

3) fostering corporate values and supporting human resource goals; 4) meeting the expectations of host communities, activist groups and governments, as well as customers, employees and investors; 5) responding to critical social issues; 6) expanding access to new markets.

- **International by design:** Programs are engineered from the outset to be international and to reflect the values and culture of the business and its local operating goals. BP has a “virtual business unit” to drive its social investment activities across the globe, in partnership with over 120 business operating units
- **Central advocacy, local delivery:** Headquarters facilitates, encourages and supports, while local operating units deliver. For this to work well, commitment of executive leadership is needed both centrally and locally. Johnson & Johnson has committees of senior operating unit execs to oversee the management of its community involvement strategy across Europe.
- **Leveraging added value:** Corporate resources pale in comparison to the social challenges to be addressed. But effectiveness can be increased by leveraging in-kind contributions, generating matching resources, replicating successful programs across regions, working with complementary partners, engaging the skills & enthusiasms of employees. Diageo has developed a series of “toolkits” to help replicate successful programs internationally.
- **Being seen to be involved:** Effectiveness depends on visibility. BP, BT, Ford and Rio Tinto all publish **social reports**. Rio Tinto also requires each of its operating businesses to publish its own social and environmental report covering relationships with local communities.
- **What gets measured gets managed:** Measurement is used to improve programs, determine if goals are met, identify impact, and identify need.
- **Making a difference:** There is a growing determination to bring about real social improvement through corporate community involvement efforts. Increasingly, they are willing to play a part in public policy debate on how to tackle pressing social problems.

(More information on this and other research from www.bc.edu/corporatecitizenship or 617/552-4545)

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **Spanish Influence Is Growing.** U.S. Hispanic population has increased by more than 60% since 1990, from 22.4 million to 35.3 million, according to the Census Bureau. Hispanics have become the largest minority group in the U.S., “at least six years sooner than expected,” notes the don Quijote press. Its website, www.donquijote.org – dedicated to the Spanish language and the Hispanic culture – received over 1 million page views last month. It points out that there are currently 340 million Spanish speakers worldwide and that *USA Today* published a front-page article titled “Learn Spanish Or Be Left Behind” (5/9/01). ¿Usted habla español?

¶ **Will A Hand-Addressed Envelope Entice You To Open It?** It did us at prr, exactly what it was intended to do. Direct mail piece from Fasprint was hand addressed; inside was a 3” x 8” folded note that reads: “Why did you open this direct mailer? Because it has the personal touch that we all want!” According to its survey research, 100% of all hand addressed delivered mail gets opened, compared to 14% of mail that is machine addressed or labeled (More from them at 518/483-4631)

LONG - TERM GOALS ARE WITHIN REACH WHEN STAKEHOLDERS ARE INCLUDED; CASE STUDY TACTICS

Four years ago, the Dearborn School Board (Michigan) decided to revamp its strategic mission and make the Michigan school district the best it could be. “There were some things we thought were perfect the way they were,” Margaret Weertz, com’n coordinator told prr. “Other things were good but needed tweaking. Then, there were some things we wanted to change altogether.” The Board decided that **parents and community would be key to the success of any strategy** they could develop.

Principals sent a **formal invitations to select stakeholders:** a) a parent; b) a teacher; c) a community member; d) a contingency from the business community (Chamber of Commerce), and e) a non-educational employee, such as a custodian or a cafeteria worker. “The idea was to reach out, from teacher to community.” With 30 schools in the district, plus school board and administrators, the effort yielded a crowd of about 500. “We all got together in a banquet hall and heard a presentation by our consultant.” Michigan-based strategist and educational consultant Bill Banach outlined impending changes – what would education be like in the 21st Century? “Even a few years ago, there was not the pervasiveness there is today of cell phones and virtual learning. Add to the mix an aging population – middle aged folks caring for their parents and grandparents, as people live to be 100. Also, retirement ages have been pushed back. He did a great job of stretching our minds – helping people to realize that we’re not in the 1950s anymore.” Then the audience broke into their school “teams” and discussed the issues germane to them.

Dearborn School Board’s new goals call for public understanding, involvement:

1. Enhance public understanding of the school district’s decision-making process;
2. Proactively pursue representative community feedback;
3. Become more effective ambassadors for the school district;
4. Accommodate public participation in school board meetings.

RECURRING THEMES

Banach hammered feedback from the stakeholder groups into recurring themes; team members were able to review and refine the themes into eight priorities. These included such things as upgrading the curriculum, helping at-risk kids with alternative methods of education, enhancing mutual respect, and integrating technology into all facets of district operation. The teams also identified those practices that work well and those that don’t. Everyone seemed to like the theme schools, e.g., Spanish-based schools, creative arts-based schools, etc.. Many stakeholders thought many teachers were still entrenched in the junior high (mini high school) mindset and hadn’t effectively made the paradigm shift to middle school (easier transition for kids) mentality. But the main thing they wanted to change:

- **level of community involvement.** “We decided to pursue community feedback more effectively and on an ongoing basis, and to engage the public in the decision-making process,” says Weertz. “To do this, it was decided to have school board meetings at the different schools, rotating them, rather than have them all at the administration building.”

