

POSITIVE IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY

WIA says the proof is in the pudding, as the work/life initiatives fostered happier

employees, boosting productivity and enhancing retention:

1. **Fleet Financial:** a work/life redesign project increased flexibility in scheduling and reduced workload for underwriters by redistributing admin tasks, changing processes.
2. **Statistics Canada.** Work/life paid off in low turnover rates – half those of other agencies, and lowest grievance rates of other gov't departments.
3. **First Tennessee Bank.** After initiating work/life, 93% of managers felt employees were more productive and 88% of employees say they're more committed to remaining at the bank. In one division, business doubled over a 6 year period while in another, productivity improved by 50%.
4. **Ernst & Young.** In areas where work/life balance prototypes were established, turnover dropped dramatically, responsible for saving \$14-\$17 million in turnover costs.

Big challenges to any work/life initiative include: a) building a broad understanding about how work/life can address both business & personal needs; b) developing a chain of support and participation from top, middle and grassroots of organization; c) creating tools & practices that will help other parts of the organization replicate the program/process. "Despite the diversity of approaches to work/life integration, the cases share a common theme: the commitment to continuously learn, evolve and improve upon strategies that address both business and work/life needs."

(To order report, contact info@workinamerica.org.)

IN GENERAL, MEDIA MEAN TO CEOs; FEW SCORE HIGH MARKS

A DC-based media tracking organization finds that CEOs from only a handful of companies have received "very positive" news coverage in the past year. Most have received neutral or negative press coverage.

CARMA Immediate analyzed 16 of the top news & business publications in the US. Daily analysis tracked analyst comments, product coverage, earnings and other key issue areas. Articles are rated on a scale of 0 to 100 with 50 and under considered unfavorable.

THE EFFECT OF COVERAGE ON VALUE

About 700 companies are included in the scope. Greatest volume of coverage of their

CEO and management include: DaimlerChrysler, GE, GM, Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Lucent. Data shows they received most coverage when going thru management changes, crises or hard times. Companies with the best CEO/mgmt coverage had CEOs with proven track records or were going thru positive growth and acquisitions.

Most favorable press coverage went to: Nokia (70), Nissan (67), Alcoa (64), GE (60), PepsiCo (60), JP Morgan Chase (60) and the Reuters Group (60). Unfavorable marks went to Sotheby's (35), Xerox (38), Bridgestone/Firestone (39), DaimlerChrysler (41), AT&T (42), Amazon.com (43) and Lucent (44). Other with low marks included Mitsubishi (44), Procter & Gamble (45) and Gap (45).

According to CARMA's Albert Barr, there's a link between media coverage, a company's reputation and value. "Many of the companies are showing a correlation between positive and negative news coverage and company share price." 80% of the companies on *Fortune's* most admired list scored positively in the analysis.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A GIANT MULTINATIONAL TO OFFER PRO BONO HOURS – EVEN SMALL FIRMS FIND REWARDS TO BE MANIFOLD

For big firms, support for community projects and big causes is folded into the budget. Can strapped-for-cash smaller and mid-sized firms also demonstrate good citizenry? Sharon Goldmacher, pres Communications 21 (Atlanta) says her staff of 7 has reaped immeasurable benefits by regularly working pro bono for a host of causes. "Everyone is encouraged to get involved," she told *prr*.

About nine years ago, Goldmacher felt a calling to help with literacy, so she decided to tutor kids during off hours. It quickly became apparent that she could broaden her efforts by using the resources of the firm she founded. (The lesson is you can sometimes help the most by doing what you do best. If you're a pr person, offer pr services.) "I began to see the great need among a lot of nonprofits. Many of them have great programs but no one to talk about them."

"VOLUNTEER" AS A MANTRA

At C21, everyone is encouraged to get involved with volunteerism and is given hours off to do so.

"'Volunteer' is a mantra for us." The firm as a whole has taken 3 causes to heart:

1. **Literacy Volunteers** receives over \$50K a year in services and resources from C21. After all, literacy and public relations seemed like a perfect fit. "Every pr person should be teaching people how to read."
2. **Hands on Atlanta** provides flexible volunteerism so that at any one time, there are about 200 projects from which to choose without making a regular time commitment. "We may work 9 to 12 for a few days cleaning a building, feeding the homeless, building a house, etc." Recently, the firm brought clients along to clean and paint the house of a 90 year old lady.
3. **CityCares**, a help network that already had a great reputation thruout the US and UK. "When I found out that they needed pr help, I jumped at the chance." Later Goldmacher found that no other pr firm or practitioner had come forward to offer free services. "We help with strategic planning, as well as developing html pieces, special events, etc."

BENEFITS ABOUND

Of course, there's **visibility** – as a sponsor, C21 ends up on T-shirts, hats, etc. And **clients are impressed**. "They think it's great that we're involved and many of them are drawn into our volunteer efforts." This helps **relationships** with clients as well as with community leaders. For employees, volunteerism improves the **organizational culture**. "It's a commitment that reflects the values of the firm. I don't think we have gotten a piece of business directly from it, but it does help our **reputation**."

Also, volunteerism allows C21 to take on new projects and enhance its own **portfolio** – e.g., the html piece the company developed for CityCares. "A paying client may not have given us such a project but now it's something that we can pitch."



