

## ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Vital New Topic for PR is Framing** -- the process of depicting, characterizing or positioning how issues or personalities are understood by the public. U So Carolina's new Center of Mass Com'ns Research marked its opening with a conference on framing. Keynoter Stephen Reese (U Texas) explains it as "organizing principles that are socially shared & persistent over time. That work symbolically to meaningfully structure the world. [Thus] a frame is a moment in a chain of signification. As sources promote 'occurrences' into 'events,' as journalists define & seek out information that fits into their organizing ideas, frames designate any number of moments when we can say that a certain organizing principle was imposed on social reality." Media frames are powerful & widely shared within the business & journalism communities, Reese said, but he warned that "these frames are also based on key political interests not shared by the entire community" -- making framing research vital. (Presentations & other original works are being compiled for a book)

¶ **1998 Corporate Communications Yearbook** features 1,400+ listings of products, services & prof'l org'ns in the pr field in US, Canada & overseas. Listings include address, phone, fax, e-mail & Web site, service costs. Broken out by 30 major categories (consultants, crisis com'ns, internal com'ns, media rels, research institutes, etc), plus subcategories. Fully indexed by organization name, category & subcategory. (\$75; \$60 if order by 6/15; from Corporate Communication Studies, 2 Owens Court, Rockville, MD 20850; 301/279-9455)

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**Association of Public Relations Firms** appoints 18 pr firm leaders as its founding Board of Dirs: Margi Booth (M Booth & Assocs); Louis Capozzi (Manning, Selvage & Lee); Kathy Cripps (Sciens Worldwide PR); David Drobis (Ketchum PR Worldwide); Robert Druckenmiller (Porter Novelli); Robert Feldman (GCI Group); Gary Grates (Boxenbaum Grates); Thomas Hoog (Hill & Knowlton); Andy Hopson (EvansGroup); Rich Jernstedt (Golin/Harris Com'ns); Gwin Johnston (JohnstonWells PR); Chris Komisarjevsky (Burson-Marsteller); Cathy Lugbauer (Weber PR Worldwide); Michael Morley (Edelman PR Worldwide); Gary Myers (Morgan & Myers); Robert Seltzer (Ogilvy PR Worldwide); Patrice Tanaka (PT & Co); Sharon Van Sickle (KVO). Group will be sworn in during the assn's inaugural Board meeting June 30. A Board chair, vice-chair & treasurer will be appointed then. Assn's current priorities:

- Meet goal of 100 pr firm members. Nancy Sharp-Zickerman (mktg/pr consultant) has been hired to recruit member firms, oversee mktg & promo efforts, & provide general leadership during Assn's first 6 months
- Hire a president -- a nationwide search is currently underway
- Based on surveys of US pr firms, Ass'n says it will focus on:
  - a) evaluation measurement; b) development of best mgmt practices;
  - c) recruitment; d) building & promoting the stature of pr & gov't rels;
  - e) competition from other kinds of professional service businesses.
 Specifics will be determined by the Board.
- Some role confusion seems to be developing. Division of labor at outset was that topics like evaluation, prof'l devel & best practices would be province of PRSA's Counselors Academy while trade ass'n would concentrate on promoting use of pr firms. (More info from APRF at 212/448-4211)

## CASE: HOW ONE COMPANY TRAINS AMBASSADORS ON ISSUES

One particular objective of Exxon Chemical Co's internal research is to measure employees' ability to act as effective ambassadors of the company. In '95:

- 59% considered themselves as ambassadors outside of work; 28% did not; 13% weren't sure
- But only 47% said they received enough info to respond to questions about safety, health & environmental issues from friends & family

To increase employees' ability to act as ambassadors, Exxon Chemical created an ongoing Community Ambassador Briefing Series (CABS) program. How it works:

## TACTICS: TARGETED PRESENTATIONS SUPPORTED BY A BRIEFING BOOK

1. **Target** a) employees active in company-sponsored community or educational outreach; b) those with spokesperson responsibilities (ie, emergency response); c) those with advocacy responsibilities (ie, regulatory issues, gov't relations, etc).
  - "But we always welcome any employee who wants to join the invitation list. We publish stories regularly in employee publications inviting employees to join the group," Charlotte Howard told [pr](http://pr).
2. **Develop a series of presentations** to these targeted employees on selected safety, health & environmental issues.
  - *Sessions are held on company time* "usually during the lunch hour & we provide the food. But if we open them up to the entire building, they are held in the morning & afternoon. Each plant decides how to handle their site themselves."
3. **Internal & external topic experts** give the presentations -- people who are conversant on the subject & can easily dialogue with employees. Howard advises picking speakers "who know their subject & are good at presenting. If they're not good at presentations, hire a good speech writer & graphic artist to help them. The best sessions have been given by good speakers."
4. **"Look around for speakers** because there are a lot of people out there who have something to talk about that would interest employees. This will save you money developing presentations."