The Board worked with the principals and Superintendent to come up with a new strategic plan, vision and mission statements, and a new set of goals. Additional stakeholder meetings have since been held, each with new faces in the crowd. “We have new teams working on the new goals.” (More from Weertz at 313/730-3248)

ORGANIZATIONS USE THE INTERNET TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

The Internet “has forever changed the way people ‘sell’ their opinions, ‘buy’ into political causes, and build long-term relationships with like-minded individuals,” writes Douglas Pinkham, Public Affairs Council president, in the introduction to *Public Affairs Strategies in the Internet Age*. This report, from the Foundation for Public Affairs, profiles ways in which corporations and associations use Internet technology in crisis communications, issues management, grassroots networks, community building and ally development. In contrast to hierarchical systems of communication used pre-Internet days, **information spreads horizontally – from PC to PC – in the Internet Age**. Pinkham says “this characteristic can **harness the power of an entire online community to solve societal problems** and hold people and institutions accountable.”

Report illustrates **how companies are using websites**. Some examples and mini-case studies include:

- Mendocino Redwood Company’s response to a Web, e-mail and postal mail attack on its forestry practices. One rule: Contain your response to the medium in which the attack occurs.
- Verizon Communications activated its already-prepared Web pages when workers went on strike.
- Dow Chemical uses 600 “scanners” in its online issues management system to identify public policy issues of potential significance to the company.
- Ford Motor Company uses the Internet and its intranet as “instantaneous research tools” to post legislation proposed on the state level.
- IBM uses an electronic “ship-sheet” system to track lobbyists’ contacts with members of Congress and their aides.
- The Hartford Financial Services Group sends e-mail grassroots alerts to its employees and, on an intranet-based equivalent, gives employees additional ways to become informed and take action.
- BASF organized the Capital Club as a way for employees and retirees (who are given passwords to access the company’s intranet) to encourage retirees to become politically informed and active.

“News events such as the Enron collapse, plant closings and campaign finance reform proposals only make the public more cynical about corporate behavior. **The most successful companies are the ones that understand this and go out of their way to keep people informed and connected.** The Internet enables them to do just that,” says Pinkham.

- The Royal Dutch/Shell Group of Companies has a Web page that links to portals for more than 50 countries. Its Shell Report section offers extensive information about the company’s business principles and how it addresses public policy issues.

BROADENING THE BASE OF GRASSROOTS SUPPORTERS

Microsoft recognizes that the speed and low cost of websites makes them excellent vehicles for recruiting supporters from the general public and demonstrating endorsements from respected third parties. It established the Freedom to Innovate Network, which channels unsolicited communications into grassroots lobbying of federal and state officials. Registered network members receive e-mailed newsletters twice a month and are periodically requested to contact public officials about an issue.

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Hartford Financial Services Group has mobilized its 6,500 independent agencies into effective grassroots activists. Agents are sent e-mail alerts with links to an extranet site, which provides online tools to compose and send messages to officials they know.

NURTURE ACTIVISTS STEP BY STEP

The BlueCross BlueShield Association’s multiple websites build on the finding from focus groups that *people don’t go from seeking information to taking action in a single step*. In fact, information seekers are put off if they’re asked to take action too quickly, says BCBS congressional com’ns dir Tony Calandro. For many, first Internet contact with BCBS is at www.bcbs.com where there is a link to bcbshealthissues.com. There they can get information about public policy issues and are asked if they’d like to send a message to a public official. Doing so requires them to register, which gives them access to DigitalRoots.org – the association’s grassroots action website. A fourth website, open only to the local Blue plans, provides content and tools for the plans’ use in their government affairs activities.

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The Association wants to tap the nearly 80 million individuals who are covered by BCBS policies. In late 2001, BCBS websites were attracting about 80,000 visitors a month, 31,000 of whom had become registered users, 22,000 had taken a grassroots action, 7,000 had signed up for a newsletter and more than 3,000 had taken multiple actions. Calandro’s goal is to have 10,000 registered users in each congressional district by 2008 – that’s about 5% of policy holders. (Copy from Foundation for Public Affairs, 2033 K Street, NW, Suite 700, Wash DC 20006; dpinkham@pac.org)

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAMS EXPLORED BY THE CENTER FOR CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP

Today, for companies to maintain their reputation and preserve their freedom to operate, they must be socially responsible internationally – *everywhere they operate, sell, manufacture, invest or market*. “It involves embedding community involvement throughout all business operations, across the world, as an essential element of corporate citizenship,” reports the Center for Corporate Citizenship. Its research “Benchmarks for International Corporate Community Involvement” – first-ever benchmarking study of international corporate community involvement – looks at the practice of 14 participating companies headquartered in Europe and the US. Key findings:

- **Drivers for developing international community involvement programs** are similar to those that motivate domestic strategies: 1) preserving the license to operate; 2) building reputation;