

immediate effect include the state Dep't of Health Services, High Speed Rail Authority & the California Wellness Foundation.

IS IT REALISTIC?

Whether or not Young is able to enforce attribution remains to be seen. "The thing is that legally, there's not much we can do (if people use it without attribution). "We're hoping people will just recognize it & know it's our concept."

Whether or not it's beneficial for Young to enforce the service mark is also a question. One barrier: most keyboards aren't rigged to stamp a tiny "sm," as they are the trademark "™" symbol. Will people bother?

KEY BEHAVIORAL ELEMENT OF MEASURING RELATIONSHIPS IS ACCESS

Initiatives to evaluate relationships are vital to pr's future (last week's issue). As they evolve, measurement methodologies will be able to move beyond research conducted primarily by psychotherapists & industrial psychologists -- tho they must begin there, because that's the existing body of knowledge.

From the pr practitioner's perspective, the question to be answered is whether building relationships motivates behavior -- in the short term or over time. Those utilizing relationship-builders like Constituency Relations, Envoy, Ambassador, Customer Satisfaction Modeling, Loyalty or Value-Added Marketing, Team-Leader-As-Communicator & similar posit a progression like this:

1. **Relational behavior begins with establishing mutual access.** Stakeholders & opinion or power leaders will accept calls or read e-mails/letters -- which they wouldn't do without a relationship, even if an incipient one
2. **This usually means they'll call the org'n or its representative with complaints or queries** -- rather than blabbing negatives to others or immediately presuming the org'n is guilty when attacked or criticized
3. **Over time the relationship matures to mutuality of interests,** as each party learns of the other's concerns & hot buttons. This is expressed by stakeholders in support on issues, loyalty of purchase, feedback on what they hear said about the org'n & offering early warning on issues
4. **The challenge for pr is to get org'ns to keep up their end of mutuality** -- by helping stakeholders with their concerns & interests, beyond just handing out philanthropic dollars (tho it helps)

PROBLEM YET TO BE SOLVED

When mutuality is achieved, often peer group principles take over. This can proceed all the way to **groupthink**, or the **Abilene Principle** -- when some relational partners go along blindly with whatever the org'n does. This may seem ok -- but people so co-opted lose their opinion leadership as others detect their robot responses. An example is on advisory boards -- where it has been shown essential to change membership regularly to maintain objectivity.

BEHAVIOR PERSUASION CASE STUDY: HOW VIRGINIA BEACH GETS 75% VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION RATE FOR NON-MANDATORY RECYCLING

Residents of Virginia Beach are not required by law to recycle. They don't receive citations or tickets for slipping bottles in their garbage barrels or sneaking cans into the trash masher. Yet, this city of 430,000 manages to get a whopping **75% of its citizens to participate**. That's a huge number compared to neighboring communities -- which can only claim a participation rate of 30% or less. How does Virginia Beach do it?

REMOVE BARRIERS TO BEHAVIOR & GIVE EASY INFO

"The nature of our curbside service is user-friendly," recycling coordinator Debbie Devine told pr. "We realized a lot of people want to recycle" -- i.e. have positive **latent readiness** -- "but not everyone has the time to put a lot of work into it. So, we put several factors in place" -- which become **triggering events**:

- 1) **Easy automated pick up.** Residents are given a 90-gallon rolling cart for garbage, and a 95-gallon rolling cart for recyclables. A truck with robotic arms comes by and can grab, lift & empty the carts
- 2) **Mixed bins engineer around resistance.** Residents are just asked to dump recyclables into the proper bin. There's no need to separate cans from bottles, clear from colored, etc. or to sort newspapers
- 3) **Information-mapped instructions provided.** Virginia Beach sends out brochures that have little copy, a lot of visuals. "The brochure depicts what we accept, what we do not. There is not a lot of reading involved"
- 4) **Point-of-use directives.** Lids of the recyclable bins themselves show the kinds of material that can go in. "The directions are right there"

THE RULE OF REWARDS

Importantly, the Recycling Dep't lets people know they're doing a good job. "We're always trying to applaud the public for participating," says Devine.

- "We run quarterly ads saying, 'Because of you, we were able to do XYZ.' We also let them know where they can improve, and where we can improve."

She adds that a feeling of cohesion and a shared sense of purpose is key to the program's success. "We try to develop the idea of a partnership among the city, the public and the contractor, Tidewater Fiber."

As the rule says: **People will only do that for which they are rewarded.**



SURVEY OF CORPORATE REPUTATIONS OFFERS INSIGHTS INTO PUBLIC'S PERCEPTIONS, BIASES -- BUT WILL IT WORK EVERYWHERE?

An on-line survey aimed at revealing how Americans rate major corporations on social responsiveness, products & services and more finds the public disregards profitability & stock performance when assessing corporate character -- sticking to tried & true concepts like babies, trust & safety.

