

¶ **Communications math** from Commcore Communication Strategies: $9 \times 1 = 0$, but $3 \times 3(P) = 1$ or 2 . Translation = a basic communication rule: 9 points mentioned once result in zero retention. However, reduce the points to 3, repeat them 3 times -- & with Proof (the P in the formula) -- then audience should remember 1 or 2 of them. (www.commcorecom.com, 914/684-2330)

¶ **PRSA section changes name & refocuses mission to serve practitioners who support higher education.** Education & Cultural Org'n Section (ECOS) -- one of PRSA's first-formed interest sections -- is now *Counselors to Higher Education (CHE)*. Its new mission: communications & advocacy for colleges, universities, research & related org'ns. CHE will focus on the interests of pr pros performing services for the enhancement, quality & stature of education, with emphasis on institutions of higher education. Some members from cultural org'ns are moving to the Tourism Section & forming a subcommittee on cultural tourism, Richard George of PRSA told prr. Another option is the Ass'n Section, depending on the focus of their org'ns. Members from elementary & secondary schools, school boards, etc. are invited to: 1) stay & participate when hi-ed issues cross over to affect all of education; 2) look for common cause with another section; 3) form a leadership group & explore the possibility of a new section. CHE chair is Curt Carlson, assoc vp-pa at Emory U. (Info from him at 404/727-0334)

¶ **PR/ad firm Rainier Corporation (Princeton, Mass) receives ISO 9002 certification thru participative design** -- the "first in North America to receive...the prestigious international standard for quality," according to its release. "Our philosophy is that the work we do for our clients should be absolutely flawless, especially in the delivery of the final creative product," notes Stephen Schuster, pres. In working toward certification, he notes that Rainier has achieved higher efficiency, better internal & external communications, far less rework & near elimination of the mistakes & oversights that plague most firms. The firm's certification is the culmination of nearly a year's effort, during which every employee became an active participant in defining & implementing operational procedures. "ISO 9002 certification shows our clients that when it comes to quality, we're all speaking the same language." (More from 978/464-5302; www.rainierco.com)

¶ **"Shoppers use the Internet to access product information,** but they frequently wait to make purchases at more traditional retail outlets," finds a CDB poll of 400 people. "With a few exceptions, such as Amazon.com, online information has more impact on consumer opinion than on actual purchases."

- Net sites influence opinions a lot (2%), some (65%), little/none (32%)
- They influence purchases a lot (3%), some (49%), little or none (48%)
- About half think info posted on the Internet is unreliable
- GenXers have the least confidence in info posted on the Internet
- Better-educated, affluent & employed consumers are most likely to trust info viewed online
- 52% say buying products online with a credit card is unsafe

(More from CDB at <http://www.cdbpr.com> or 212/367-6858)

STUDY PROVIDES EMPIRICAL SUPPORT FOR COMMUNICATION'S EFFECTIVENESS IN THE CHANGE PROCESS -- & SOME CAVEATS

Conventional wisdom suggests communication is key during organizational agenda setting, write Betty Farmer, John Slater & Kathleen Wright in their research study *The Role of Communication in Achieving Shared Agenda Under New Organizational Leadership*. So they set out to gather proof.

Study was conducted on a mid-size comprehensive university in the Southeast. School was undergoing a change in top-level leadership, with a new chancellor. Three surveys were conducted during the chancellor's first year. 455 administrators & faculty were queried; 186 agreed to participate. As this longitudinal study progressed (3 surveys), there was a dropout rate of 26-30% for each survey. But those who responded closely approximated the proportion in the total population, so findings are valid.

RESULTS VERIFY SEVERAL STANDARD PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

- **The well-informed tend to agree** A significant relationship exists between organizational members' feelings of being well informed & their agreement with the leader's vision
- **Effective com'n gains agreement** A statistically significant relationship exists between respondents' evaluations of how effectively the leader communicates the vision & their agreement with it
- **CEO must be active communicator** The chancellor was the #1 recipient employees would communicate with to provide input into the university's agenda. Channels for this feedback most frequently mentioned were 1) e-mail, 2) face-to-face meetings, 3) written memos. (In this case, the chancellor invited employees to share ideas with him via e-mail. He received 1,125 e-mails from every rank during his first 6 months.)
- **Confirms importance of "Undecideds"** Those who initially neither agree nor disagree with the vision may be the most important public to focus on, both in sending & receiving information

EXTERNAL CHANNELS INTRUDE WHETHER WE WANT THEM TO OR NOT

- **2 internal channels** exhibited positive, statistically significant relationships -- 1) memos from the leader & 2) meetings with the leader
- **2 external channels** were statistically significant -- the local & the regional newspaper

