

2. **Being willing to say, when interrupted**, something like "Wait. That last question wasn't fully answered & it's very important." If interruptions continue, interviewees may need to say "I need time to really answer your good questions so *your viewers/listeners/audience* get the information you want them to have"
  - Shifting the emphasis to the viewers/listeners – the interviewer's customers, as it were – gets them on the interviewee's side, a critical advantage
  - Fortunately, interviewers who continually cut off interviewees earn them sympathy
3. **Remember the mantra: a duck walking across a bridge carrying a blanket.** If you can, duck slanted queries. Bridge back to the point *you* want to make. Blanket specious or attacking questions with responses that don't legitimize them but still answer their underlying intent
4. **After it's over, fence mending** with the interviewer may be necessary. Tell them frankly that you brought them a good interviewee with good material – but they wouldn't let the person talk
  - This assumes you've trained interviewees to give sound-bite answers, or at least not to ramble
  - It works best for live interviews; we know what otherwise ends up on the cutting room floor

## ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **NPO Exec Pay Not at Corporate Level – But May Raise Same Eyebrows.** Some NPO CEOs now make \$450,000+, reports 13<sup>th</sup> ed of *Compensation in Nonprofit Org's*. While these individuals lead org's with \$10 million+ budgets & 100+ employees, this figure can raise questions from donors & critics. Such pay is typically found in mfg trade ass'ns, foundations, healthcare providers, certain other ass'ns & medical/dental societies. Median CEO pay is only \$75,000. Median pay for gov't rels directors is nearly as high – \$74,238. In contrast, for dpr's it's \$44,000, \$40,224 for pio's, \$32,000 for directors of volunteers. Study covers 45,000 employees in 125 job titles in 1,592 NPOs. (More from [www.abbott-langer.com](http://www.abbott-langer.com))

¶ **"Internet Changes Everything" No Longer World Economic Theme**, say reports from World Economic Forum last month in Davos, Switzerland. This should help practitioners tackle the challenge of balancing e-com'n methods so their wonderful advantages aren't lost amid the hype & disadvantages – e.g. overwhelming e-mail load & vast over-expectations of Websites. Most telling statement came from a tech co. CEO, Howard Stringer of Sony America. After a panel espousing the idea that being wired 24 hrs/day was the road to success, & any org'n not doing so would die, he asked **"Doesn't anyone here think this sounds like a vision of hell? While we are all competing or dying, when will there be time for sex or music or books? Stop the world, I want to get off!"**

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**ELECTED.** Issue Management Council Officers: Amy Stevens (Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Ctr), chair; Michael Palese (DaimlerChrysler), vp; named to the board: Mark Affleck (Calif. Avocado Ass'n), John Cleghorn (Bank of America), Lawrence Hurst (Intel), Malcolm Williams (Shell Int'l).

2001 PRSA Counselors Academy officers: Lynn Casey (Padilla Speer Beardsley, Mpls), chair; Tom Gable (Gable Group, San Diego), chair-elect; Tom Hoog (Hill & Knowlton, NYC), sec'y-treas.

## 3 STUDIES UNDERSCORE OFTEN UNSPOKEN ROLE OF RELIGION IN AMERICAN THOUGHT & BEHAVIOR; IS TIDE RISING OR FALLING?

The number of new studies on religious beliefs, along with its rising use in political discourse, reminds practitioners how large a role it plays in attitudes & behavior. Yet it remains an often taboo topic for public discussion ([pr.10/2/00](http://pr.10/2/00)). Since the research shows its unequivocal impact, practitioners need to keep it in mind when assessing audiences, decisions & issues. Here's an update on current research.

1. **For religious org's**, the research is marketing data in a highly competitive field. Also info to make decisions about Pres Bush's proposed use of federal funds to faith-based social services agencies (an example of religion coming to the forefront, albeit a controversial issue). Today every denomination has a pr arm – & some, like the Mormons & Catholic Bishops, have exemplary pr shops
2. **For business**, it links to the bellwether corporate watchdog, ICCR (Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility), composed of 275 religious org's which own stock in corporations. 100 ICCR members last year filed 140 proxy resolutions with 109 companies. As business goes global, it's a reminder of the religious wars in the Middle East, N. Ireland, on the Indian subcontinent & other places – & the implications for entering markets & handling pr
3. **For universities, NPOs & schools** its value is manifold, including inclusivity issues, public prayer, sensitivity to faiths new to the nation etc. When Billy Graham's son gave a sectarian invocation at Bush's inauguration, questions about the president's real understanding of diversity were raised that will linger & bring concern to each initiative he undertakes – precisely what can happen to any org'n which appears to lack sensitivity in this area. **Religious faith also fosters giving & volunteering**

## STUDY #1: 55 - 65% OF AMERICANS HAVE SAID RELIGION IS "VERY IMPORTANT IN MY LIFE" SINCE 1978; TODAY IT HAS A BLACK, FEMALE FACE

Yet 58% now feel it is "losing influence" in society. Which may explain politicians' new embrace of it. What is the archetype of the religious, Bible-reading American – using Bible-reading as a symbol of serious faith? Many may conjure a picture of a white married male. According to the Gallup religion poll, this profile is off base. Bible-readers comprise a surprisingly mixed bag, but **women & minorities take the lead**. Phone interviews with a random sample of 1,024 adults late last year find:

- **Most Bible readers are women** & they are much more likely to read it frequently. 43% of women say they read it weekly or daily, compared to 29% of men
- **Most are minorities.** 42% of whites rarely or never read it compared to only 32% of non-whites
- **Fewer people read it than once did.** Only 59% of respondents say they read the Bible, even on occasion – down from 73% in the 80s. May only mean Bible-reading is no longer the symbol
- **More Republicans read it:** 47% at least weekly. Only 32% of Democrats as frequently

