

3. Asked what they expect, 76% agree with the statement "corporations have a much greater responsibility now than ever before to play a much greater role in responding to the needs of our society." Only 19% disagree.

4. Asked if business is doing its fair share, 60% disagree with the statement "a large corporation gives back more to the community than a small business." Only 31% agree with the statement.

People expect org'ns to show commitment "by being truly involved in charitable activities that are visible & make a tangible difference. Checkbook philanthropy" isn't enough, notes Judy Hamby of H&K's strategic philanthropy unit.

IS ANYONE MAKING AN IMPACT?

Of 291 companies mentioned by respondents, only 7 got more than 10 mentions! And only 62 were mentioned more than once! Share of mind is not being accomplished. Hamby feels it's because

A) Companies don't get, or don't seek, credit (see [pr](#) 6/10/96)

B) "Giving programs are spread too thinly across too many categories" (the antithesis of strategic philanthropy, in most cases)

(More from Hamby at 404/249-8550)

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ Dick Weiner subbed for William Safire in Sunday NYTimes mag 9/13. The well-known counselor & directory compiler covered theatrical slang in the "On Language" column. Among several others, he's the author of *Webster's New World Dictionary of Media & Communications*. The vacationing Safire is one of the most respected writers on writing & it is an honor for a pr pro, even one of Weiner's standing, to do this.

¶ Sound bites on network news are down to 8 secs, old broadcast pro Peter Restivo reminds us. Media trainers need to show how to "go for the short & direct answers" as never before. This usually requires "a direct answer to a direct question in a complete sentence" -- but it may get you two short shots on the screen or soundbox, since that's better broadcast style and better for you. One spillover: videos now must be shorter. "Truthful, simple & short" is his recipe. Put another way, information mapping applies here as well as to print ([pr](#) 11/17/97).

¶ Intrusive reporters can be controlled, as Swissair & Nova Scotia officials are demonstrating at the site of the Flight 111 disaster. As relatives of the dead arrived on charter flights, they were taken thru customs in a private room at Halifax airport, then taxied to their hotels. Reporters & photographers were kept at least 100 yards away. Interviews with willing relatives were permitted -- with the threat that if families were pestered there would be further restrictions. Someone understands it is in no one's best interests to have a mike shoved in mourners' faces. It helps, of course, to have the Mounties at your disposal!

"SPIN" -- HOW DID PR GET STUCK WITH THIS BUM RAP?

Every preacher who ever gave a sermon. Every salesperson or retail clerk who ever pitched a product. Most certainly every Wall Street broker. And every lawyer who ever addressed a jury. All politicians. Plus editorial writers, as well as journalists whose reporting becomes biased -- more often the case than not, since objectivity may be psychologically impossible. Each one of us when we're discussing beliefs or positions we hold with others who are neutral or disagree. We're all "spinners" -- because it simply means marshalling the data from your viewpoint, attempting to persuade others your viewpoint is legitimate.

WHY THEN IS PR SINGLED OUT FOR THIS OPPROBRIOUS APPELATION ?

1. Basically, of course, it's one more chance for journalists to slam pr. Considering the falsehoods & plagiarism media are guilty of recently, maybe they ought to throw fewer stones from inside their glass houses.

2. The word has gained cachet in book titles -- 3 in particular:

■ *PR: A Social History of Spin*, by social historian Stuart Ewen. This is a scholarly look at pr's origins from the viewpoint of the public's right to accurate information & democratic participation -- which thus makes the field look anti-social, especially in periods like the present when a monied establishment uses huge pr budgets to set the agenda.

- A valuable read for practitioners. It's the title that's damaging.

■ *The Father of Spin*, Larry Tye's biography of Eddie Bernays. A Boston Globe reporter's look at the truths & extravagances of the grand old man (as most of us knew him) & when he was at his prime. The author told [pr](#) the title was insisted upon by his publisher -- but we note he uses the phrase in strategic points of the volume. Tye tries again to settle the question whether ELB is the "father" of pr. His answer is probably correct: not the first practitioner but undoubtedly the one who gave the field its intellectual substance. In the text, Harold Burson agrees.

Side Note: In researching pr's evolution, a prime source for Ewen was the *Public Relations Journal* -- which PRSA scrapped for a glitzy tabloid that is about as far as possible from a source for serious inquiry. Maybe it should be brought back -- especially as it lost less money than its replacement (even tho "losing money" was touted as a main reason for ditching the Journal).