- **Supporters use these channels** Respondents who agreed/strongly agreed with the leader's vision reported receiving info about the agenda from these channels more frequently than individuals who did not agree. Of those who agreed/strongly agreed with the vision, 60% reported frequently getting info about the vision from the local & regional newspapers [*confirming media's role is to reinforce not change what people believe*]
- **Disagreers didn't use external channels** None of those who disagreed/strongly disagreed with the vision reported frequently getting info from the local or regional newspaper

THO FINDINGS SUPPORT THE NEED FOR 2-WAY COM'N, THERE ARE CAVEATS:

1. **Communication is not a panacea.** Employees can sometimes evaluate the communication process & the leader's communication positively, but still not agree with the leader's vision
2. **Since no amount of communication can change deeply held beliefs & values,** clarity in the communication of goals may actually accentuate differences & further polarize positions [*Messages turn some on, some off*]

FROM THE LITERATURE

Much of the literature on a leader's visioning ability describes communication from a persuasive model -- "influencing strategies" coming from the top down. But organizations are increasingly moving to a bottom-up, employee-empowering strategy. Communication models (from Grunig & Hunt) at work here are:

- **2-way asymmetrical model** (persuasion). Org'n tells & listens. The purpose of this listening (research) is to find out what opinions publics hold, then use them to change the publics' opinions to agree with management's
- **2-way symmetrical** (understanding). Depicts communication as a dialogue. The com'n question here is not how mgmt can persuade the publics to come over to its side, but how understanding & cooperation between the two can be achieved

It would appear that the model best suited for achieving a shared agenda would be the 2-way symmetrical model, write the researchers. From this perspective, the leader who encourages input from all levels of the org'n is more likely to succeed than the leader who seeks to impose his or her agenda thru either coercion or persuasion.

"Many practitioners operate from the public information model, which emphasizes 1-way dissemination of messages, often to external media. Our findings suggest practitioners may best spend their time helping the leader craft messages about the institution's vision. This presents an excellent opportunity for practitioners to assume their rightful place at the management table, as counselors to top management during periods of organizational change."

(More from the researchers at Dep't of Com'n & Theatre Arts, Western Carolina U, Cullowhee, NC 28723; 704/227-7491, fax 704/227-7647)

HAVING SOME JOURNALISTIC SKILLS CAN BE HELPFUL

Notes John Ledingham of Capital U (Columbus), responding to 5/4 prr:

1. "I agree wholeheartedly that we far too often think we have done our job when we bombard a media outlet with press releases, or hang a client's name on an event with little or no regard for whether we have reinforced or changed attitudes or perceptions -- much less behavior...."
2. "However, I must pick a nit concerning the notion that press releases are seldom used without re-writing & that 'the idea that a pr person is ever going to write the article is ludicrous.' On many occasions I have seen press releases I have prepared run word for word, and in one instance, I was pitching a news item when I was asked, simply, to write the story. I did & it ran on the front page of the newspaper (a daily newspaper, not a news-starved throw-away or rural weekly), in the right-hand column, with the headline above the fold. It is but one example where knowing the mechanics of who, what, why, where, when & how served my purpose. However, I don't think you have to have 'ink in your veins' or journalistic training to understand the mechanics of the inverted pyramid."
3. "However, I still agree that as a profession we are consumed with a practice that for the most part -- usually limited to instances where the goal is awareness creating -- makes little sense."
4. "Moreover, I would contend that as a profession we have a 'rush to production' that is nearly compulsive. We seem to think that every problem has a communication solution & that, in addition, the problem must be manifest in the production & dissemination of messages."

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Edel-U reflects Edelman Worldwide's commitment to training & development.** Initiated this Spring, Edel-U offers core competency & elective courses for support staff, entry level & interns/trainees, supervisory staff, & sr mgmt. "Edel-U demonstrates our commitment to maintaining an internal environment that is both challenging & rewarding while encouraging every member of the staff to grow & develop professionally," explains Janice Rotchstein who coordinates & manages Edel-U with the support of 4 regional deans representing North America, Latin America, Europe & Asia-Pacific, as well as 35 deans representing the offices. Edel-U held its first European Summer School Aug 26-29 at Trinity College, Dublin, for 40 senior consultants from offices in Europe. For faculty, Edel-U taps the firm's multi-cultural sr mgmt, local college & university professors, members of the media, authors & clients. Offices participate in Edel-U Intranet on-line classes & on-line chats, ranging from "Writing for PR" to "How to Manage a Company's Global Reputation." **Each employee is required to take 24 hrs of training annually.** (More from Rotchstein, 212/704-8164)