

LIFE EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION

"I just got married as a result of a relationship that began on the web. It did not evolve from a dating service. No, it evolved in the old fashioned way, based on common interest.

- "I was a hobbyist writing essays on topics of interest & interacting with many people who shared that interest. Among them were eligible women but I had never thought of them in that way. The relationship evolved over 2 ½ years
- "Exchange of information over the web might be likened to solving a picture puzzle. You get the border done all around. Then you start to fill in pieces from the corners until pretty soon you have a lot of the picture put together. There are some big sections still missing but you know what the picture is supposed to look like. When you go to meet someone, all the pieces come together

"E-commerce, if it is personalized, can share some of these qualities. At least for me the relationships have been an important part of building my loyalty to the business. I put in an order & I get a follow-up note from a real human being who tells me how it's coming.

- "If I have a problem, I have an e-mail address & a human being I can talk to. It is much less hassle than fooling with one of those irritating voice mail systems or a message that says, 'Your message is really important to us, but all of our service representatives are helping other customers, please hold on the line ya da, ya da. If it is that damn important, why doesn't somebody answer the phone?'

The WWW will transform the world more profoundly than the printing press. Why? Because for the first time in human history communities are being created that are not locally-based, they are interest & value based. If we think of the globe as a human body, then in the past our communities were like individual freckles with a limited amount of interaction. But the web creates communities that are more like the nervous system, or the circulatory system, or the endocrine system. They exist throughout the body. Now air transportation & the immediacy of web communication are creating these new world-wide networks of friends who share common but specialized interests.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **More Professionals Unionizing.** Since the fastest growing job sector is professional positions, it's common sense for unions to organize there. The surprise is who's being organized -- & what effect it may have on internal relations challenges for practitioners (see prr 6/28). NYState psychologists have allied with American Federation Of Teachers. While managed care was reportedly a factor, so was concern psychiatrists -- a more highly educated group -- might take away business. Psychologists will be associate members of AFT -- but will have its lobbying & organizing muscle. In another case, California legislators forced U.Cal. to open Los Alamos Nat'l Lab (which U.Cal. manages for DOE) to unions -- raising the possibility world-class physicists, computer scientists & engineers could join organized labor.

¶ **E-world Stimulates, Rather Than Eliminates, Printed Materials.** Order merchandise on the web, and in the package get a catalog, perhaps coupons, probably a letter or other promo message -- all printed. No different than what comes from a mail order house. This is to be expected, of course, but it shows once again the e-world probably won't change things nearly as much as cyber gurus claim. It's analogous to the case, shown by research, that the number one way people are lured to web sites is by face-to-face recommendations of others they trust to know about such things.

1ST WTO LESSON: PEACEFUL PROTESTERS MUST TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO KEEP HOODLUMS FROM SPOILING THEIR PLEA

To Seattle came an army of 50,000 people opposed to World Trade Org'n policies, from an impressive array of coalition org'ns (prr 11/8). But their message was overshadowed -- & probably put in doubt -- by a small group that smashed windows & performed other senseless acts.

For many, tv shots of youth shattering store windows now forms their understanding of the controversy -- which in fact is based on legitimate disagreements supported by participating nations as well as the protesters. Those who train activists say protesters must take specific steps to bulletproof themselves against being derailed, including:

- **Establish strict rules** for the event -- making it clear any who don't agree to abide by them should not participate
- **Keep marchers, pickets etc in "troop formation"** -- people who know or can recognize one another & work as a group
- **Appoint "sergeants"** to lead each group, and give them a distinctive hat, armband or similar so they can always be spotted even if stampeding or violence erupts
- **Have groups spend at least some time together** to rehearse the game plan & memorize the rules
- **Be doubly certain everyone knows the "why"** of the activism, as well as the "how" -- and put it in their hands as they start off, on paper or 5x7 cards, so they can speak with One Clear Voice to inquirers or reporters (instructing these true believers not to speak to the media rarely works)
- **Train participants to tell the leader whenever an unknown person appears in the group** -- because they may be disrupters, police or opponents. [Experienced activism watchers are wondering who the hoodlums were in Seattle among the grandmothers, labor union folks, environmentalists & others. Kids out to use the situation to inflict mayhem? Planted by those opposed to the protesters' aims? In activism, anything is possible ... so organizers are responsible for trying to anticipate "anything"]
- **If violence occurs, the protesters themselves must try to stop it** -- so video images show the peaceful, legitimate folks are not the cause. This may require "bodyguards" or "protectors" in each group -- the physically strong ones -- who can rush to the scene, altho a brave grandmother with a cane may be more visually appealing!

The difficulty of overcoming rivalries & enmities to get 135 nations agreeing on world trade is symbolized by what Seattle's mayor said when 200+ were arrested: "They're anarchists from Oregon." Reminds us of the billboard on the highway from Calif. into Oregon: "Don't Californicate Oregon." Or the one at the Minnesota border: "You are about to enter North Dakota. Why?"

ACTIVIST EVENTS ARE THEATRE & TREATRICAL NORMS APPLY. Particularly important, of course, is what will appear on tv & in press photos. This must be planned, then staged.

