

Chicago, the Economic Club of Detroit, City Club of Cleveland & the Commonwealth Club of California. 55 org'l participants included Honeywell, Merrill Lynch, Entergy, Duke Power & Delta Airlines. **Highlights about what makes a great event:**

1. **SPEAKER IS KEY: Vision.** It's important they are not scripted to an orgn's promo, project passion & gears his or her talk to the audience – which for these venues are CEOs or managing partners. They are not impressed with financials. "If the CEO is speaking just to speak it's really not worth anything," says Heiss. The introverted CEO of a decade or two ago is being replaced by the exciting individual who looks outside the box & projects a vision. "Companies that do a lot of cause-related marketing have shown a huge ROI; people will pay a high price for a product that stands for something and that is tied right into the CEOs vision."

Challenge audience. One forum leader noted that a CEO challenged the audience to be "competitive in spirit." "One way we can measure that is the response from the audience to the pertinent speaker, which makes it a great event," he says.

Substantive & relevant. Tailor talk to the audience, give timely & relevant information.

Interactive. Dialog with the audience, also humor, leaves all feeling well served.

2. **TECHNOLOGY:** Increasingly, forums are making use of Web technologies including web casting, on-line replays & cyber membership. "I can be in Australia, asking questions of a speaker in Boston," says Heiss.
3. **PR SUPPORT:** Forums like it when speaker's organization offers pr assistance so they're not always the ones "going to the well" of the local media & other promo. They also look for fresh advice. Further, pr will know what the speaker might want to avoid, & "we love to have the reality of what are the parameters & candor."
4. **THE FUTURE:** Participants feel technology will change the face & format of speaking forums, as cyber audiences replace, or supplement, huge auditoriums. For this reason, there is a "youth movement" among the forums wherein they work with area schools & colleges. "The technology is geared toward them & keeping up their participation is important."

BPCC studies the philosophies & initiatives of org'ns whose success can be attributed to either a specific aspect of com'ns or to a com'n strategy. (More from Heiss at 202/463-3763 or www.tpag.com)

ITEM OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

- ¶ **Ever Wonder About English As The Global Lingua Franca?** It's by no means the most spoken tongue – that is a Chinese dialect. Even Spanish has more adherents. And sometimes it makes no sense, with such trickers as homonyms (homophones is now the preferred term) – e.g. "There's no time like the present so it's time to present the present." On the other hand, it takes 25% more time to say it, or 25% more words, using Spanish or other Romance languages. In a time-constrained world, that may be a major benefit of English – or American, really, since more people use the US version than the original. As practitioners struggle with the multiple languages spoken *inside* countries like US & Canada (old hat to EU nations), this will be an issue – possibly a divisive one – for decades.

2 HEALTHCARE STUDIES SHOW HOW EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNICATION ARE CHANGING – EVERYWHERE

More evidence the loyalty factor is on the wane comes from 2 recent studies. One verifies that more employers are passing health costs on to workers. As if in response, another study polled 7500 workers to determine how many were highly committed to their employers. Results: a little more than half say they're committed (55%), and even fewer have confidence in top management.

- **Employers report increases in healthcare costs** as high as 7.5% in '98 & '99 to 9.7% in 2000. Yet the median report only a 3% increase in health plan fee schedules to providers. The 6.7 percentage point difference between provider fees & plan costs to employers indicate: a) changing utilization patterns; b) a mix of services; c) efforts by health plans to improve profitability
- **70% of employers respond to increased costs by passing them off to employees.** Survey, by Watson Wyatt Worldwide (Bethesda) in collaboration with Washington Business Group on Health, includes responses from 503 employers whose plans cover over 18 million people. It finds one employer response is finding new ways to disseminate info & help employees make the right choices:
 - a) 63% of employers say they are moving toward greater use of **Intra- & Internet** to administer benefit & healthcare info
 - b) 62% report educating employees on **self-care**
 - c) 44% say they act as **info brokers** who, for example, add links from the company site to healthcare sites or disseminate plan data & healthcare/wellness advice
- **Some have more creative responses** to rising costs, such as: a) absorbing them (57%), b) changing coverage (38%), c) changing vendors (22%) & d) targeting specific conditions for more active medical intervention (30%)

TRYING TO GET HEALTHCARE OUT OF THE HOT POTATO CATEGORY

Second part of the survey questioned reps from 953 healthcare provider org'ns & 69 health plans. **Providers** say they're hoping medical management & better info systems will help hold down costs. **Plans** react by passing costs to employers (99%) & changing coverage (59%) – as well as also seeking to improve medical management (94%) & info systems (81%) & partnering with employers (49%).

"Employers, providers & health plans cannot continue to keep passing along costs to each other like a hot potato," says Mary Jane England, pres, WBGH. She calls efforts to improve medical mgmt & info systems, & to actively target conditions & behaviors "sophisticated strategies more likely to lead to long term cost containment & higher satisfaction with the system" – & thus with the employer.

