

- **Nothing new in fundamentals of media placement:** a) know your source, b) know who you are pitching to, c) know how that media channel operates – d) and for pete's sake make sure you're leaving editors with phone numbers [Do pr pros forget *that*?!]

Other tips & tactics offered test the relevancy of your pitch – is it redeeming or just fluff, and timing is everything. Some tricks editors are using you may want to be aware of:

- **Screening calls with caller id** (Crain's NY editor says if you don't have a NY area code, chances are your call will go unanswered)
- **Verdict is still out on e-mailing press releases** – auto delete & key word red flags are popular with editors (e.g., words like, "first," "best," or "only" merit delete)
- **Attachments are a big no-no** – IT departments are mandating no attachments be opened. Thank the LUV Bug for that!

One interesting prediction from Media Relations 2000 conference. Media relations practitioners will soon be called, "word-of-mouth generators," believes Mary Furlong, Chair, ThirdAge.com. Another word for the wise for many org's: the power of chat rooms & message boards are yet to be tapped, both by org's and the average consumer.

ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

- ¶ **Heard at a Professional Conference:** "Which sessions did you attend this morning?" he asked. "I was in my room picking up my e-mail," she responded. She paid from \$400 – 3,000 to attend, depending on proximity to the meeting site, & did what she'd do back at the office. Couldn't most – probably all – of that have waited a day or 2 until she got back? The same lack of priority is seen in those who leave a session to answer their cell phones. Someone should do a study on how many such calls really qualify as *urgent*. Besides missing what may be the key points of a presentation, there's the question of good manners – this can be very disruptive to others. Establishing protocols so that only the most urgent messages get thru can't be that difficult.
- ¶ **The Open Question Whether it's Possible to Build Cyber-Relationships** gathered more data during the election. All parties had extensive programs to get out the vote. But how do you do this difficult task successfully? *USAToday's* headline suggested a snapshot of where things stand now, at least: "Internet's potential to increase turnout is unproven. Ads are 'next to useless'. What is *known* to work? The personal touch." Paid staff going door to door & burning up phone lines is still the standard. But automated phone calls from the candidates themselves or other political stalwarts may have been the biggest change. Experts say the unanswered question about e-mail appeals is whether they're personal enough. Perhaps PRSA Fdn's finding in its credibility study is the key: the spokesperson today is sometimes more important than the message.
- ¶ **Prr Erred in Reporting a Global PR Mistake (10/30).** K. Sriramesh's sneaker case should have noted, in his words: "The captain of the Indian cricket team, named Mohammed Azharuddin, was asked to endorse & sign Reebok sneakers in India. Whereas Reebok was replicating the marketing strategy used in the West, a similar strategy boomeranged in India because the Muslim population (over 100 million strong) thought it was blasphemous to put the name Mohammed (the Prophet) on shoes, which are considered polluting."

TEENS – CRITICAL MARKET & OPINION FORMATION GROUP – FACE ETHICAL DILEMMAS & VIOLENCE BUT ALSO CARE ABOUT CAUSES

Youth constitute a huge market, with money to spend as never before. And their influence on adults is unparalleled in an era when opinion leadership can come from anyone with expertise & a smattering of trustworthiness. On new economy issues, generation.com has been cutting edge, for instance. Also, they can vote (even if too few do). What is known about this audience is constantly changing.

- Yet teens are inexperienced in the deeper aspects of life & society, so are in a **critical stage of forming attitudes & behavior patterns that will guide them as adults**

TEENS & ETHICS: LACK OF INTEGRITY INDICATES "HOLE IN MORAL OZONE"

Preliminary findings of a new study indicate many American teens frequently lie, cheat & even show up

for class drunk, according to "Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth," developed by the Josephson Inst of Ethics (Marina Del Ray). Many kids: a) think it's okay to hit someone when they're angry; b) may be drunk at school when they do it; c) find if they desire a gun, they can easily get one.

The Institute concludes this mix amounts to a "*toxic cocktail*," i.e., a recipe for violence

- **Cheating.** 71% admit they cheated on an exam at least once in the past year (45% 2 or more times)
- **Lying.** 92% lied to their parents in the past year (79% 2 or more times); 78% lied to a teacher (58% 2 or more times). More than 1 in 4 (27%) say they would lie to get a job
- **Stealing.** 40% of males & 30% of females say they stole something from a store in the past year
- **Drunk at School.** Nearly 1 in 6 (16%) say they have been drunk in school during the past year (9% were drunk 2 or more times) [Can this be accurate ... or is it braggadocio? If accurate ... wow!]
- **Propensity Toward Violence.** 68% say they hit someone because they were angry in the past year (46% did so at least twice), and nearly half (47%) say they could get a gun if they wanted to (for males, 60% say they could)

The Institute's Tom DeCair says **girls' behavior was not much better than boys'**. "We don't have a breakdown yet, but we know that the girls are fairly violent, too," he told prr. (Info on differences according to sex will be available at a later date)

Institute began biennial testing in '92. Until '98, there was a steady increase in deviant behaviors. "Between '96 & '98, kids who said they cheat went from 64% to 70%." This year, however, behaviors have leveled off. "It hasn't gotten significantly worse." It's a relief, he says, since the researchers were wondering just how high the levels could go.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR SEEN IN DATING

Another study, by Liz Claiborne as part of its "Women's Work" program, finds 31% of teens have experienced dating violence. While later teen years are known to be times of lessened parental influence, nonetheless fewer than 25% have even brought the subject up for discussion with parents.