It's certain the Seattle organizers did *not* want the image to be window smashing. Had they anticipated it & bulletproofing methods failed? Or did they believe all would be smooth?

A POWER PLANT BY ANY OTHER LOOK: BUILDER TRIES VISUAL STRATEGY TO CHANGE PERCEPTION OF GENERATING STATIONS

Sounds familiar. Reliant Energy (Houston) is drawing resistance in McHenry County, Ill., where it wants to construct a power plant. Some in the area like things just the way they are: rural, unspoiled, with rich natural & historic resources. They're concerned a new power plant will bring not only electricity but also growth, traffic & congestion.

- "There's also the issue of flood plains, wetlands, noise, emissions, a whole gamut of concerns," principle planner Jim Hogue told pr
- On the plus side, the project would provide much needed power for both the residential & business communities. And the company seems committed to working with the public

"This project is a perfect fit with our strategy to develop a portfolio of generating assets in the Midwest," vp business rels Chris Allen added. "We're committed to building a long-term relationship with the people of McHenry County, and we'll work to become a valued member of the community." Also sounds familiar.

THE PROJECT

The plant, 500 megawatts burning natural gas, would take up 125 acres. It would be a "peaking plant", only generating power when other stations go off line or are at capacity. According to media rels mgr Pat Hammond, the area has seen a population increase of 30% & lacks adequate power. "While most of the growth is happening north of Chicago (where McHenry County is located), existing power plants are south of the city. There are only so many lines that can carry power where it is needed most." Zion, a nearby nuclear station, is shut down. The power has to come from somewhere, and the community has to face the probability that if Reliant doesn't provide it, someone else will. Who will be most in tune with their needs?

AESTHETIC APPEAL

"It's always a huge challenge to bring a power station to an area," Hammond says. "People are afraid." The utility is doing its best to address concerns head on & persuade the community the plant will bring benefits to the area. Persuasion tactics have included familiar relationship-builders: public hearings, town meetings, addressing concerns face to face, meeting with opinion leaders, etc.

- Reliant is also trying something unusual: planning to change the image of power plants, literally. The mind's view of a power plant conjures negative reactions. Gray, fuming, sprawling things, associated with pollution & sprawl.
- By building something that won't clutter the landscape, Reliant hopes to endear itself to the community. "One concern that had been expressed -- not for the McHenry station but for another proposed power plant in the area -- had been aesthetics," explains Hammond. "We thought we'd take a lesson from that."

- **So the utility presented the county with a rare design: a generating station that resembles a farm.** The power plant would be housed in a red barn, with three flue gas stacks made to look like grain silos with green tops. In addition, 80% of the acreage will be preserved as open space -- part leased to the nursery that currently owns it, the rest planted with native prairie grasses & trees.

A BIG GREEN LIGHT FOR THE BIG RED BARN?

The design is eliciting all sorts of responses. Some people "think we are trying to disguise a wolf in sheep's clothing", reports Hammond. "Our intention is to make it blend in with their rural environment." Others like the design. "It is partly for aesthetics, but also for noise control," says Hogue. The stickler may be a completely different issue. The parcel borders a flood plain and construction & digging could wreak havoc with the water table.

The idea is not unique. Several plants in Europe are designed to blend in with the landscape or achieve a kind of urban architectural chic. Reliant won't know if its efforts pay off until the county decides whether or not to approve construction. That could happen as soon as year-end.

KEN MORGAN: WEB DOES CREATE TRUE RELATIONSHIPS

"There is no question in my mind that the web is another level of relationship -- far more powerful than telephone-based", writes DOE's pa trouble shooter. "Your article (last week's issue) mentions the impersonality of it." But... "As a person who just got married after meeting a woman on the web, I submit with some authority that you will find people are getting married & developing rewarding friendships from the web. Here is why:

1. **Revelatory communication.** "The web forces people to use words & images to express themselves. Thus, thru the web you can actually learn more about a person, faster, than you can in the old fashioned dating pattern. For a business, a web site can be a great way to relate to customers. Since it can be interactive, both parties (customer & vendor) can find out more about each other"
2. **More realistic expectations.** "Once you start an interaction, it does not have to be anonymous, in fact, it can be more personal than a store front interaction. In a web dating relationship, you soon start sending pictures back & forth & lots of e-mail, then you may evolve to "chat." In a business relationship a customer can have a one-on-one relationship with a real person at the business. It's faster than the mail & much better than the telephone. Since there is no expectation of calling & getting an immediate answer from so-and-so, it is less frustrating than voice mail. Yet it is fast enough that so-and-so can respond while the customer is still pretty close to the same emotional state as when they sent the e-mail"
3. **The real advantage is to specialists.** "I have developed close business relationships with specialty suppliers. These people provide me with custom services which are entangled in all sorts of personal issues. We are congratulating each on births, deaths, weddings & the like while conducting commerce. I have even sent photographs of its products in use back to the business. The businesses, I think, find this very satisfying & respond more eagerly to me the next time I contact them. I am not just a customer but a special customer, even a friend"