

2. Dummies have become synonymous with the car crash mannequins seen in auto safety ads & materials. Should an airline use any symbol that even hints at crash?

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

- ¶ IABC's new internal customer service manual shows how to apply customer service principles to strengthen day-to-day internal com'ns. Includes exercises, case studies, worksheets & sample questionnaires. Table of contents & intro are on IABC Web site: www.iabc.com. (\$150 mbrs, \$185 others from 800/776-4222.)
- ¶ Multi-media material is being integrated into publications' Web sites, say a third of respondents to a survey of print journalists. This includes audio, video & animation. Newspapers use more outside multi-media materials than mags. Don Middleberg, whose firm sponsored the "Media in Cyberspace" study, says increased multi-media use & inter-activity means practitioners must start telling stories in nonlinear ways. "Multi-media storytelling may become pr's most valuable online skill," he told pr. (More from him at 212/888-6610)
- ¶ Print still an unsurpassed medium when used at point-of-behavior. Avis is giving car renters a 3½ x 8" single sheet flyer of immense usefulness. The Travel Safety Information piece tells travelers the particular state's speed limits, seat belt laws, child restraint regulations, whether right turns on red are ok, police emergency numbers, if pedestrians have right of way, local radio stations. Who hasn't been stymied by such queries while in a strange city? Flip side offers safety tips & guide to child safety. Color is, of course, company's trademark red & white. So easy, so obvious, why hasn't everyone in this biz done it?
- ¶ Speaking of honest marketing (pr 4/5/99), shame on *PRWeek*. After sending free trial subscriptions to everyone & his cousin, now it sends an invoice stating "Thank you for your subscription order." But recipients haven't placed any order. This is the old "maybe they'll send the check without noticing" tactic for which publishers have been severely criticized.
- ¶ IR people would make good additions to boards of small-medium-sized companies because of their shareholder expertise, says James Kristie, editor & publisher of *Directors & Boards*. He says trend working against this is that shareholder activists "only want to see the CEO & maybe one other insider on the board," meaning the pres or CFO. (More from Investor Access Corp, 212/679-0652)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORED. Howard I.B. Charbeneau posthumously named IABC's '99 Foundation Lifetime Friend for "leadership in advancing the Research Foundation's goal of serving communicators thru

research, education & professional development." Charbeneau developed the Foundation "Friends" program & served in numerous leadership positions in IABC.

JOURNALISTS SAY THEIR STANDARDS SLIPPING, CREDIBILITY FAILING

Lack of credibility is most often cited by news media as the top problem facing journalists today, finds a survey by Pew Research Ctr for The People & The Press. Report suggests journalists increasingly agree with public criticism of their profession & the declining quality of their work.

"A large majority of news professionals sense a degradation of the culture of news," write Bill Kovach, Tom Rosenstiel & Amy Mitchell, of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, in their commentary on the findings. They depict the switch as being:

- From a culture "steeped in verification & respect for the facts"
- "Towards one that favors argument, opinion-mongering, haste & infotainment"

GOODBYE REPORTING, HELLO CREATING THE NEWS

- Across all media surveyed -- print, tv, radio & the Internet -- more journalists say the press drives controversies rather than just reports the news, when covering personal & ethical behaviors.
- Nearly 50% of respondents say loss of public trust is a leading cause of declining news audiences.
- TV news people are more likely to cite quality issues as journalism's top problem. Although financial pressures are evident in all media, they are more apparent in tv & radio, particularly national tv.
- Media execs & reporters disagree about what hurts news coverage. National journalists (53%) claim that growing financial & biz pressures are hurting coverage. But 59% of execs believe financial pressures are changing the way things are accomplished -- rather than reducing news quality. Despite differences in opinion, most journalists rate their leadership highly!

PRESSURE TO MAKE THEIR NUMBERS DELETES THOUGHT ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

"The numbers suggest journalists & execs have yet to think deeply about what is going on here," notes the Committee of Concerned Journalists. "Increasingly, mgmt & ownership expect the newsroom to share a sense of common purpose. A schism over values is more consequential than it might have been...because of the enormity of the challenges facing the profession & the way the industry operates."



