message development. This is a common mistake made by public health programs throughout the country, according to the paper's authors.

To craft and deliver influential consumer-based messages that will ultimately lead to the science-based recommended behavior, a series of **six strategic questions are asked**, the answers to which will ensure the communication messages and tactics will be *relevant and meaningful to the consumer*:

1. **Who will be the target?** If a public health message is to be effective, **it must be personal**. The consumer has to be defined as a person, not merely a statistic. The target must be precise with a clear description of a person's demographics, psychographics and current behaviors. If we are to fully understand the consumer, we must find out what is important to each person.

2. **Exactly what do we want our target to do (read: behavior) as a direct result of experiencing the communication?** This question will "help formulate the intermediate steps that stand between where the consumer currently is and where the science recommends he or she should be."

3. **What benefit should our message promise?** Here, we want to focus on a benefit the target would find appealing and motivating regarding a desired behavior change. This benefit must be persuasive and meaningful to the target. "If the consumer does not see the benefit to the behavior, then it is not a consumer benefit."

4. **How will we make our promise credible?** If we want our message to be credible, we must provide relevant, important, understandable and believable information to the target. Informational support, paired with emotional support, is persuasive. This will always lead us back to the consumer.

5. **What communication openings and tools should be used?** CHC's focus is first and foremost on the consumer. By reaching "receptive consumers" we are able to reach the openings in the mind of the consumer. Additional openings may be found if the target finds a promised reward particularly appealing.

6. **What image should distinguish the health behavior?** Almost every behavior has a pre-existing image. If we are to change behaviors, we must create "a look and feel for the behavior that makes it accessible, inviting, distinctive and compelling to the target," thus helping to determine the tone and style of the communication program.

ITEM OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **A New "Reporting Tongue" For Nonprofits Known As XBRL** is being designed to help both donors and nonprofits compare financial statements. XBRL – eXtensible Business Reporting Language – simply creates a set of tags (or labels) that define the typical financial statements that organizations use. These tags standardize the many formats nonprofits now submit to several different government and regulatory agencies. Funding sources will find it easier and faster to analyze data from organizations that compete for grants. More than 90 members – including the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Microsoft, Dow Jones, and the U.S. Census Bureau – comprise the assembly known as the XBRL Steering Committee. (For more information, visit XBRL.org)

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pr reporter

HABITS OF ONLINE ELITE REVEAL COMPANY WEB SITES ARE INFO SOURCE OF CHOICE; TV AND DIRECT MAIL LOSE CLOUT

This is a wake up call for organizations neglecting relationships with online publics. "E-fluentials" – the powerful group of online users who steer current cultural and consumer trends (see box) – use **organizations' web sites as their online info source of choice**, finds new research from Burson-Marsteller (NYC). Furthermore, most depend on these sites for purchase info and rely little on tv or direct mail.

By surveying 525 e-fluentials from a pool of 100,000 households, B-M found that company web sites (85%) are more widely used than online magazines (62%) and opinion sites (55%) as sources of Internet-based information about organizations, their services and products. The habit cut across a wide swath of sectors – technology, retail, finance, pharmaceutical and automotive. The **bad news** – *e-fluentials tend to spread news about negative experiences more than relate stories about positive ones*. The **good news** – companies, communities and special interest groups can *tap the power of e-fluentials and enlist their support*.

BAD NEWS BEARERS

On average, **an e-fluential relates a positive experience to about 11 people, but spreads negative stories to about 17 people**, a 55% difference. "This powerful effect makes them preferred players and partners in direct- and viral-marketing campaigns…. *E*-fluentials can be reputation-builders or busters," says researcher Leslie Gaines-Ross. "It's crucial for companies to build trust and value with influential visitors to their web sites so they can neutralize the negatives and nurture the positives." Web sites that provide straightforward, easy-to-use info-retrieval systems are pivotal in building and enhancing the value of brands, products and services. "Other consumers count on e-fluentials to be their hunters and gatherers of online information."

The survey builds on B-M/Roper research that identifies an emerging class of online elite. They: a) participate in chat rooms, b) use e-mail frequently, c) utilize message boards and d) forward selected info to others. Coined "e-fluentials," this group is similar to the traditional Roper-Starch definition of "Influential Americans" – a group that dramatically influenced cultural and consumer trends in the 1940s through letters to the editor or community activities.

E-fluentials yield clout offline as well as online: 77% vote, 55% sign petitions, 48% e-mail government agencies, 47% e-mail congressmen or senators, and 40% serve on committees of local organizations.

E-fluentials similarly affect the purchasing decisions and opinions of 155 million American adults (about 12 to 14 people each) and use a peer-to-peer network that has a ripple effect on the population. E-fluentials are estimated to be at over nine million now in the U.S., and are projected to exceed 16 million in five years.

