, etc. The same survey shows that newspapers are far more *credible* than tv newscasts. Details when study comes out in Jan/early Feb. (More from Stempel, 740/593-2609)

5 TIPS FROM FUTURISTS FOR BEING YOUR OWN TREND WATCHER

1. **Visit "glamour" districts:** observe people on weekend mornings as they wander thru trendy areas like NYC's SoHo, Chicago's Mich av. or your town's hot spot. These places attract consumers to fashionable stores & eateries, says futurist Art Siemering -- you can watch the trends go by
2. **Use "wide-angle" vision:** observe activity on the edge of your everyday experience. This allows you to act before a crisis happens, advises Wayne Burkan, author of *Wide Angle Vision*
3. **Think in opposites:** look for the countertrend behind every trend, says Derm Barrett, author of *The Paradox Process*
4. **Follow Yellow Page headings.** New businesses or new descriptions reflect changes in society & demographics, finds directory mktg expert Peter Eder
5. **Watch your language:** Nouns used as verbs hint at increased activity, e.g. *network*, *access* & *parent*. Newer examples: *thrifting*, *bargain hunting* at thrift stores, & *theming*, creating themes to promote everything.

TRENDS NOTED IN '98 THAT IMPACT PR

1. The "**celebretizing**" industry is booming as people hire publicists & image consultants to promote them via media, Net, cable. Reason: celebrity pays. High profile makes difference between a modestly successful consultant & one who nabs \$25,000 per speech.