

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Time Is Better Than Money, According to Toronto Practitioner Survey.** An increase in personal time is more important than padding the paycheck, finds a survey of pr execs. Sample included practitioners in both firms & pr departments, ranked the need for personal time as a top priority and indicated that job satisfaction is not driven by salary alone. "We were fascinated to find that our survey showed no correlation between monetary compensation & job satisfaction," said researcher Shelagh O'Donnell, 1 of 4 students in the PR Certificate Program at Ryerson Polytechnic U which conducted the study. [But this is consistent with most research on this topic] Researchers mailed surveys to 190 practitioners, received 65 responses (34%). The team also interviewed 6 practitioners in depth. "The need for personal time ranked highest among the practitioners we interviewed in person and those who responded to our survey," said another researcher. "PR professionals want to spend time with their children, caring for elderly parents, on hobbies or contributing to the community."

¶ **Same Thing Is Happening to Professional Publications as to Mainstream Media** -- offering entertainment rather than what readers need-to-know to serve clients & employers. Appears to be so in many fields. In pr, *PRWeek & Tactics* are examples. If they are influential, even subliminally, practitioners reading them can go in opposite direction from what research, evolution of the field & experience suggest ought to be the forward trends. Tho they touch other topics, both scream at the top of their voices that Publicity & Celebrity are everything. Yet for the great majority of clients this approach must be viewed critically. Will under the radar, 1-on-1 & other more powerful strategies serve these clients better, instead of the old-fashioned one-size-fits-all approach of publicity & making the CEO a celeb? Granted, some clients think this is what they need. But giving it to them for that reason is like a doctor prescribing medicine the patient requests, even if it will not help him/her. Has this situation become so pervasive that pr has been marginalized as a commodity -- in which case clients ask only for this (via a competitive RFP) so that's all a practitioner is asked to provide? (Can you imagine a doctor, lawyer or accountant being hired on a competitive, cost-specific RFP?) In such times, prr is glad to be able to grow its reader base. In case of PRSA's *Tactics*, it's instructive that the Society gave up the field's standard medium -- *PR Journal* -- & every other pr orgn's pub'ns serve practitioners' needs & promote the orgn's projects: IABC's *Communication World*, CASE *Currents*, NSPRA's newsletters, PAC & NIRI media et al.

¶ **"Good Design Always Incorporates an Element of the Unexpected"** postulates graphic psychology specialist Harley Wagner (Grand Rapids). "It must, or it would never get anyone's attention." Apt illustration of this principle is Scandinavian Airlines' holiday card. Its contrast with the great bulk of heavily illustrated, multi-color cards is immediate. On a light grey background, in about 14-pt type, c&lc, in silver ink, are the words "Do you know what a snowflake tastes like?" -- printed in 2 lines slightly above center flush right. Inside left page is b&w scene of a snowy woods. Opposite page says simply "Season's Greetings" (18-pt, c&lc, in red), and below it in about 12-pt, c&lc b&w, "Our very best wishes for the season. Scandinavian Airlines." Most of this page is white space. On the back page is a tiny SAS logo & barely readable notation the company is giving to Save The Children. Superb understatement. And, senders sign their names.

¶ **"The Public Be Damned!"** said Commodore Vanderbilt -- meaning what today we'd call the "general public" or mass audience. History in turn damns him for saying it. But practitioners know it doesn't exist now, due to fragmentation of interests & other causes discussed in this issue's lead article. An "asymmetrical" society, one scholar calls it. Have we come full circle, even if with less harmful intent?

NEW LOOK AT INACTIVE PUBLICS THEORIZES THEY CAN BE & MUST BE REACHED -- REGARDLESS OF THE DIFFICULTY

Practitioners' conventional focus has been on *active publics* -- strategic constituencies that can directly and immediately impact an org'n. Many scholars & practitioners have probed the possibility of engaging & motivating *inactive publics* -- which usually account for about 90% of stakeholders.

Kirk Hallahan of Colorado State, a rising research star after a career as a practitioner, assesses the environment in which publics form & operate by looking at these elements:

- **When does a public become a public?** When it senses a problem, recognizes the problem creates issues & organizes to take action (Grunig's paradigm, prr 10/15/98). If these steps don't occur, no public has been formed -- even if the people involved are stakeholders. People must feel "connected", the issue must have personal relevance or consequence (enduring or situational). [It can be a major error to assume publics will form before there's evidence they have or will]
- **People enter into relationships that vary in importance**, as shown by two prevailing theories:
 1. Resource dependency theory -- they seek needed resources
 2. Social exchange theory -- they compare benefits to costs
- **Publics are influenced by 2 factors, involvement & knowledge**

	<i>Low Involvement</i>	<i>High Involvement</i>
<i>High Knowledge</i>	Aware Publics	Active Publics
<i>Low Knowledge</i>	Inactive Publics	Aroused Publics



