

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Power of a directive theme: "Football Socialism"** is how a think tank questioning huge public expenditures to build football & other sports stadia states its case. It estimates \$7 billion of funds that could be used to solve festering urban problems will be spent over the decade for sports stadia -- an annual subsidy nationally of \$500 million. Studies show these sports palaces don't deliver the benefits promised by promoters. Local economies aren't boosted, may even be harmed. Instead, benefits go to millionaire team owners, which The Independence Institute dubbed "modern-day robber barons" in the Denver Post. What do the fans get? Higher prices for everything, from tickets to hot dogs, while the big shots lounge in boxes costing corporate sponsors big bucks.

¶ **Op-Ed Biz, a guide on placing opinion articles in newspapers & mags**, includes 1) 900-word article on how to write successful op-eds; 2) contact list with background info, phone, mailing address & guidelines from 18 nat'l & West Coast newspapers & mags. Upcoming 2nd edition will include Eastern & Midwestern media. "Competition is stiff for getting op-eds published, particularly in large newspapers & magazines. The best approach is to state your viewpoint clearly & immediately. Make sure your op-ed is based on one or two solid ideas backed up with incisive, revealing facts. Don't go overboard with facts or you will dilute the overall impact. Finally, try to offer a fresh perspective on a timely & newsworthy issue," explains author Clifton Parker. (Clifton Parker PR, 64 Martens blvd, San Rafael, Calif 94901; 415/459-4118; free)

¶ **Foreign products no longer have special appeal** for Americans, study says. They feel US products are the same or better than goods produced in Western Europe (76%), Asia (75%), South America (81%), Central America (81%), & Eastern Europe (81%), finds a survey by Creamer Dickson Basford. Americans have a better perception of products made in Western Europe than those made in Eastern Europe or Asia. Products from Latin America have the worst reputation among US consumers when compared with US-made products. Men favor products from Western Europe & Asia; women from Eastern Europe & Latin America. Affluent consumers are the least negative about products made in countries outside the US. (More from 212/367-6800)

INTRODUCING pr's NEW (& CONTINUING) LINE-UP OF SUPPLEMENTS

- purview, by Otto Lerbinger, continues to scan the literature
- tips & tactics, by professionals, continues to discuss methods & procedures that directly affect the practice of public relations
- plain talk, by John Budd, continues to offer his "iconoclastic" views on the sturm & drang of public relations

Added to the line-up this year:

- strategy, by Jim Lukaszewski, explores the importance of strategy, analyzes the process of strategic thinking & examines current examples
- research in pr, by Jim & Larissa Grunig, will begin in September & look at the latest & most applicable research, explore how to incorporate it into practice, as well as how to design & do it.

OPEN-BOOK MANAGEMENT MAKES COMMUNICATION & RELATIONSHIPS THE BASIS OF RUNNING THE ORGANIZATION

Open-book management, aka *the great game of business*, is a mgmt system where everyone in the organization is directly involved & responsible for its success or failure. This is achieved by superb communication.

Bo Burlingham, ed-at-large for Inc magazine & co-author with Jack Stack of *The Great Game of Business*, told prr it is based on the idea that "business is interesting & fun." And that everyone shares in the outcomes.

"It doesn't mean you have fun all the time because there are a lot of difficult challenges. But there are opportunities. Organizations that practice open-book mgmt are built around taking advantage of opportunities & sharing them with everybody in the business."

ITS ORIGINS In the early 80s when International Harvester was in deep trouble, managers of subsidiary Springfield ReManufacturing Corp (Missouri) offered to buy the factory. They put up \$100,000 & borrowed \$8.9 million to do it.

Realizing this was a desperate situation, "they had to get all employees working together because the thing that would bring them down is if people started fighting with each other. So they went to everybody in the company & said, 'You need to understand business. Forget everything you've heard about it. It's basically a game. No more complicated than any other game. But like any game, if you're going to understand it, there are 3 conditions that have to exist. You have to:

- 1) Know the rules
- 2) Get enough information so you can follow the action & keep score
- 3) Have a stake in the outcome -- sharing both the risks & the rewards."

This became the basis of *open-book management*. It's practiced by thousands of companies, including major corporations like Walmart, Southwest Airlines, Wabash National, GE Capital, Harley Davidson. Not all call it open book mgmt. "But they're all basically following the principle that to succeed in business you have to

- 1) **Educate employees about how the company works**, how the business works, how it makes money. You do that by...
- 2) **Teaching them to understand the numbers of the business** & then
- 3) **Giving them complete access to the numbers** ... as opposed to the traditional method of hiding financial info from everybody."



OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SYSTEM

All the measures of success depend on communication (often in the form of training, role-modeling & worker interaction) and sufficiently strong relationships that rewards, or losses, can be shared by everyone. Others:

- **The most successful users at least have employee stock plans**, tho they may not be employee-owned.
- **Everyone winds up doing the education.** It's integrated into the daily functioning of the organization. In large companies, there are specialists who do the training; in small companies, hr or pr does it. "Once you start operating in this way, everyone gets drawn into it."
- **Education becomes continual.** "That's what this is about -- continual education about the business, what's going on, how it's changing. Because business isn't static. It changes all the time."
- **The top-down way of running a business doesn't work here.** "The idea that the job of the boss is to tell other people what to do & the job of the people down the line is to wait & be told what to do is eliminated. Responsibility is delegated right down the line."

A conference on open-book mgmt, the Gathering of Games VI, will be held Sept 17-18 in St.Louis. Conference began about 4 yrs ago as an informal reunion of companies that had been thru Springfield ReManufacturing Corp's monthly seminar on the Great Game of Business. Many of those companies practice their own versions of the Game -- hence the name of the conference. Since then, it has grown into a national conference of companies using all forms of open-book mgmt. Tracks available for beginner as well as experienced players. (More from 800/386-2752)

UPDATED BASIC RESEARCH MANUAL NOW AVAILABLE

"Guide to Public Relations Research," updated yearly since first issued in '91, is a reference manual for practitioners. Prepared by Walt Lindenmann, it includes a) checklist of things to consider when doing research; b) comparison of different research approaches; c) sources of secondary data; d) selected glossary of research terms; e) bibliography of more than 250 recent books & articles on pr research. '98 edition expands the secondary data sources section & the bibliography to include not only US but also selected references from around the world. Defines pr research as:

- An *essential* tool for fact & opinion gathering;
- A *systematic* effort aimed at discovering, confirming &/or understanding,
- ...Thru *objective* appraisal,
- ...The facts or opinions pertaining to a *specified problem or problems*.

(Copy from Research & Measurement Dep't, Ketchum PR Worldwide, 292 Madison Ave, NYC 10017; \$25, no purchase orders)

RIVERKEEPERS IS EXAMPLE OF CAUSE ORG'N ATTACKING PR

Tho its own success is the epitome of good pr *technique*, the waterway preservation & cleanup org'n is among many cause-related entities now attacking the *ethics* of practitioners who work on behalf of org'ns accused by Riverkeepers (Garrison, NY) of causing or abetting pollution.

The result is a self-righteous arrogance -- our use of pr techniques is ok cuz we're white hats, but yours is bad cuz you're black hats -- that can only harm public perceptions of pr generally.

- As Robert.F. Kennedy, Jr of Riverkeepers phrases it: "It's the good guys against the bad guys." That approach undoubtedly motivates zealous supporters -- but destroys the pr principle of seeking harmony & win-win solutions.
- PR is seen as a zero-sum game of power vs. power, as opposed to a method for allowing the public to make decisions.
- Yet their opponents are often biggies like GE, Exxon, utilities & local gov'ts, who are causing pollution or turning a blind eye to it.

THEIR SUCCESSFUL APPROACH COMBINES SWASHBUCKLING WITH TECHNIQUE

1. **"The will is more important than the money.** You've got the will & the support, the idea (of protecting waterways like the Hudson, Willamette or Casco Bay) is so good, and the public understands it so well, it all follows." *Evidence environmentalism is now ingrained in our belief system, and companies or others who harm it are out of step.*
2. **Assigning a person or team to each waterway.** Gov't agencies or EPA don't do this, but let responsibility get fragmented over several dep'ts. If you call Riverkeepers & ask for the person handling the Hudson, you'll get that person. *Ease of access is a cardinal rule today.*
3. **Line up volunteers & supply the tools.** Riverkeepers has boats & divers to get onto the rivers & investigate, and "a retinue of volunteers and lawyers & lobbyists." *Training advocates is vital & Kennedy devotes himself to providing a new generation of environmental attorneys.*
4. **Attacking polluters' sophisticated responses as "greenwashing."** They claim pr firms "formulate strategies to avoid environmental responsibility. They also hire scientists for the industry, people who will say what they're told to say. We call it 'tobacco science.'" *If you can't attack their case, or in addition to attacking their case, undermine their credibility & attack their ethics.*

Given its many victories, like a \$half-billion award against Atlanta for polluting the Chattahoochee, this is a case study for activists or those who must contend with them. (More at www.keeper.org; or read *The Riverkeepers: Two Activists Fight to Reclaim Our Environment as a Basic Human Right*; Scribner, \$25)