

journalists enter the workforce, Webpages & the Internet will play an even more significant role as part of the complete media kit. What they advise practitioners to do:

1. **Make sure your Webpages reflect your latest message.** (In a separate session, Alaska Airlines was presented as an excellent example of how a company's home page was swiftly & thoughtfully modified to assist with information dissemination during a crisis)
2. **Put contact phone numbers on your Webpage** – simple, but *Boston Globe* tech ed Hiawatha Bray was “stunned” over how many Websites fail to convey basic contact information at the beginning
3. **Support hard copy press kits with identical on-line versions.** Offer transferable digital images inside your on-line, password protected pressroom (credentials still mean something). You'll serve both the ink & Web journalists
4. **Don't expect a reply** to your carefully crafted & compelling e-mail pitch – unless a relationship exists

Panelists included an AP bureau chief, a magazine managing ed, a Business Week bureau chief & Bray.

CRISIS PREPARATION & COMMUNICATION IN A HOAX BOMB THREAT

As reported to prr by a parent, here's how one middle school principal followed basic crisis management rules – that will work for any org'n – by communicating essential, concise & immediate information directly to parents. Each student came home at the end of the school day with a note from the principal. **In addition to providing specific details of the day's events, the note:**

1. **Allays fear:**
 “we immediately notified [authorities]”
 “we . . . evacuated the building for a time period we believe is safe”
 “our building sweep was complete”
2. **Answers anticipated questions:**
 “in accordance with our emergency plan . . .”
 “This event confirms the emergency response plan developed in cooperation with [police & fire] departments is effective”
3. **Advocates a strong position:**
 “Our communities should refuse to be held ‘hostage’ to the irresponsible actions of an individual. We will work closely with the central office, police dep't & other officials to apprehend & prosecute any individual who interferes with the education of your children”
4. **Conveys teamwork & resiliency:**
 “Our staff and students were exceptionally patient, cooperative and understanding throughout this evacuation. Please share your praise with them”

School has 1200 students. No doubt a skeleton of a letter had been prepared & stored as part of the school's emergency preparedness – to ensure rapid response to the audience that mattered most.

A TRIGGERING EVENT BY ANOTHER NAME IS . . . STILL VALUABLE

The 3 vital skills in 21st C. pr are ability to: 1) utilize **triggering events**; 2) create **symbolic communications**; 3) design programs that build relationships with **opinion leaders**. Least understood & utilized of these is the first – and now 2 creative people offer insight, but use different terms:

1. **INTEL'S ANDY GROVE CALLS THEM “INFLECTION POINTS”** – the point when the balance of forces shifts from the old structure, the old ways of doing business & the old ways of competing, to the new. Marking when this shift actually occurs may involve elements of many social science theories. Philosophically, it's the attempt to define the straw that breaks the camels' back.

So think about it in an organizational sense – what actually creates these triggering events, these inflection points?

- **First a storm begins to brew** – this can occur over a period of weeks, months or years
- **Second, cognitive dissonance occurs** – i.e. you become aware that within the walls of your organization the talk is not being walked
- **Then comes the inflection point**, the triggering event. This paves the way for change to occur: behavior to change, a new set of systems, or methods of managing takeover & other trauma

There are challenges: 1) This occurs simultaneously thruout an organization & therefore resistance surfaces. 2) With this change you may have to start all over again. 3) Within any organization, multiple inflection points – periods of weakened perceptions of stability – can erode the trust of both internal & external audiences. (From Grove's *Only The Paranoid Survive*, Doubleday 1996)

2. **“TIPPING POINTS” IS THE TERM** used by *New Yorker* writer Malcolm Gladwell. Contrary to prevailing wisdom & focus group mktg, as an article about his work puts it, “a few individuals or a single haphazard event can set off a social epidemic that profoundly alters the culture.” PR pros who learn to recognize these can tie appeals & messages to the tipping point with powerful effect.
 - Gladwell believes ideas “often follow the same rules of contagion that govern infectious diseases” & sometimes big changes flow from small events, often very quickly
 - Some cases of tipping points: 1) *Sesame Street* tipped a revolution in early childhood education; 2) Nearly dead “Hush Puppies” became a fashion trend because a small group of hip New Yorkers rediscovered the comfortable brushed-suede shoes; 3) Paul Revere's door-to-door messaging changed a nation. (From Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*, Little Brown 2000)



STUDY OF RELIGIOSITY REVEALS ATTITUDINAL CHANGE: OLD TIME RELIGION & BELIEFS NOW APPEAL MAINLY TO OLDER AMONG US

Only 1 of 9 Americans does not belong to any organized religion, a Scripps Howard News Service poll finds. But this group comprises 24 million – making it **second in size only to Roman Catholics**. While it's unclear whether religious ambiguity is a growing trend, it does seem to be characteristic of a specific demographic group. "We did an analysis of the roughly 10% who answered 'no affiliation' & found they tend to be disproportionately young, male & single," correspondent Tom Hargrove told prr. **"People who belong to a religious denomination are older & have children."**

RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES VARY ACCORDING TO AGE

"While we did not see clear evidence of a trend, we see that **the face of spirituality is changing**," says Hargrove.