- **Most say they are out of touch with the public & blame themselves for declining audiences.** Execs & journalists believe the public is overloaded by news & info. Public doesn't share this view -- 2/3 say they like having many info sources available [but do they use them?]
- **Two-thirds say they've turned to infotainment to attract readers or viewers,** in both nat'l & local media. More local news people (46%) than nat'l (31%) think what the public is interested in should be given a lot of consideration in coverage decisions [market researching what's news?]
- **The press values its watchdog role more than the public.** Despite driving controversies rather than reporting the facts, media personnel continue to value high standards for accuracy, sourcing & objectivity. Most of the nat'l media (3/4) say remaining neutral is a core principle of journalism; only 52% of those working in Internet news agree.
- **Journalists under age 35 are less likely to know about their news orgn's ethics programs** -- & most likely to want more of an organized effort.

Survey queried 552 media execs, mid-level editors & producers, & working reporters & editors from both nat'l & local media. It was conducted in association with the Committee of Concerned Journalists. (More from Pew Research Ctr, 202/293-3126; www.people-press.org)

RHODY: OUTSIDE FORCES CAN "MAKE OR BREAK" CEOs & ORG'NS

Biz school may teach theory & mgmt but it doesn't prepare CEOs & mgrs for the outside forces that affect org'ns today, says Ron Rhody in *The CEO's Playbook*. In his concisely written book, Rhody contends **pr is really a CEO function.**

"You have to manage the marketing of your reputation," he advises CEOs. "Reputation suggests character, caring, responsible action -- a 2-way relationship of the firm with constituents creating inter-relationships & mutual benefits."

USE MEDIA -- WHEN IT MAKES SENSE; WHEN POSSIBLE, GO DIRECT

Rhody, now consulting after an award-filled career as sr pr ofcr at Bank of America & Kaiser Aluminum, defines the CEO's relationship with the media as targeting, then working with, key media -- national print outlets that set the tone & agenda for other coverage, trade press, home town media, big biz & financial magazines. Other primary pr advice for CEOs:

1. **Get to know your key constituencies.** In most cases they are: employees; the media; consumer/environmental/minority activists; shareholders; federal/local/state gov't; & special interest groups. **"An orgn's most important constituency is its employees"**

- *"What is of tremendous importance to you are the opinions held by your constituents. What counts are what the people who can help you the most or hurt you the most think -- and are likely to do something about the things you're doing or want to do."*
- 2. **Manage perceptions** because they're more important than facts. The facts depend upon whose are being used & how
- 3. **Tell the story truthfully, your way, & at the time an event is unfolding** -- before you're pre-empted. Fashion arguments appealing to constituents & bypass media if necessary
- 4. **Manage crises before they happen.** Most "disasters waiting to happen (self-inflicted, bad mgmt decisions, product deficiencies, consumer outrage)" can be avoided
 - *"When a crisis is up & running, it's too late to be managed. All that can be done is damage control. The only time a crisis can be 'managed' is before it begins." Important: get messages to key constituents directly, not via media.*
- 5. **Learn "cooperative confrontation"** with special interest groups & activists. Find out their objectives & see if there's common ground
- 6. **When working with legislators,** remember they're concerned about what their constituents think. CEO must sell to opinion leaders in their constituencies
- 7. **Develop ability to identify & go directly to key constituents** -- and key media, as it becomes more difficult to get fair media coverage
- 8. **CEOs must find "human-ness"** to be successful in today's changing biz environment & operate in the public interest. They must also manage for the long run & make customer satisfaction a company goal

(Available this summer from Academy Publishing, 916/736-2546; \$19.95)

UNINTENDED PR CONSEQUENCES DAMAGING WHEN THEY'RE SYMBOLIC

United Airlines has replaced actors in its in-flight safety videos with dummies. Their computer animation movements are -- well -- wooden & unreal. More important, a doubly dangerous symbolic message is sent:

1. **Would anyone ever call their customers dummies?** Why then go the next step & show them as dummies? Is United by analogy saying its passengers are dummies?

Book is valuable 3rd party voice for counseling execs by outlining what the media is/isn't; media goals; the business of the media; rules for working with them; & how to use the press effectively -- all the things you've said that maybe weren't heard.