

a population of 21,000, people young and old participate in more than 50 boards and commissions, including less familiar groups like the Blue ribbon Committee on Dogs and the Microcenterprise Advisory Committee. An important aspect of the city's high level of civic participation is that not only elites, but people of all backgrounds take part in community life. The mayor, Evelyn Sirrell, is a 70-year-old parking lot attendant who never went beyond high school.

Companies with employee volunteerism programs are adding to their communities' social capital. They can point out that such involvement not only raises employee morale but also likely improves their health. Porter **says social bonds are by far the most powerful predictor of life satisfaction**; e.g., getting married is the equivalent of quadrupling your income!

### ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANTAGE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

New tech companies, whose value depends largely on the production of intellectual capital, know that it's important for

employees to talk with one another and share ideas. Companies that facilitate such interactions are more likely to produce more ideas and patents. Social capital can make the difference between success and failure in business, according to Canadian researchers at Simon Fraser University's Centre for Innovation in Management (CIM) and York University's Schulich School of Business. **They have been testing the theory that trust, shared values and strong stakeholder relationships can be key financial indicators.** "We are really only just beginning to see how social capital might be applied to business," says CIM executive director Ann Svendsen.

One insight from such research is that managers who are able to connect with others unknown to them are valuable. They are able to influence the outcome of takeovers, the direction of strategic alliances and the acquisition of venture capital. Surveys by the US Small Business Administration show that most start-ups find and secure financing through the "informal investing grapevine – of capital seekers and investors."

### THREE COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital can be better understood by recognizing its three components: 1) structural, 2) relational, and 3) cognitive. Most descriptions emphasize structure: the

overall pattern of connections among people – that is, whom you reach and how you reach them. The relational focuses on dimensions familiar to public relations: trust and trustworthiness, norms and sanctions, obligations and expectations, identity and identification. The third component, cognitive, strikes at the heart of communication: the shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning among people. In other words, when people share a common culture, they can communicate more easily and efficiently with one another.

### WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**DIED.** Dr. Alan Scott, co-author with Doug Newsom of *This Is PR: The Realities of Public Relations*, a widely used public relations principles book, died August 23, age 88, at his home in Austin, Texas. He

taught at the University of Texas at Austin for 34 years before retiring in 1983. He was a co-founder of the Texas Public Relations Association.

## BROOKHAVEN LAB DEMONSTRATES THE VALUE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND SHOWS WHAT PROGRAMS SUPPORT IT

When a policy, decision or behavior by an organization affects the vital interests of a stakeholder group, that group expects to be included in the decision-making process. Serious confrontations and consequences can occur if that expectation is not met. One of the policy-making roles of a public relations or public affairs director is to advise top management when such public involvement is desirable – or absolutely necessary.

Brookhaven National Laboratory, a U.S. Dept. of Energy laboratory founded in 1947, was named Organization of the Year by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) last May for making the right policy decisions. "Brookhaven not only actively seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by lab decisions, but also effectively provides the public with information that allows them to participate in a meaningful way," explains IAP2.

A new management group, installed after the Energy Department fired the former managers, recognized the importance of such public affairs measures by creating a **community action plan and forming a community advisory council.** John Marburger, the lab's director since 1998, recognizes that science should not be put ahead of safety, which his predecessor did. He notes, "It pays to have the community understand what we do...and try to operate in harmony with the community instead of fighting with them."

"Brookhaven's public-participation initiatives are remarkably effective," says one member of the Lab's **Community Advisory Council.** "I think the Lab has put forward an exceptional effort and has made a significant, honest attempt to listen and respond to issues raised by the community. I am quite impressed

Core values for the practice of public participation, according to IAP2, include:

- The public should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives
- Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision

Other public participation values required by IAP2 state that the process should:

- Communicate the interests and meet the process needs of all participants
- Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected
- Involve participants in defining how they participate
- Communicate to participants how their input affected the decision
- Provide participants with the information needed to participate in a meaningful way

with the major strides the Lab has made in being open and responsive to the issues that we and other community groups raise.”