BASED ON THESE FACTORS, HE RECLASSIFIES PUBLICS INTO 5 GROUPINGS:

1. High knowledge + high involvement = **Active Publics**, the stakeholders who care about the subject, i.e. find it very relevant to their situation now or in the near future -- usually about 10%
2. High involvement + low knowledge = **Aroused Publics**, likely to be dangerous & a prime target for risk communication strategies
3. High knowledge + low involvement = **Aware Publics**, with latent readiness to get involved
4. Low knowledge + low involvement = **Inactive Publics**, but now far less than the traditional 90%. An early scholar called them "the obstinate audience" since they are unlikely to seek information

Hallahan is working on a study of how groups proceed thru these classifications, i.e. the boxes in the chart. He is concerned that pr theory has not gone deeply enough into com'n processes -- advertising has explored them in detail -- to devise "actionable strategies" practitioners can pursue for dealing with aroused, aware & especially inactive publics.

A fifth group, with no knowledge & no involvement, is a **Non-Publics**, even if they may technically be stakeholders, i.e. people would be impacted & therefore should care.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Inactive publics are large, potentially important constituents for most org's -- & many pr programs are aimed primarily at them, e.g. to sell products or gain voters. Therefore, they can be just as important as highly active relationships.

- But org's must **seek out** these groups because of their "unrecognized or marginal" interest levels
- They are, after all, the ground from which aroused, aware & active publics spring

Hallahan feels a potential way to engage the inactive-public can be the M-A-O model -- enhancing their **Motivation, Ability & Opportunity to process messages**, thus creating **awareness**. pr will summarize his review of the tactics researchers have identified in these 3 categories in a forthcoming t&t.

CLOUT OF GAY PUBLIC MOVES TO FOREFRONT WITH TARGETED APPEALS, BUT SEGMENT WANTS CHANGES NOT PITCHES

The gay public, long ignored by the marketing efforts of mainstream firms, is finding itself the focus of targeted appeals. *Wall Street Journal* reports ads tested in gay publications such as the U.K. magazine, *Attitude*, are now being seen in mainstream venues. The advertisers are big players like American Express, Absolut Vodka & IKEA.

Other marketers, such as Anheuser Busch & Miller Brewing, don't necessarily feature supposedly gay people or gay-oriented messages in their ads, but are spending hefty sums to place regular ads in gay-oriented magazines. Anheuser Busch, for example, spent \$260K last year in *Out & the Advocate*. Coors began courting gays after fighting off the long-running boycott against the company in '84.

SEGMENT WANTS TANGIBLE BENEFITS, NOT ADVERTISING STROKES

According to NYC-based Brandfutures, other organizations are finding more subtle ways to compete for what it calls the "pink dollar." Some sponsor events such as "Gay Pride Week," others are making donations to gay-related causes. British Airways sponsors the Rainbow Card, an internationally accepted Visa that supports gay & lesbian causes.

- But a survey by researchers Greenfield Online shows that over half of gay consumers are unaware or indifferent of such efforts on their behalf. And, 80% of the gay people surveyed by Greenfield say the most important show of support a company can give is tangible benefits, such as insurance coverage & other support for domestic partners.

Brandfutures predicts marketers will soon learn to segment the gay public according to values, age, lifestyle choices, etc. It also forecasts the proliferation of products & services for graying gays, plus such focused efforts as 24-hour syndicated cable channels dedicated to gay audiences.

ONE CAUTIONARY NOTE:

Survey by Yankelovich finds gays tend to be better educated than the average individual -- but they're not

necessarily more affluent, as has been the popular notion.

- As a market segment, however, they account for big bucks.
- Their educational status makes gays valuable & concerned issue allies

BRUCE WILLIS? BIG DEAL... SURVEY SHOWS CELEB ENDORSEMENTS NO INDICATOR OF CORPORATE CITIZENRY -- BUT AIDING EDUCATION IS

According to a survey from Hill and Knowlton & Yankelovich, when people evaluate org'l citizenship, celebrity spokespeople don't carry much weight. The research, which surveyed 1000 Americans, found:

- **What influences people most** in deciding whether or not a company is a good citizen is the cause itself (42%). Next, respondents (31%) are impressed if a company's employees or execs volunteer their time for the cause. Only 6% think having a celebrity associated with the cause is influential, and even fewer (4%) feel corporate advertising is indicative of a company's corporate citizenship. "Consumers have to believe in the cause to believe in the company that supports it," says H&K's Judy Hamby.
- **Most base opinions on media** (33%), personal experience (17%) & word of mouth (15%).
- **As for causes**, most people are impressed by companies that support **education** (30%), followed by **health & welfare** (21%). Only 10% put the **environment** ahead of other causes.
- But most (59%) believe in spreading the wealth & are most impressed with companies that use philanthropic dollars to support a variety of causes. The researchers recognize the difficulty this finding presents for org's, since "scattershot" spending can yield low-impact results