

ROUGH GOING OVERSEAS; SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR PRACTITIONERS SEEKING MEDIA COVERAGE IN ASIA

While grassroots and community-based programs comprise the backbone of truly effective public relations, practitioners are often called upon to use media relations to raise awareness. Counselor Lauren Hunter (Fremont, Calif) warns that organizations seeking coverage overseas should be wary of the tricky pitfalls in Asian countries. "Unlike the U.S., pr is relatively new to Asian countries, providing greater difficulties in producing effective results there." Many media rels practices are still being discovered and refined as economies develop. Hunter explains them according to countries:

1. **Taiwan:** Due to its compact size, *most of the influential media are in one area of Taipei*, making it easier to contact key editors. "Because everyone is so close in proximity, the traditional way of obtaining media coverage is to *hold a 'launch event'* and invite all surrounding media to attend." But this method is becoming more difficult because of the influx of new companies vying for attention. "Many organizations are now inviting celebrities or offering substantial gifts to editors."
2. **China:** Language and culture barriers among regions means *each major city functions as a separate entity*. "Each city has its own publications and media sources that are read only within that territory." Organizations that can afford it hold a series of events city by city – and the amount of work needed is multiplied. "In addition, China is a very censored nation and can pose public relations problems due to strict government regulations."
3. **Japan:** The system of media and news distribution is vastly different than in the U.S.; *it has little structure and few well-defined procedures*. "Only large, industry leading companies have any media leverage and are able to obtain substantial attention." Smaller companies have trouble because they can't command the same presence.

(For more info, contact Hunter @ 510/226-6780 or visit www.e21corp.com)

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

- ¶ **Internet Busy With Traffic From Medical Info Seekers.** More than 85% of Internet users are using the Web to find health and medical info, finds a national survey. The study, conducted by Decision Analyst, Inc. (Arlington, TX) surveyed 565 Internet users. Of those using the Net to gain medical knowledge, 25% are seeking pharmaceutical info, 23% want to know about new treatments, 21% are trying to investigate potential medical conditions.
- ¶ **Forecasters Predict Business Trends.** The World Future Society (Bethesda) recently predicted these workplace trends: 1) **Improved productivity**, yielding to more play time, longer life spans. "The result will be that leisure oriented business will dominate the world economy by 2015, accounting for roughly half the U.S. gross national product. This includes 'Big Entertainment'"; 2) **Company loyalty**. Is it the death of the dot.coms that has caused waning company loyalty to do a turnabout? Tenure increased 50% in the 1990s and the number of employees working for a single company during their careers jumped 254% thanks to more pro-employee policies; 3) **Isolated employees**. "Some companies may be doing too much for workers, cutting people off from their communities. The result may be workers so dependent on employers for social services that they find it increasingly difficult to leave their 'corporate families.' Companies are becoming more tolerant of office romances, despite escalation in sexual harassment suits." (For more info, contact WFS at 301/656-8274 or visit www.wfs.org)

GENERATION Y: WHO ARE THEY? WHY DO THEY MATTER? NEW SEGMENT CALLED ENIGMATIC, FORCEFUL, TECH ABLE

They've been called the Echo Boom, the Internet Generation, The Wired Generation and Generation Next, but most demographers are settling on the name "Generation Y" to describe young adults and older teens, ages 16 to 24, who have grown up plugged into computers, cell phones, headphones and pagers. Ogilvy PR (NYC) recently issued a report, "The Whys of Generation Y," which looks at the intricacies of this new and emerging public. The report is based on a worldwide scope of studies, articles, and other literature about this group, which represents \$100 billion in spending power in the U.S. alone. "We took a global look at Generation Y to help us analyze and create a credible body of secondary research," mng dir Mark Curran told pr. "Many things are needed to connect with them in a meaningful way."

KEY INDICATORS

"This is a new breed of consumer," says Curran. "They are social beings who place heavy emphasis on the sense of self." They're not homogenized and have many peculiarities. Practitioners who realize nuances will succeed in engaging them. Key attributes:

1. **Thrive on technology and are not intimidated by it.** This gives them greater market clout than youth generations that have gone before them. "Napster is a perfect example of this." They wanted the music and have the tech savvy to pick and choose songs they like and download them for free.
2. **Optimistic and materialistic.** In the U.S., they have no memory of economic hardship. In Europe, economies are improving, creating a sense of guarded optimism. All Gen Ys link having a lot of money with quality of life and tend to be motivated by it. Also, credit card mentality of "buy now, pay later" prevails as the kids have faith the cash will be there.
3. **Use multiple forms of stimulation, entertainment.** Also, keep in mind that online pursuits are almost always accompanied by music, "which is a consistent staple in their daily lives and a key source of self expression."
4. **Music, in fact, is more pervasive in their lives than tv** but its influence is hard to measure. "Music rarely has their full attention and it's difficult to isolate its effect." 64% say they'd rather go a day without food than a day without music.
5. **More tolerant and open-minded** about race and same sex relationships while embracing traditional institutions such as family and marriage. They are trending toward earlier marriages, bigger families.
6. **Spiritual rather than religious.** Example: the popularity of the WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) bracelets as opposed to more traditional modes of religious practice indicate that they're tailoring religiosity into a fashion statement, and looking for guidance on how to conduct their day-to-day



lives rather than stick to traditional parameters. "They seek to personalize and individualize beliefs." Still, 86% consider themselves "religious."