- Forget the title & enjoy the oft-told tale, with comments from many current practitioners & much new data, from ELB's papers in the Library of Congress & other sources.

■ The 3rd book, *Global Spin: the Corporate Assault on Environmentalism* by Sharon Beder, is a year old, hasn't had much impact & is about practice globally, not just North America. But it is an indictment that could be hard to refute -- because most of the data is verifiable or even undisputed. It does make a value judgment -- against pr as a matter of philosophy -- and that is refutable.

- Maybe the most important read of the 3. Polishes up pr's moral compass.

WHAT SHOULD THE FIELD DO ABOUT IT?

Probably not much. At least not until we see whether the word proves to be a fad & short-lived.

1. Practitioners should correct people they actually hear use the term, especially in groups
2. Writing letters to editors & similar protests will only cement the word into the vocabulary
3. For those who can't help themselves from engaging in public debate, one tactic would be to finger the bunch really responsible -- political media consultants & campaign strategists. "Spinning" to the point of lying has become part & parcel of their work -- and they're usually confused with legit practitioners.

After all, pr has been called "manipulation" for decades -- but it is not a word most people associate with the profession. Critics of this pr activity or that pr plan will grab onto it, but everyone knows you can't manipulate people in a free society where there are no longer any secrets.

Maybe that's what will happen to "spin." Reread the opening paragraph & see if you agree with the evidence.

STUDY: CEO OR LEADER IS KEY COMMUNICATOR ABOUT VISION

"The leader who *flattens* the communication hierarchy is more likely to achieve *shared vision*," conclude Betty Farmer, John Slater & Kathleen Wright in their research, "The Role of Communication in Achieving Shared Agenda Under New Organizational Leadership" (see pr 8/31 lead). Empirical support for this finding:

1. There was a statistically significant relationship between effective communication & shared vision
2. Employees or members who believe they are well-informed about the leader's vision are more likely to agree with that vision

3. The most effective communication channels were direct from the leader to members of the organization

QUESTION: HOW BEST TO COMMUNICATE THE VISION TO GET THIS RESULT?

The researchers offer these findings from their longitudinal study (3 flights of surveys of the same groups over time):

- **EXTERNAL MEDIA HELP AT FIRST.** Survey 1 found a statistically significant relationship between those who agreed with the leader's vision & those receiving info about it from external media -- the reinforcement principle. But this didn't continue to correlate as the study progressed.
- **ONGOING COMMUNICATION GAINS ATTENTION.** By the time of survey 2, the "Undecideds" had decreased from 47% to 41% -- but were still the largest group. What did change is the number of Undecideds who felt the leader *effectively communicated* the vision (50% in survey 1, 75% in survey 2).
- **CONTINUING COMMUNICATION MOVES UNDECIDEDS TO COMMIT.** By survey 3, Undecideds had fallen to 31% -- & 78% of these agreed the leader *effectively communicated* the vision. The largest category now (44%) is those who agree with the leader's vision, 90% of whom felt the leader *effectively communicated* it.
- **LEADER IS KEY COMMUNICATOR.** "This movement seems to support the importance of the communication exchange between the leader & organizational members in achieving a shared organizational agenda."
- **LEADER'S COMMUNICATION MUST INCREASE IN FREQUENCY.** Respondents reported a statistically significant increase in the frequency with which they received info about the vision from *channels relating directly to the leader*. Of the sources & channels studied (20), *only* those that related directly to the leader changed significantly over time. The other channels showed a decrease in use.
- **FLATTENING THE COMMUNICATION HIERARCHY** between the leader & the org'n seems to have had an effect. (More from them at 704/227-7491)

GIVING PRODUCTS/SERVICES & EMPLOYEE TIME BETTER THAN CASH

A Hill & Knowlton/Yankelovich Partners study turns strategic philanthropy one step closer to true social responsibility & partnering.

1. Asked which philanthropic effort they find "most impressive":

- 43% say "donating products & services"
- 37% say "volunteering employees to help"
- Only 12% say "giving a large sum of money"

2. Asked which category to support to create a favorable impression:

- 30% say education
- 21% health & welfare
- 9% environment
- 3% arts