- **Oldsters read it more.** Half of those 65+ read it at least weekly, compared to 27% of youngsters between ages 18 & 29. About 36% of 30-somethings & 40-somethings read it that frequently
  - **39% don't agree with everything their faith teaches,** they say in response to question "There are a lot of things taught in my religion that I don't really believe"
  - **44% consider themselves "born again" or evangelical** & they're the ones apt to be politically active or involved in social issues
- **Education is a predictor.** Years in school dictate who believes the Bible answers life's questions. 46% with post graduate degrees agree vs. 72% with a high school education or less
- **You will be held accountable,** most people believe. 79% of respondents believe there will be a judgment day when "God decides whether a person is going to heaven or hell"
  - **"Spiritual" is how 30% describe themselves** vs. 54% who use "religious" – important difference
  - **Despite it all, social pressure still strong.** While 48% say they "pay more attention to God & religious teachings" 45% "pay more attention to your own views & the views of others"

As in all self-response studies of behavior, there's a factor of false positives ("ideal" behavior) in these numbers. But what is clear is that religiosity remains a firmly entrenched force and strategists & communicators can't risk making assumptions about their target audiences.

## STUDY #2: MOST SAY RELIGION A POSITIVE THING, ESPECIALLY AT LEADERSHIP LEVEL, BUT THINK DIVERSITY SHOULD BE RESPECTED

Good news for the pr philosophy: Most people extol religious observance as a panacea for societal ills, but temper this with the belief that **respecting all religions is of paramount importance**, finds a study from Public Agenda (NYC). "For Goodness Sake" surveyed 1,507 Americans & found:

- 56% think religion is an effective force in controlling *bad behavior in children*
- 74% believe *raising kids* without faith "is a bad idea"
- 74% believe *school prayer* teaches that belief in a god is important, but they balance this with the belief that respect for various religions is the key ethic. Most therefore regard a homeroom "moment of silence" at the start of the day as a better way to go. "While many Americans seem to feel the nation has gone too far in removing religion from public schools, only 6% call for a school prayer tailored to the Christian majority," study finds. "Most are reluctant to isolate students whose beliefs are different, and voice concern that school prayers may infringe on the rights of parents"

### MOST REMAIN TOLERANT ON ISSUES

Study, sponsored by Pew Charitable Trust, found a paradox regarding religion & politics. Many would like their political leaders to be more religious as individuals since they believe it speaks to their character. But most don't consider a candidate's religious affiliation when voting – in fact, 58% say it would be wrong to do so. What's more, they are suspicious of politicians who wear their religion on their sleeve. *They say that on hot button issues like gay rights, abortion and the death penalty, even a devout politician may need to make pragmatic compromises.*

**Opinions Differ Among Groups.** Jews & non-religious are more upset by the idea of mixing religion & politics. 80% of Jews surveyed say they have to be vigilant against anti-Semitism. But evangelical Christians say they, too, are suffering from bigotry – over 2/3rds perceive "a lot of prejudice" against them. This group is much more likely to believe a) devout politicians will craft better policies & b) religious officials should be less willing to compromise on key issues.

## STUDY #3: AMERICANS ARE AMBIVALENT ABOUT RELIGION

Also sponsored by Pew (thru its new Forum on Religion & Public Life, chaired by columnist E.J. Dionne) is "Religion and Politics: The Ambivalent Majority." Findings also indicate Americans embrace religion as a backdrop in the sociopolitical landscape, but are conflicted as to how it fits. Solid majority say they're uneasy with clergy espousing political views, but 7 in 10 want the president to have religious faith. Most, however, want politicians to keep their churchgoing habits to themselves.

Survey questioned 2,000 voters. Most (54%) believe in gov't funding religious organizations so they can run such programs as job training or drug treatment.

## HOW RELIGIONS ARE PERCEIVED: STILL ROOM FOR TOLERANCE HERE

Reputation of **evangelical Christians** has bounced back from the skepticism of recent years (probably brought about by Tammy Faye, et al) – tho note above that evangelicals don't think so. Overall, 63% rate evangelicals favorably, up from 41% in '96. About 77% rate **Jews** favorably, virtually the same as the rating for **Catholics** (78%). But:

- Only 50% view **Muslims** favorably. Tho only 21% see them unfavorably, 29% can't rate them
- **Atheists** are seen favorably by 40% & 44% see them unfavorably

Compared to 4 years ago, Republican Party has lost ground as the protector of religious values. Today, 39% say GOP is most concerned with protecting religious values vs. 30% who name the Democrats. Religious freedom is a different issue: by large margins, partisans see their party as most concerned with religious freedom, while 30% of independents cite Republicans & 29% choose Dems.

- BUT – in 60s only 40% felt churches should express political & social views. Now 54% think so
- There is a rise in the number that attribute their reasons for volunteering to their faith

(More from [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com), [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org) and Pew Research Center, 202/293-3126)

## HOW TO HANDLE MEDIA INTERVIEWER WHO INTERRUPTS?

Ex-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak complained to the *International Herald Tribune* that he "regretted never finding a way to address the people without having a tv reporter interrupt after every 8 words." Bill Clinton found the same when he was interviewed by Israeli reporters. This isn't restricted to that nation's journalists, of course (or to journalists) – but how can practitioners deal with it?

1. **Interviewees need to stick firmly to the thought that they, not the reporter, are the subject.** Sometimes this means tactfully saying that. For pr pros, this means 2 actions need be taken:
  - Training interviewees in this mindset
  - Not being afraid to mention this to the interviewer