E-fluentials are receptive to e-mail from companies they know, indicating the vital role played by familiar brands in e-mail viral marketing campaigns. Though not all *e*-fluentials open every unsolicited e-mail message – in fact, 94% report having deleted such e-mail on occasion – an astounding nine out of 10 say they have read unsolicited e-mail from people or web sites that they know. "Once they open these e-mails, *e*-fluentials bring motion to the campaign by passing on info to others and visiting the sites mentioned in the message. These findings underscore the **importance of identifying these community opinion leaders and building strong, positive relationships with them.**"

SCANT ATTENTION PAID TO TV SPOTS AND DIRECT MAIL FOR BUYING INFO

Surveyed in the early part of the holiday shopping frenzy, most e-fluentials said they would ignore tv and direct mail and turn to newspapers and the web for holiday shopping info. "Good old-fashioned newspapers are demonstrating enormous staying power as highly effective media outlets for holiday shopping sales information on a daily basis, even among the technological elite of the Internet," says Gaines-Ross. People use them for info on local sales, coupon clipping. "We were surprised to find that television scored so low despite the millions spent on tv ads." Also:

- Nearly 60% indicated they most likely would pay attention to newspaper articles and ads for tips on where to shop and what to buy during the holiday shopping season.
- Friends (45%) were the second most-cited source.
- Family and websites (39% each) tied for third.
- Only 12% reported they would tune in to their televisions for shopping ideas.

What did they buy? Toys led the shopping list at 39% listing them as the products/services they would recommend to family, friends, etc.; 35% cited CDs; 29% cited clothing. An equal portion cited portable music devices such as CD and MP3 players (29 percent), jewelry (29%), and sports equipment (27%).

WEB SURPASSES DIRECT MAIL, CATALOGS

Only 12% of those surveyed say they would turn to tv as an info shopping source; an equal percentage would turn to chat rooms and message boards, and less than that (10%) said they would pay attention to direct mail or catalogs. Only e-mail (6%), online banner ads (4%) and outdoor ads (4%) fared worse.

"The deluge of catalogs and direct-mail offers that swamp mailboxes each holiday season may be too much for a significant number of people to process amid their hectic schedules at this time of year. Companies who want to reach these people may be better served by providing informative, easily navigated web sites that they can browse whenever time allows."

(For more information on the Burson-Marsteller/Roper survey, contact David Corvette @ B-M, 212-614-4019.)

CAMPAIGN AGAINST COKE'S "COMMERCIALIZATION" OF HARRY POTTER FAILS

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) launched a protest against Coca-Cola's use of Harry Potter to promote "liquid candy." The main goal of the protest has been to persuade J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter books, to pressure Warner Bros. to drop the Coke promotion.

CSPI created a web site called SaveHarry.com that describes the health effects of Coke's products, and cites a joint letter from a coalition of 56 professors, physicians and social activists. **People can log onto the web site and send Rowling protest notes.** She has received 10,000 notes according to CSPI. Roberta Friedman, program manager of one member of the coalition, the Massachusetts Public Health Association, states, "Although we are thrilled that children are reading more because of Harry Potter, we're outraged that he'll be selling them empty calorie junk food."

The Harry Potter books have been credited with sparking interest in reading among children. Recognizing this opportunity, Coca-Cola reportedly signed a $150 million contract with Warner Bros. for the exclusive global marketing rights to the movie, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. The tie-in with reading is that Coke donated $18 million to Reading Is Fundamental, a program that will last at least three years. In its 2000 Annual Report, Coca-Cola said it will "develop programs in local communities that will engage and encourage readers at all skill levels." This program conforms to CEO Doug Daft's management philosophy, "**Think Local – Act Local**," says Bill Marks, the company's vp of public relations. He also commented, "To characterize Coca-Cola's sponsorship of Harry Potter and the magic of reading as inappropriate – and infer a connection with the health and wellness of children – simply misses the point for the sake of sensationalism."

The program enables Coke to reach out to a younger audience while not alienating adults. It also helps elevate the Coke brand worldwide because of the sheer popularity of Harry Potter.

CSPI's campaign aimed at ending Coca-Cola's use of "Harry Potter" for marketing purposes has failed. In a statement supportive of Coke, Rowling said, "I understand that Coca Cola's global literacy cause will focus on increasing children's literacy – a cause of particular interest to me." But the publicity attending CSPI's campaign has helped the public interest group get its message out to the public. Dr. Patience White, professor of medicine and pediatrics at George Washington University Medical Center, was quoted as saying: "Consumption of soft drinks has soared over the past two decades, contributing to the *doubling* in the percentage of obese teenagers. That obesity epidemic is fueling a diabetes epidemic."

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMUNICATION GOES FOR ACTION NOT AWARENESS

The concept of consumer-based health communications (CHC) originated when an issue was raised as to how health communicators can motivate the public to achieve public health goals. In a paper, "Strategic Questions for Consumer-Based Health Communications," Sharyn Sutton, George Balch and R. Craig Lefebvre explain this concept:

As health communicators, **we need to understand what motivates, reinforces and affects the consumer's current behavior**. In essence, we must understand the consumer's reality. We must be able to comprehend the barriers standing between the consumer and his or her uncertainty in adopting a marketed, healthier lifestyle, as well as the rewards, as perceived by the consumer, associated with it.

While research is necessary for understanding the target audience, it is not to be relied upon solely for

> Research plays a large role in designing the message and delivering it in such a way that is truly aware of the consumer's reality. It is necessary if we are "to assure that the science-based recommendations are **communicated in ways that are consistent with the consumer's values, beliefs, desires, needs and behaviors.**"