- While far superior to the *Fortune* rankings -- which poll mainly sr execs -- this new vehicle seems workable only for a handful of nat'l org'ns. What's needed, of course, is a reputation measure all org'ns can utilize.

METHODOLOGY USES "REPUTATION QUOTIENT"

The study was carried out in 2 phases. First, phone interviews with 4,500 respondents asked them to nominate companies they thought had best/worst reputations. Phase 2 surveyed 10,830 respondents to obtain detailed ratings of the 30 best-regarded companies.

The study used a Reputation Quotient (RQ), which examines how key stakeholders -- customers, employees, investors & the general public (sic) -- perceive the company. RQ scores were based on:

- **Corporate Appeal:** How much company is liked, admired, & trusted
- **Products & Services:** Perceptions of their quality, innovation, value & reliability
- **Vision & Leadership:** How much the company demonstrates clear vision, strong leadership
- **Workplace Environment:** Perceptions of how well the company is managed, how good it is to work for, & quality of employees
- **Social Responsibility:** Perceptions of the company as a good citizen in its dealings with communities, environment & employees

USURPING BABY APPEAL

Johnson & Johnson (J&J) came out as having the best reputation with an RQ of 83.4 (of a possible 100). Historically, the company has impressed upon employees its famed credo of answering first to doctors, nurses, patients & parents -- then to employees, communities &, last, shareholders.

But J&J's **targeted branding strategy is key:** the J&J label goes almost exclusively on Band-Aid & baby products -- not on its many other products -- so a brand-association exists in consumers' minds (i.e., J&J = babies, gentleness, caring). As well as being number 1 overall, J&J came in 1st in 3 categories: emotional appeal, products & services, workplace environment.

Also topping the general list were 2) **Coca-Cola** (forgiven for last summer's tainted drink scandal in Europe?) 3) **Hewlett Packard**, 4) **Intel**, & 5) **Ben & Jerry's** (the Vermont-based ice cream maker long famous for its efforts on behalf of the environment came in first in the Social Responsibility category). 6) **Southwest Airlines**, a relaxed, reliable, no-frills outfit that uses offbeat customer service tactics (e.g., dark humor during safety instruction). **Financial services co's** didn't make the cut, probably because people don't feel emotionally connected to their credit cards, says an exec of polling firm Harris Interactive, which did the survey.

FOLKS HAVE LONG MEMORIES FOR BAD CORPORATE ACTIONS

Survey also named the companies with the worst reps. *The Wall Street Journal*, which got first dibs on the study, says indications are in **Exxon's** case, people can't get past the Valdez incident -- despite numerous apologies & other initiatives. **K-Mart** is fighting hard to shed its reputation for cheap quality (Where'd ya get that, K-Mart?) but its efforts haven't yet gotten results. **Philip Morris** is still seen as a tobacco company & these days, tobacco is the devil in the minds of many.

TAKING AN ETHICAL STAND IS RISKY FOR REPUTATIONS

Supporting controversial causes, such as gay rights, Planned Parenthood, gun control etc. incited strong reactions both pro and con. E.g. **Nike** got negative reactions because of association with child labor overseas, plus marketing pricey products to poor kids who can't afford them. These notions persist, despite efforts to revamp Nike's overseas labor force & expand its line to include inexpensive athletic shoes.

Methodology was designed by the Reputation Institute, headed by NYU's Charles Fombrun, who hasn't responded to prr's requests for info. (More at www.harrisInteractive.com. Available for purchase at 212/539-9660)

NEW TWIST: PR FIRM WINS SERVICE MARK FOR COUNSELING CONCEPT

California awarded Young Com'ns Group (LA) a service mark -- a form of trademark or brand equivalent -- for the term "**emerging majority.**" This means the term is legally owned by Young to serve as a label or brand that visually identifies the firm's services. A small "sm" will accompany the phrase whenever it is used in print.

Young specializes in strategic pr -- targeting the increasingly diverse population of Calif: gays & lesbians, seniors, African-Americans, Asians & Hispanics.

- **Young's approach is that these segments should no longer be referred to as minorities**, especially in Calif. "We've been dealing with these markets for about 8 years now," acct mgr Jennifer Schlegel told prr.
- "These segments are our specialty, our target markets." This group, she says, constitutes well over half the state's population. "Rather than call them a minority, this new phrase is more positive."

HOW WILL THE MARK BENEFIT THE FIRM? THE GROUP IT'S IDENTIFYING?

Schlegel hopes the concept will be widespread & that people will associate it with the firm. Young is taking immediate steps to ensure the company owns the phrase not only in the state, but in the entire US.

Moreover, Young feels the state's decision to grant the mark **will facilitate recognition of the impact the emerging majority has on the state's economic, political, & social direction.** "When viewed collectively, these people are the majority." Clients who will put the concept into