**Recognizing the importance of public affairs**, one of Marburger’s first actions was to bring the communications, community involvement, and government affairs functions under one manager – Marge Lynch who holds the title of assistant laboratory director. She sits at the policy-making table and reports directly to Marburger. Most responsible for public participation programs is Kathleen Geiger, manager of the community involvement office. BNL’s **public participation program** has several components:

- **Community Advisory Council** consisting of representatives from more than 30 local civic, health, environmental, and business organizations
- 15-person **Stakeholder Relations Team** which had face-to-face interviews with 60 Long Island opinion leaders and covered 20 issues
- **Ambassador Program** which involves employees in community activities
- **Envoy Program** that builds on relationships employees already have with community organizations
- **Outreach and Community Programs**, such as Summer Sunday; and
- **Speakers Bureau.**

The lab sought community participation to deal with a difficult environmental crisis: plumes of volatile organic compounds were discovered off site in 1996, and in 1997 an on-site plume of groundwater contaminated with radioactive tritium was discovered. After receiving extensive community input, the Energy Dep’t and Brookhaven are reviewing alternative options for cleaning up contaminated sediment on the site and in neighboring communities’ Peconic River. Their interest and willingness to get involved in public participation is still new. The journey is hardly over,” says a community activist. BNL agrees, realizing that relationship building is an ongoing process, not just a way to deal with a specific crisis.

## MARKETING TO CHILDREN: A CALL TO ACTION TO PROTEST THE GOLDEN MARBLE AWARDS; WHAT HAPPENS WHEN INDUSTRY DOESN’T POLICE ITSELF – NEXT STEP, REGS?

A coalition of health care professionals, parents, educators and advocates is protesting the fourth annual Golden Marble awards, a celebration of "excellence" in children's advertising. The event will take place in New York City on September 10th at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. The awards take place during an annual industry conference titled "Advertising and Promoting to Kids."

“It is time for people who care about children to take a stand against their exploitation as a consumer group,” says Boston’s Judge Baker Children’s Center, organizers of the coalition. “The Golden Marble awards celebrate artistry without questioning the ethics of marketing to children. They reward advertisers’ effective campaigns regardless of how the products, or the marketing messages, affect the well being of children and families.”

The group is alarmed about the recent escalation of corporate marketing directed at children. Children influence \$500 billion in spending per year. As a result, they are bombarded with commercials for products, including violent toys and junk food.

- Children consume almost 40 hours of media a week and see 20,000 commercials a year on television alone.
- Corporations spend more than \$12 billion a year marketing to children, well over 20 times the amount spent 10 years ago.
- Over the past ten years, childhood obesity has become a major public health problem. The fast food industry is the biggest advertiser on tv.
- 40% of fifth-grade girls report dieting. Discontent with body image correlates with how often girls read fashion magazines.
- The most frequently advertised and best-selling toys are linked to media. Children play less creatively with media-linked toys.
- The United States regulates advertising to children less than most other democratic nations.

At last year’s conference, over 40 people – mainly childhood specialists and researchers – gave speeches and rallied outside the Hyatt’s doors. Susan Linn, a psychologist with the Judge Baker Children’s Center, says, “It’s the perfect issue for a protest: people actually rewarding themselves for manipulating children.”

Recommendations of the group include a White House conference on corporate marketing; more funding to study advertising’s effects; firm federal regulation of toy-based media programs; a ban on advertising of products harmful to kids; ad-free schools; and ethical research standards for the ad industry that meet the strict requirements of academic research. (For more information: [http://www.jbcc.harvard.edu/media/marketing\\_to\\_children.htm](http://www.jbcc.harvard.edu/media/marketing_to_children.htm))

## SOCIAL CAPITAL: DOES YOUR ORG’N HAVE IT? BUILD IT?

Interest in the concept of social capital has been growing since Robert Putnam popularized the concept in his book *Bowling Alone* (Simon & Schuster, 2000). States like New Hampshire, which ranks first in social capital, proudly disclose this distinction. Going further, management scholars are finding an “organizational advantage” in companies with high social capital. Because the dimensions of relationships and trust are part of social capital, public relations professionals can apply this concept.

### COMMUNITY FOCUS

Putnam defines social capital as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” The community has been its focus, as suggested by a definition in *Business Week*: “bonds of trust and mutual concern that arise through volunteering, socializing, and taking part in organizations such as church and civic groups, bowling leagues, PTAs, and professional associations.” In Portsmouth, N.H., a city with