

security, congressional mail is backed up. Gov't officials are just now getting mail that was sent to them in December. "After being irradiated as a precaution against anthrax spores and other bioterrorism agents, many letters are delivered burnt, and most tend to crumble when handled." Why not e-mail which seems the logical alternative? "Ironically, your e-mail is likely to get lost in the shuffle. Representatives receive hundreds of e-mails per day, much of it mass e-mail. It's **printed out and distributed by hand** throughout congressional offices, and replied to via US mail, **primarily to avoid time-consuming running debates** with constituents made easy by the 'reply to sender' feature of the medium." [That's a lot of time & money spent to avoid communication....]

¶ **Looking For Info On CEOs?** Go to *CEOGO.com* – Burson-Marsteller's Internet site that reports on CEO reputations, changing roles, research, current articles in the media, leadership challenges, etc. For instance, the site reports that: a) nearly 50% of a company's reputation is due to CEO reputation; b) the average CEO tenure has dropped to nearly 5 yrs; c) media coverage of CEOs has increased seven-fold since 1990; d) the leading reason for CEO failure is a lack of strategy & execution.

¶ **Enron Scandal Leaves Public Wanting Reform.** A Harris Interactive survey finds a large majority favors campaign finance reform to ban soft money. Harris surveyed 2,031 adults online between February 21 and 27 and found that nearly everyone (97%) knows about the collapse of Enron. While 39% think Enron is mainly a business and financial issue, 53% believe it is also an important political issue and 65% want to ban "soft money." A plurality of 48% favors a new federal government regulatory agency to oversee accounting firms.

"We Are Always At The Mercy Of The Integrity Of Senior Corporate Management," writes John Budd in this week's supplement, *plain talk*, on the subject of Enron's demise. "Could the crisis communications program have been better orchestrated? Makes no difference. Mud is mud." In a "once-and-for-all" effort, Budd sorts out the *lessons for public relations*.

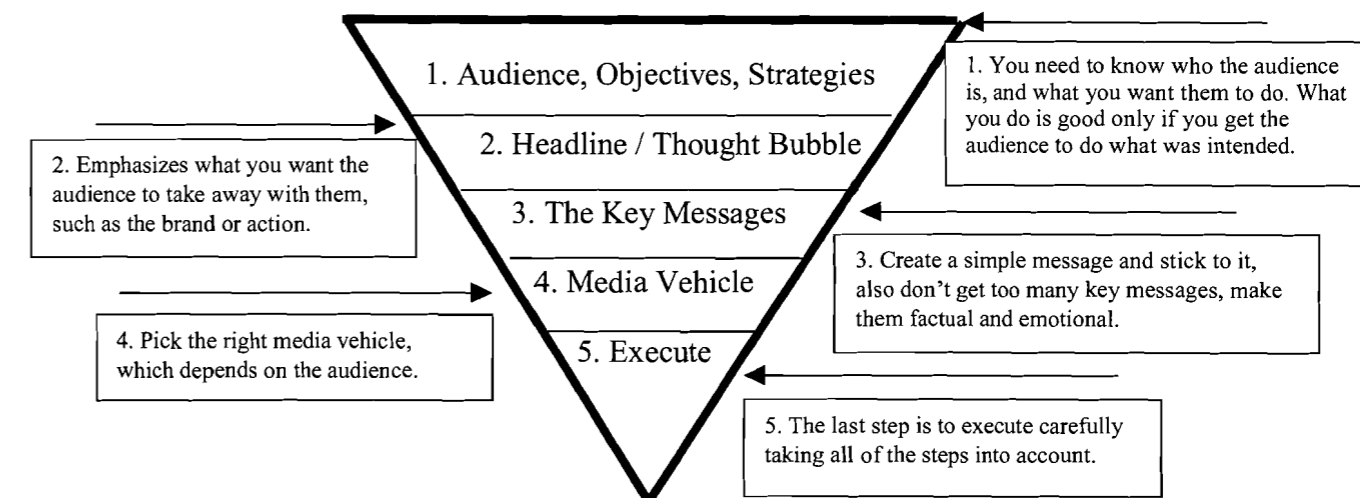
¶ **The Shape Of The Table Matters In Meetings**, as does our positions around it, writes Rick Brenner in his email newsletter *Point Lookout*. The traditional long, rectangular table with the leader at its head is problematic – it encourages sidebar conversations at the other end and makes it difficult for people at opposite ends to participate. Brenner recommends: a) For small meetings use a round table, which "facilitates frequent and spontaneous pair-wise exchanges." b) For larger meetings, the leader should "avoid sitting at one end. Instead, sit in the middle of one side...where you have good access to all participants, and they have good access to you." c) Brainstorming meetings need no table. (More from www.ChacoCanyon.com)