- **Communication sources teens rely on.** What information they have on the topic comes from friends (92%) – the typical peer networks so prevalent with this group. Other information sources are magazines/books (91%), school (88%), tv/movies (74%) & the Net (52%)
- **Teens influence here can be important.** "They're a key component in ending relationship abuse. Imagine a whole generation that does not tolerate this behavior"

MOVEMENT TO EFFECT CHANGE

The Institute study was pre-released to coincide with Character Counts! Week, an initiative of the Character Coalition (CC). In '93, after the release of its first study, the Institute launched CC, a national, diverse partnership of schools, communities, education & human-service org's, which strive to instill the "6 Pillars of Character" – 1) trustworthiness, 2) respect, 3) responsibility, 4) fairness, 5) caring, 6) citizenship – via individual & joint programs. "The coalition has grown from 27 in '93 to over 450 now," founder Michael Josephson told prr. "Members include the YMCA, NEA, 4-H – pretty much all the major youth related organizations." This & similar initiatives are pr opportunities.

To become an effective, broad-based, grassroots group, CC had to overcome 2 major hurdles:

1. **Politics.** "We had to form non-partisan alliances." That means Bill Bennett is involved, but so is Marian Wright Edelman. While Joe Lieberman sits on the Coalition's committee for character development, George W. Bush channeled a \$million grant to the effort in Texas. The point, says Josephson, is that character development is everyone's concern, regardless of political affiliation
2. **Religion.** CC had to get around 2 tricky mindsets: a) that it was moving religion into schools & b) that it was leaving religious faith out. Training & community based programs allowed CC to win fellowship from both camps

"We're trying to get into the schools & make character development a central goal, not to replace education but to supplement it." He says the hope is that by using a consistent language with kids, the lessons of good character will be reinforced & better understood.

CC offers training seminars, books & videos, & the "Victory with Honor Program," to encourage ethics in sports, which has participation from the major universities, as well as sports celeb endorsements. (More from DeCair at 310/306-1868 or www.charactercounts.org.)

LIZ CLAIBORNE'S MATERIALS

As part of its goal of creating a society without abuse, the company is offering a teen handbook, "What You Need to Know about Dating Violence." The publication is also being made available on www.Alloy.com, which has a database of 3 1/2 million teens & reaches over 10 million monthly.

This is the company's 3rd publication on avoiding or preventing violence (pr 8/9/99). (Copies from 800/449-STOP; or www.lizclaiborne.com for downloading)

ORG'NS THAT SUPPORT CAUSES WIN TEEN LOYALTY & DOLLARS

Another new study finds a huge increase in number of teenagers likely to switch brands – to one associated with a cause they like: 89% now say they will, vs. 27% last year. Even if this number is overstated, it's clear a competitive edge in the \$150B market is social responsibility programming.

Cone/Roper Cause-Related Teen survey finds, when price & quality are equal – which in today's global competition is normal – 85% are likely to switch vendors or retailers, as well as brands.

- "This significant increase in support of cause marketing confirms that today's teens – growing up in a world of school shootings, high divorce rates & dual-career parents – are **looking for ways to connect with & play a positive role in society**," believes Carol Cone of the sponsoring pr strategy firm, which specializes in linking companies with causes
- "Teens today are leveraging their purchasing power & technological prowess to impact the issues they care about to regain a sense of traditional values & community" is her analysis

OTHER IMPORTANT FINDINGS

1. 81% of teens believe org's have a responsibility to support causes & reward them with *loyalty*
2. 91% value org's & products that support causes & 87% will continue to buy from them
3. 86% will tell friends about companies committed to causes
4. Teen girls are more supportive of cause initiatives than boys – including more likely to feel org's are not doing enough to impact social issues
5. Support of causes (68%) plays a larger role than price (50%), advertising (48%) or celebrity endorsements (23%); donation to a cause outranks all these factors (71%)

With school violence teens' #1 concern (60%), 2 examples of company linkage to this issue are Levi's partnership with PAX, an anti-gun violence org'n, & Chevrolet sponsoring S.A.V.E. (Students Against Violence Everywhere), a student-run group empowering teens to resolve conflicts peacefully. (More from Anne Chan at 617/227-2111 or achan@coneinc.com)

STILL NO SILVER BULLET ON DEALING WITH MEDIA AS THE ENVIRONMENT, THE ORG'NS & THE CHANNELS ALL CHANGE

It's all in the relationship – quality, trust & 2-way com'n. That hasn't changed, nor given human nature should we expect it will. Wisdom from several meetings & seminars on media over the past months reveals disagreement among journalists themselves.

- **Editors & producers contradict one another about the best way for practitioners to deliver their clients' messages** – should we e-mail, phone or fax releases & suggestions? Is the formal release dead?
- **Most advice focuses on establishing a relationship with the editor of choice.** But is that smart when you may need to work with several different dep'ts at a large medium?