

really not new. You may label them as such & as being part of the 'New Public Relations,' but they are really old hat to people with long memories (& who have a copy of one of the first books about public relations)."

Simon hits the problem squarely. It's not a new technique. But it's newly emerging as a powerful public relations program in many organizations. Why did practitioners get away from such a basic concept in the first place?

OLDER WORKERS OK, BUT HOW ABOUT GEN-X & GENERATION.COM ?

- 93% of workers over 55 are extremely or very satisfied with their employers. So are 70% of those between 35-54. Number drops to 58% for workers under 35, according to a study by CDB Research & Consulting. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports similar findings: a) average tenure of adult employees has hovered around the 5-yr mark during the last decade; b) among workers 20-34 yrs old, tenure has decreased; c) 52% of employees 20-24 yrs of age work for less than 1 year at a given organization.
- "Employers need to communicate with young staff to help them see the big picture. Financing professional development programs that increase retention rates is preferable to the transfer costs associated with employee turnover," says Jean Farinelli, CEO of Creamer Dickson Basford.
- College grads (61%) think less-well of their employers than those with a high school education or less (77%). Because college grads today are entering the workforce after going thru an internship or two, they "have a good understanding of their value as skilled workers. They are willing to challenge company operating procedures &, in some cases, to look elsewhere for employment if they perceive themselves to be undervalued."
- Employers must place more emphasis on employees' professional development & satisfaction, she says. Otherwise they may be lost to competitors. "As baby boomers retire over the next 15 years, a company's ability to hire & keep skilled workers will prove critical to its long term well-being." (More info: 350 Hudson St, NYC 10014; www.cdbpr.com)

TODAY'S 20-SOMETHINGS ARE MANAGING THEIR CAREERS DIFFERENTLY

Than their parents. Instead of staying around to get the gold watch, they move from job to job much more frequently, finds The Herman Group (www.herman.net). "The trend will be for people to change jobs every 2-4 yrs.

- They will seek to 'ramp up' very quickly with each new employer
- They learn rapidly & expect to start with high levels of responsibility
- Their objective will be to make their mark early, then evaluate future opportunities to make a difference, to be involved.

"Employers can hold these mobile workers if they offer variety, stimulation, high learning & a chance to actually accomplish something -- to make a positive difference in the world around them."

BOEING CASE A MODEL FOR HANDLING MERGERS, MAJOR CHANGE

Merger of Boeing & McDonnell Douglas created a company with 220,000+ employees, customers in 145 countries & projected revenues of \$48 billion. How important are the employees to the success of such a merger (or any big change)? "Crucial," says Larry Bishop, vp, com'ns & investor rels.

NEED was to quickly combine into One Company, with One Vision, employees from both -- plus a 3rd group of Rockwell divisions merged into Boeing a week prior to McDonnell Douglas talks. **Process to build unity began almost the moment the agreement was made -- the "key element of merger success."**

MESSAGE to the 3 groups was: "As one company, we own the most powerful history in world aviation... We built our legacies alone; we'll invent the future together." It went to employees worldwide -- **targeted primarily to sales, marketing & service positions supporting customers.** Program won the Grand Prize for Excellence in the IPRA Golden World Awards. Key elements:

RESEARCH • 21 employee focus groups were conducted just after public announcement of proposal to 1) determine levels of understanding & 2) refine the type, scope & nature of on-going communications. Sessions cut across varying levels of supervisory management within Boeing, McDonnell Douglas & Rockwell. Participants said:

1. "Communicate, communicate, communicate. Even when you don't know the answer, tell us you don't know."
2. "Treat the merger as a celebration, not a funeral."
3. "We're not ready or willing to start working together as a team" -- an attitude that could undermine a successful merger.

• **Researched other merged companies**, found little attention paid to workers in pre-merger stage. So adopted a strong employee focus from the start.

TIMING • There were only 5 days between the handshake (by both CEOs) & the press conference announcing the proposed merger. Starting the 2nd day, CEOs met with communications staffs to build the preliminary programs -- **which were underway by the day of the press announcement.**

• **To show employees they are an extreme priority**, mgmt wanted to have info ready as the merger was completed. To do this, commitments had to be made prior to final approval. Mgmt committed much of its \$5 million investment to having the complicated materials produced in advance, ready for release on merger approval which came 7/1/97 from US gov't, 7/25 from shareholders, 7/30 from European Union.