Goldmacher says she recently read about how an Atlanta office of a global pr firm spends only \$80K in services for pro bono projects. "I thought, wow, are we crazy?" She surmises that perhaps the big firms get complacent in good times and don't feel the need to help out as much.

(For more information, contact Goldmacher at 404/814-1330)

REPORT CRITICIZES PR'S CODE OF ETHICAL STANDARDS, CALLS FOR BETTER DEFINITION OF PRACTITIONERS' OBLIGATIONS

According to a paper submitted to Fourth Interdisciplinary Public Relations Research Conference held in Miami last month, PRSA's Code of Professional Standards (t&t 10/30/00) fails at monitoring the professional behavior of practitioners and only succeeds at presenting a positive image of pr to observers. "These approaches ignore the obligation ... to hold values and recognize obligations that are unique to their profession," authors Michael Parkinson, Marie Parkinson & Jerris Penrod argue. They say the code applies to personal or public ethics but not professional ethics.

REQUIREMENT MISSING

Single most significant requirement is public recognition or licensing. "A profession's members cannot define themselves as a profession, the public or government must do so, as they do by admitting attorneys to the bar, licensing physicians or ordaining ministers. Such professions require:

1. A clear definition of what acts are prohibited to those without a license
2. A unique set of skills & knowledge
3. A recognition or identification of the obligations a member of the profession must meet

"For pr to be a profession there must be a shared definition of professional ethics or obligations and the ethical obligations for a practitioner must be unique to the profession."

COMPARISONS TO LAW

Authors choose to compare pr to law because both focus on communication skills, presentation of facts and arguments to advance clients' interests. Both are advocates for their clients and have similar goals and obligations, which restrict the form and content of their communication and require accuracy in reporting facts.

The PR Code provides no guidance, authors say, on how to deal with conflicts between a practitioner's obligations to free and honest public communication and the client's interests. "In short, the PRSA Code of Professional Standards is more about image than professionalism or ethics." Lawyers advocate for clients having faith that the "truth will out" and that the facts or law will ultimately decide the case. PR, they say, demonstrates little faith in the "court of public opinion," focusing on protecting the public interest as well as representing clients. "This attempt to simultaneously represent two interests is doomed to failure and cannot be defended as professional." Also, it's impossible to determine the best interest of society as everyone's opinion is colored by experience and the future is impossible to anticipate.

Comparing the PRSA Code of Professional Standards to Canons of Professional Responsibility adopted by most state bars reveals that the former refers to personal ethics, the latter, professional ethics. The PRSA Code makes repeated references to obligations to the public interest, objectivity or fairness and dual obligation to client and public or democratic process. The Canons, on the other hand, focus on obligation to the professional status of the attorney and his/her relationship with the client.

STICKY ISSUES

Authors site legality problems in adhering to the Code's requirements. "In particular, Article 2 which specifies a dual obligation to the client and the democratic process simply ignores the legal obligations to a client which could arise from an employer-employee relationship." In order to honor certain code requirements, a practitioner would have to violate his/her legal obligations to, say, client privacy.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ADVOCATE

"We must find some way to comfortably accept our role as advocates," say authors. "We must develop faith in the decisions of the publics whose opinions we seek to influence. We must accept the reality that we cannot know what is in the public interest – rather we must present info to publics on behalf of our clients and let those publics decide what is and what is not in their interest."

WORK IN THE BALANCE: INVOLVING EMPLOYEES IN DEVELOPMENT OF WORK/LIFE STRATEGIES BRINGS BENEFITS ALL AROUND

Do work and personal life have to be at constant odds? A study by Work in America (Scarsdale, NY) finds that some organizations are adopting a "dual agenda strategy" approach to work guidelines and are enjoying the dual benefit of boosting performance while improving employees' lives.

WIA studied in depth 10 organizations representing a broad range of industries, e.g., a pizza packing plant, a call-in customer service center, government agencies as well as white-collar interests. Funded by Ford Foundation, Kraft Foods, Merck, Chase Manhattan and about a dozen others, report points to strategies for creating a work environment that supports work/life balance.

SOME STRATEGIES THAT WORKED

- **At a Kraft pizza plant**, workers who took part in high-performance work redesign developed a schedule and a new team system that boosted production and reduced overhead costs. New program gave employees greater flexibility and predictability in work hours, making childcare, transportation easier to arrange. It also provided employees – many of whom were first-time job holders out of welfare-to-work programs – with increased pay and training in business & team decisionmaking.
- **Ernst & Young**. Employees & managers negotiate life-balance agreements every 6 months to address such issues as how many days they'll travel. Meanwhile, "solution teams" redesign travel schedule to allow more time at home, and "utilization committees" meet regularly to oversee employees' workloads, evenly distribute work and balance client expectations with employees' personal needs. New rule: no checking e-mail or voice mail on weekends & vacations.
- **Baxter Healthcare** used benchmarking and surveys to build managerial support for work/life initiatives and reshaped organizational culture to place higher value on treating employees with respect. Findings led to addition of new work/life standard in the company's mission statement and into key hr systems – a big step toward uniform standard for highly decentralized company.

Other key ingredients to overhauling organizational culture toward work/life balance include public-private partnerships, joint labor-management partnerships and collective bargaining agreements.