5. **Developed the CABS Briefing Book** -- a small binder with tabs holding Fact Cards (laminated 5x7 cards that include short, factual info about the subject). These cards are a tool, providing attendees with written quick facts as a take-away.

- "We distribute them to all of the target audience members. They receive one whether they attend the sessions or not."

6. **Funded by headquarters' public affairs dep't.** (Exxon Chemical's budget for presentation development & speaker costs -- \$50,000, actual \$46,000) Resources -- ½ professional staff member's time (in their case, job shared by 2 staffers) & ¼ of a support staff member's time.

7. **Annual focus groups** help evaluate success of program

8. **Evaluation forms** are gathered from each session to determine how program is working & what topics employees want to learn about

9. **CABS tracking chart** identifies action items -- "what needs to be done & what we have already done."

**EVALUATION** '97 Employee Communications & Community Awareness Survey showed:

- 69% (up from 59%) of employees consider themselves ambassadors
- 72% (up from 47%) say they receive enough info to respond to questions from friends & family
- Average number of attendees per topic increased from 54 in '96 to 91 in '97

CABS program won an Excalibur Award from PRSA/Houston. (More info from Charlotte Howard at 281/870-6607)

## THE EMERGING FIELD OF COACHING: WHAT EXACTLY COACHES DO

Are pr practitioners coaches? Are we encouraging coaching as the most effective training tool in our organizations? Results of a first-ever comprehensive survey of clients of coaches reveals the impact coaching is having. International Coach Federation polled 210 coaching clients during 1<sup>st</sup> quarter '98 for demographic data & opinions. Some highlights:

- **Value:** 70% say their investment in a coach is "very valuable"; 29% "valuable"
- **Confidant:** 50% confide in their coach as much as their best friend, spouse or therapist; 12%, more than anyone else
- **Roles:** 85% say the main role of their coach is to be a sounding board, to listen to them & give honest feedback; 78% call the coach a motivator; 57% a friend; 51% a mentor; 47% a business consultant; 41% a teacher

- **Turn to their coach for:** 81% time mgmt help; 75% career guidance; 74% business advice; 59% relationships/family issues; 52% physical/wellness issues; 46% personal issues; 40% goal-setting; 38% financial guidance; 11% creativity

- **Outcomes clients attribute to their coaches include:**

Higher level of self-awareness (68%)

Smarter goal-setting (63%)

More balanced life (61%)

Lower stress levels (58%)

Self-discovery (53%)

More self-confidence (53%)

Improvement in quality of life (44%)

Enhanced communication skills (40%)

Better relationship with boss or co-workers (33%)

- **Coaching works because** 1) the coach helps clients set & reach higher & more appropriate goals, 2) asks more of them than they would do on their own & 3) focuses them to produce results more quickly.

- **Coaching uses a process** of inquiry & personal discovery to build the client's level of awareness & responsibility, & provides the client with structure, support & feedback.

- **It's a form of consulting**, but the coach "stays with the client to help implement the new skills, changes & goals to make sure they really happen. However, coaches do not try to "fix" a client -- it's up to the client to take action. (More info from Amy Watson, 714/376-7500)

"It seems as tho 'coaches' could end up giving advice, with great trust & credibility, on any number of business or personal topics (health, financial, political). Do we see a future where we will hire lobbyists to influence the coaches of the people we want to influence?" asks Elizabeth Hirst, vp of Veritas Communications (Pointe Claire, Quebec), who brought this survey to prr's attention.

## AGAIN, PROOF THAT AWARENESS ALONE DOESN'T CHANGE BEHAVIOR

Fewer than 2 in 5 adults have asked their doctors about prescription drugs they've seen advertised on tv or in print -- a figure virtually unchanged from last year despite huge increase in direct-to-consumer advertising by the pharmaceutical industry, finds a new study.

- Only 1 in 3 adults has encouraged someone else to ask a doctor about advertised prescription drugs -- also unchanged from last year.
- "While it is true that heavily advertised prescription drugs have made considerable gains in public awareness, the fact remains that most prescription drugs marketed directly to the consumer have only moderate to low aided brand recognition," notes Jean Farinelli of Creamer Dickson Basford.
- Key, she says, is noting which consumers are paying attention: older adults & better educated consumers; women more than men (38% vs. 31%) encourage others to ask doctors about drugs & medical treatments seen advertised. (More from CDB Research & Consulting, 212/367-6858)