EXECUTION

During transition (8 months leading to merger approval):

- Merger announced on Sunday. Monday at 8am full packets on all managers' desks to share info with employees in their groups
- 11 transition com'ns teams formed. Led by members from both companies
- 28 Transition Bulletins issued; videos, internal tv programs on a steady flow; company newspapers offering major weekly coverage
- Worldwide media reports summarized for key employees on a steady basis
- Web sites of 2 companies carried daily info, then merged on Day One
- Boeing corporate logo redesigned to include tribute to heritage of McD
- Strong public involvement of both CEOs. They were chief communicators of the merger message -- usually seen together to show "we are One Company"
- Media tours to background reporters, provide them with internal reactions

During day one/week one of the merger:

- Delivered on Aug 1-2, to all 220,000 employee homes: a) comprehensive info packages with videotape of CEOs discussing vision of merger & significance; b) 2nd videotape plus 30-page color brochure with products, programs & capabilities of new Boeing; c) brochure & lapel pin as intro to new company signature. Packets also went to employees overseas.
- Invited 150 employees, each with a guest, from across US & Canada, to DC for a weekend. Part of an employee-only Town Hall meeting with the CEOs. Attended Aug 4 employee telecast from Nat'l Air & Space Museum, & press conference with "Phil & Harry," as the CEOs now were being called.
- 176,000+ employees gathered in 52 plant locations to view telecast, hear from Phil & Harry prior to public announcement. Also took part in live satellite telecast of the DC news conference, shown on giant screens in factories, on tarmacs. Airshows & parachutists highlighted some venues.
- New signage went up, with 1,400 banners of One Company, One Vision.
- Message carried in person by "Phil & Harry's Excellent Adventure" -- a barnstorming 5-day visit to employees in 14 cities. They walked production lines, shook hands, signed autographs, answered questions. At one plant, "even Phil & Harry were taken aback by sustained employee applause of 7 minutes."

EVALUATION IS ONGOING

Used post-merger focus groups in 18 areas to evaluate the com'ns program. Reports

are not final but indicate visits by Phil & Harry & day one/week one activities were extremely positive. Majority of employees appreciated the ways in which the program involved them. Also, employees are virtually unanimous in believing the merger itself was a good idea.

- **"Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.** As just one example, the C-17 (McDonnell Douglas) production line has just experienced one of its highest-productivity days ever. This, despite an hour of down time while Phil & Harry [visited with employees]. All across the country, our people are pumped up," according to a team leader's summary report.
- **An employee survey** was recently mailed to a sample of 20% of employees to further gather their opinions on the merger.
- **"Opinion of management** is that the energy put into employee communications was well placed & will show dividends over the long term." (More from Larry Bishop, Boeing, Box 3707, Seattle 98124-2207; 206/655-0965)

DESPITE DEBATE ABOUT COMMERCIALISM, TEACHERS LIKE MATERIALS

78% of educators rate the instructional value of sponsored materials as good to excellent; 86% integrate them into their teaching, finds a survey of teachers by West Glen Communications (see prr 4/6).

Additional services they would like corporations & others to provide:

- Videos & print materials
- Classroom appearances by industry experts
- Cash prizes for essay contests, poetry writing, art & community service
- Work experience/apprenticeships
- Scholarships

IBM was cited most often as pro-actively supporting education. GM ranked 2nd, Apple 3rd, Ford 4th. (More from West Glen, 212/944-9055)

WARNING AGAINST EYE CANDY & "DANGER, DESIGNER AT WORK"

Whether you call this a quote of the month (as did Writing that Works) or quote of the year (Newsletter on Newsletters), it's one to remember:

"Nobody really likes to read. As writers, we admit this. Reading is a slow, static & immobile process in a restless world. But we write anyway because against these barriers we have one ally: our readers' curiosity. What we don't need is more barriers: words crippled by weird spacing, entangled letters & lines, distressed type, colliding columns; tiny words swallowed up in hideous background textures, stripes, photos & even other type; impaled paragraphs disjointed by Dadaesque slashes & streaks that ambush the eye & obscure the letters.

"Which brings me to the most formidable threat to the printed word since the match -- the art director of radical pretense, who sees text & typography as objects of visual form to which he, not the writer, gives final meaning. Graphics are becoming to literacy what terrorism is to government."

-- John McDonough, in "Too Hip for Words," in the Wall Street Journal.

OPINION LEADER CONCEPT CERTAINLY ISN'T A "NEW TECHNIQUE"

Reminds Ray Simon, text author & prof emeritus, Utica College (NY), in an e-mail to prr about an item we carried 4/13:

"In 1923, some 75 years ago, Edward L. Bernays' book, "Crystallizing Public Opinion," was published. In a chapter on techniques & methods Bernays discusses group leaders, pointing out how important it is for public relations counselors to work with such leaders & to recognize that they may represent a wide variety of interests & hence subdivisions of publics.

"These subdivisions," says Bernays, "are so numerous that there are large companies in the US whose business it is to supply lists of groups & group leaders in different fields."

"I imagine the lesson to be gained from the above is that care must be taken in writing today about 'new techniques' which are