- **Younger adults, e.g. are more likely to believe in the occult.** Interestingly, there doesn't seem to be a decline of religious interest in younger people, just a variation in beliefs. "Interest in spiritual matters are not generational, but That Old Time Religion is not as powerful among the young"
- **Participation in religious services is lower among young adults also**, as 17% report they don't participate. Only 7% of those 65+ report they don't attend. Other drivers:

PARENTHOOD: Having children seems to be a pivot point of deciding to join a church because of the structure & support a church can provide to young parents. What other changes vital to practitioners occur along with this?

GEOGRAPHY: An important factor in the decision to participate in organized religion. Residents of large cities – especially urban areas in the Northeast or on the Pacific Coast – are much less likely to attend church regularly than people from small towns & rural regions in the Midwest or South.

Single adults without children are more than twice as likely to be religiously indifferent than are married people who are raising or have raised children. Only 8% of married-with-children households are not involved in organized religion, compared to 18% of adults who are childless and single.

POLITICS: People who are unaligned in terms of religion tend to be politically unaligned, also. 16% who say they are "independent" of any party loyalties have no religious preferences, compared to 9% of self-professed "strong Democrats" & 6% of "strong Republicans." Also, most religiously unaffiliated are more likely to identify themselves as "somewhat liberal" or "very liberal" than are those who participate in organized religion.

EDUCATION: The study found education has little or no impact on religious affiliation. College graduates of the same generation are no more or less likely to participate in organized religion than people of similar age who never graduated from high school.

INCOME: There are slightly more non-religious individuals in lower income groups, tho the study didn't show a strong linkage between income level & religious affiliation.

The "multi" or "trend" study gathered data from 7 Scripps studies conducted in the past 4 years. In all, they surveyed 6,705 adults from all 50 states. (More from 202/408-1484, or www.shns.com.)

INTERNET EXEC RON SEGE OF LYCOS SHARES HIS VERSION OF 10 LESSONS LEARNED AT PRSA'S TECH2000

1. If you're going to grow – grow fast
2. No one knows you're a dog on the Web – brand is everything
3. Go where the money is – and include the international market
4. Sex sells, but infrastructure pays the rent (and "MP3" beats "sex" now as the most frequent search engine phrase)
5. Design matters. A lot. Newbies tend to clutter sites with too many images. And consider people want to do one or all of these 3 things: find it/buy it/talk about it
6. It's not your kids' Net anymore. Internet users are skewing older, more middle America and poorer. Early geeks were successful because they were creating for fellow geeks. Now, Internet marketers require same research & communications tools depended upon by traditional marketers
7. Be great at what you're good at. Don't dream of boiling the ocean: being unfocused is deadly
8. It's hard to replace the foundation once the building is up. Make sure your pr, hr & internal systems are scalable from the get-go
9. Profit is not a four-letter word. Fundamentals of money in the bank & earnings per share will influence where the chips, so to speak, will fall
10. Portals alone won't get you what one good business development person can

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY REMAIN THE SAME; JOURNALISTS DESCRIBE STRATEGIES NECESSARY TO SUCCEED WITH THEM IN THE CHANGING COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT

Several low-tech components remain attractive & important to senior journalists who addressed several hundred practitioners at Tech2000, PRSA Technology Section's annual conference:

- **Pitch letters** that acknowledge a journalist's interest & history with a specific subject
- **Snail mail**
- **Media kits** one can peruse, stuff in a briefcase & possibly save to reconsider
- **Relationships** with trusted practitioners

Turns out journalists at major papers seem to be lagging behind in grasping the brass ring of electronic information gathered at light speed. There are more journalists than we might expect still sitting at dumb terminals & dependent on their morgue & newspaper library for research. E-mails as by-lines are hotly debated. AP is just now including Websites within reported stories for readers interested in additional information.

Electronic journalism is nascent. Yet they know they need to Netify simply to compete. As more journalists become CAR trained (Computer Assisted Reporting), and as more freshly-minted, Netified