- **BUT traditional benefits dep't/hr approaches need best-practice pr to make this a reality**



DECLINE IN COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYERS IS AN OPPORTUNITY

At a time of unprecedented earnings & stock values for many org's, employers expect workers to accept less (see prr 7/10 for loss in earning power). BUT survey found companies with highly committed employees enjoy a 112% 3-year return to shareholders, vs. a 76% return for companies with low employee commitment. Companies with neutral employee commitment showed a 90% return (pr 6/26). This phenomenon is surely replicated in NPOs & even gov't.

- **Clearly, somebody isn't listening** & if pr can get the point across, mgmt can enhance results not by *zapping* employees but by *rewarding* them... especially in the tightest job market ever

"The results provide plenty of motivation for employers whose workers aren't committed to take measures toward building confidence & commitment," says Watson's Bruce Pfau. "Employee commitment used to equate with old-fashioned loyalty to a career employer. But today's mobile workers look for an employer of choice – one they can be proud to work for and whose leadership they trust."

TRUST IN LEADERSHIP LOW, BUT WHEN PRESENT = MEASURABLE BENEFITS

Only half the respondents expressed confidence in "the job being done" by senior management & **21% expressed no confidence**. 29% were neutral. Trust was assessed by whether or not leadership: a) promoted the most qualified employees; b) gained support for their business direction; c) motivated the workforce to perform at peak levels; d) explained reasons behind major business decisions.

- Companies that had employees with high trust & confidence levels had a 3-year total return to shareholders of 108%, compared with 66% return at companies with low trust & confidence levels

Getting this data internalized at top mgmt level is a responsibility of – & an opportunity for – the orgn's relationship managers, i.e. pr dep'ts. (*More from Gretchen Ace at WWW @ 301/581-4538.*)

CAN AD CAMPAIGN GET PARENTS INVOLVED IN SCHOOLS?

South Carolina has become big in pr news (see flag stories 7/24 & 5/8). Now it's the state's Education Oversight Cmte, with an attempt to solve the major school problem with a series of advertisements.

- **The "Don't Fail Your Children" campaign** is an openly stated attempt to goad parents into taking an active role in their children's education – mainly helping with homework
- One ad bluntly says "**You don't have to hit your children to hurt them,**" meaning failing to help with schoolwork hurts, too. Another tries humor, giving parents F's & D's on helpfulness

Ads evolved from Parental Involvement Act, which encourages parents, businesses, educators & state agencies to get involved in schools & education. Oversight Cmte says everyone is responsible for success/failure of schools, felt ads were a way to achieve this goal. (Recalling Republican ridiculing of Hillary Clinton's book, *It Takes A Village to Educate a Child*, this is ironic in a GOP-controlled state).

Act mandated a public awareness campaign. Committee members are primarily businessmen, with some legislators & educators. Bumper stickers, billboards, t-shirts, posters, an 800 number & how-to brochure are also planned.

- Some criticize the ads as negative, instead of offering positive suggestions of ways parents can help

Is this another case of businessmen plunging into education without really knowing what they're doing? Motivating parental behavior is far different from promoting products.

AS CUSTOMERS TIRE OF UBIQUITOUS "HOW'D WE DO" SURVEYS, SOME FIND WAYS TO IMPROVE THE METHOD

Hilton hotels in-room survey questionnaires emphasize a single topic, rather than the long list of evaluations usually sought.

- **"Please rate your satisfaction with the bathroom in your accommodations,"** asks the chain's GUESTScope system
- On the cover of the folded card are the words "Guest Survey" to give fair warning, but then "At your convenience, please rate your satisfaction with the bathroom in your accommodations"

LINE OF QUESTIONING

1. First 6 questions ask, on a 7-pt scale, opinions on towels, general cleanliness, lighting, tub/sink/toilet, even the grout around the fixtures. Also the query hotels often flunk: "Adequate shower pressure, temperature & drainage."
2. Having hooked the guest, form *then* asks 4 general satisfaction indicators – overall satisfaction, likelihood of recommending & value for price paid. Plus a reworded standard question – "Likelihood, **if returning to the area**, you would return to this Hilton" – that should wipe out the false negatives received from those who, without the bolded clause, answer in the negative because they don't expect to be back in the area
3. Simple demographic questions round out the form, along with ample space for open-ended comments on "any other aspect of your visit"

Hilton makes no bones about the relationship it desires with guests. The typical VIP note from the manager begins with the flat out statement, "**Our Goal is Your Loyalty**". Then the expected "Do not hesitate to call on me should you desire anything."

CONFERENCE OF TOP 5 EXEC SPEAKING FORUMS POINTS TO MOST EFFECTIVE PR, COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Conference call featuring the top 5 executive speaking forums (pr 7/29/96) offers insights from CEOs about the most effective communication practices. "This was probably our most insightful call to date," Brian Heiss, dir, Best Practices in Corporate Communications (DC) told pr. "We're talking the top 5 forums opening the book on what they're looking for. Their insights help practitioners tailor their message in the most effective way."

Speaking forums are venues for org's, political leaders & others to have their voices heard. The conference call, held early last month, featured heads of the Chief Executives Clubs of Boston and