- 7. **Drinking is the biggest addiction problem** among Gen Y. Worldwide, early smoking is increasing dramatically, especially among the girls.
- 8. **Most have money.** No matter the country or economic group, most have weekly allowances. Their buying power is unmatched by previous youth generations.

¶ **Other interesting notes:** Gen Y will spend upwards of 23 years online. Cell phones, instant messaging and e-mail mean these kids are in constant "real time" communication, Still, they prefer the mall experience to online shopping. "The threat is that all of this technology will isolate them, but the fact is that they still have the need to be social in person." Boys and girls use the Internet differently – the former for games, the latter for chat. Girls use it more for school than do boys.

Inward Looking, Outward Bound.
 Gen Ys are more introspective, seeking to personalize and individualize beliefs, personal image and possessions in what they perceive as an increasingly homogeneous world. Yet, they're a global community of consumers rather than local – reflected in CDs, tv, movies, and multi-national franchises.

WAYS TO REACH THEM

Their situation is unique because their lives are laden with choices. "Ordering a cup of coffee entails at last 10 selections." Communicators must tailor messages in a unique, attention-grabbing yet respectful way. "Condescending to them will only drive them away." Ways to break through:

- 1. **Interaction is key.** "Messages should be from peers, not preached," as peers tend to influence brand value. One-way messaging, always lame, has never been less effective.
- 2. **Messages should be packaged in a funny and quirky fashion.** Products and services must seem adventurous. Extreme sports are in, indicating the desire for thrill and stimulation.
- 3. **Personalize.** "They expect things adapted to their needs – they have incredible buying power but are prudent. They expect an array of products and services they can personalize." Again, the Napster example shows how they'll customize something to fit their own needs.
- 4. **Use universal appeal.** Barriers of race, creed, sexual orientation have broken down and they feel less connected to any one group. "They like sports but mostly for the interactive benefits more than for the competition." Also, the "global" society is perceived as glamorous.
- 5. **Use all facets of technology.** Constant stimuli are necessary when getting thru to this crowd. "You need to provide ways they can interact."

Study also breaks down differences between the sexes, among nationalities.

(For copy or more info, call Curran at 212/884-4081 or visit www.ogilvy.com)

ONLY THE LONELY CAN RELATE TO THE LIFE OF A TELECOMMUTER; DOWNSIDE OF AN IDEAL JOB

Sure it has its benefits – stay at home with the kids, make your own hours, work all day in your PJs... But after a decade or so of increasing popularity, the ugly side of telecommuting has emerged. The result is a new, sometimes disillusioned and often disconnected workforce segment.

The Boston College Center for Work & Family found **telecommuters are less satisfied in their jobs** than are traditional employees with flex time. Research leader Leon Litchfield led a 2-year survey of 1,353 workers and 151 managers at six large U.S. corporations. "One problem is that telecommuting and other flexible work arrangements are handed out to employees as privileges rather than entitlements," he says. "So, when employees are granted this, they're so grateful they feel like they have to put out and bend over backwards to be productive. And that manifests itself in people working a lot of extra hours." The phenomenon is so prevalent that the study quotes Dana Friedman, a Boston area workplace consultant, as calling telecommuters "the grateful dead."

Litchfield's concerns seem validated by the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, which reports that the American workforce averages 43.4 hours a week. "Flexibility was supposed to have the opposite effect... Now is the time to figure out what we can be doing to address this. It's going to come back and hurt the companies if workers get burned out in the long term."

Indeed, many are sleeping in front of the monitors of their home PCs. They report they're likely to work during their vacations and say they have difficulty "striking a balance" between personal and work lives. Other problems:

- 1. They're less likely to get the same pay increases as other employees
- 2. Have worse relationships with co-workers and bosses than people who stay in the office
- 3. Are less likely to get good performance reviews, promotions
- 4. Are less committed to their jobs

STILL THE ARRANGEMENT OF CHOICE FOR MANY

Despite the kinks, many telecommuters say they're happier at their at-home jobs than in the office. The *Raleigh News & Observer* reports that the Society of HR Mgmt has found 37% of U.S. corporations now let workers telecommute, up from 20% five years ago. The reason for the increase is that employees seek it out; and it makes the difference for companies between retaining and losing workers.

Employers often report more productivity. For example, AT&T, which has 56% of its managers telecommute at least one day a week, estimates that their increased output is worth about \$100 million a year, with \$25 million saved in real estate.

HAMMER OUT THE JOB DESCRIPTION

Burnout is best avoided when employers engage employees in dialog about expectations. "I don't think companies are having the right discussion about how this should work," says Friedman. "If this stuff was talked about and expectations were made clear, their work would be based more on quality and not on quantity."