¶ **Best Practices In Communication Planning And Implementation** is a collection of nearly 100 award-winning case studies from IABC's 2001 Gold Quill Awards. Reference tool provides international insights and commentaries for each category on what made these award-winning programs best in class. Diversity of authors (from Asia Pacific, North America, Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa) creates a unique, international perspective. Categories include: 1) community/gov't rels, 2) media rels, 3) mktg/branding com'n, 4) special events, 5) issues mgmt, 6) investor/shareholder rels, 7) internal rels, 8) benefits. Cases show how key needs were identified, goals set, obstacles overcome, resources budgeted and success measured. Also includes a CD-ROM showing visual samples from selected programs. (Ring-bound format \$175 mbrs, \$210 nonmbrs; www.iabc.com/store or call 800/776-4222)

"PR THOUGHT PROCESS" MODEL EARNS AMAZON ITS MEGA STATURE THROUGH BRANDED MESSAGES, TARGETED PUBLICS

It's the driver that made Amazon a company that **relies entirely on pr and not on advertising**, and it's the reason for the company's success: "we use public relations to drive sales," Bill Curry, dpr, Amazon.com (Seattle), told *prr*. The company, which started as an online bookstore in 1995 and has expanded into a plethora of other product lines, maintains a straightforward mission – increasing sales. "We don't influence legislation, obtain permits, or try to get people to take the bus instead of drive a car." **Getting people to go to Amazon.com and buy Amazon products are the desired behaviors.**

In a presentation made to students at Florida International U, Curry used the familiar inverted pyramid writing model to illustrate how Amazon implements its sales strategy. But Curry's triangle has a unique twist in that it shows what *practitioners are to focus on at various points of a program or campaign*. It looks like this:



Two things the pyramid does not show, says Curry, are *research* on the top and *results* down by the point. "We're not doing this in a vacuum," he says. "If something doesn't work, we know it right away." Curry can measure results almost immediately. "We look at traffic to the site and then sales. We can measure very closely, almost in real time, whether or not the people coming to our site will do what we hope they'll do. We do know that the approach gets the result we want, and that is traffic and sales." (For more information, e-mail curry@amazon.com.)

[**Editor's note:** Research shows that media alone do not stimulate the ultimate behavior. But in this case, the awareness function of media is more directly tied to bringing about the desired behavior. Stimulated by media exposure, visitors to the Amazon site (even if merely seeking information) quickly become purchasers due to the relative ease of doing so and the lack of risk involved.]

HOT ISSUES OF 2002: TO HELP UNDERSTAND THE ENVIRONMENT AND TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES CHANGE BRINGS

Each year, Bill Banach – practitioner and past pres of NSPRA – considers current problems facing schools “to help you reflect on what was and to anticipate what might be – to help you think about change and seize the opportunities it always presents.” Though compiled for schools, this list is relevant for hospitals, corporations, nonprofits, you name the industry; all share the same environment. **All industries can glean from this list.** Four hot issues for 2002 are:

- Leader Stomp.** People are playing “Circle the Troops and Stomp the Leader.” **While people routinely speak to the importance of and the need for leadership, leaders who propose new approaches and different techniques are frequently received with disdain.** In some quarters, leader and target have become synonymous. No wonder many leaders are hunkering down and playing defense.
- Remote Control.** Change must be advocated from a context of understanding. Most initiatives aren’t coming from the employees who have to do the work, but are: a) legislated from a distance by people who have little understanding of the day-to-day routines or b) being advocated by theorists who don’t have to deal with reality. Moreover, much of what legislators and theorists advocate is not systemic. Systems people tell us that this means the desired change cannot be sustained. **Those who advocate change from a distance will have more impact and create more goodwill if they advocate their positions from a context of understanding.**
- Dwindling Constituency.** The primary audience for today’s educators is one quarter of a community’s citizenry. And in addition to the traditional “three Ps” – public, private, and parochial education – there are charters, home instruction, university classes, virtual schools and packaged learning. One would think that public schools should start schmoozing the parents that are left, but there’s another choice: **be all things to all people.** This choice caused public education a lot of grief in the past and stretched education beyond its capacity. But today **technology enables us to extend our reach while increasing our depth.** It allows us to reach more people with more programs, and it might give us the capacity that we need to better serve our dwindling constituency while reaching out to some new ones.
- No Radio.** Do we hear what’s going on? The economy has had its ups and downs. Businesses are cutting back. Uncertainty is on the upswing. And we’re just a few months into a new kind of war. Everyone says that things are different ... and they are. Practitioners will have to **listen more**

Banach offers a common sense, **five-step planning process:** 1) Conduct an **analysis** of the environment in which you function. Do this first. 2) Based on the analysis, develop a **strategy** to move forward. 3) Put your **plan** in writing. 4) Do what you said you were going to do; that is, **execute** the plan. 5) **Evaluate** to understand what worked and what didn’t ... and why. The process is cyclical: evaluation leads back into analysis, which, in turn, leads to checking strategy, which leads to updating the plan ... and so forth.

“Strategic processing means that people must continuously assess what they’re doing and where they’re headed. That’s what allows them to respond to a changing environment and capitalize on the opportunities that it presents,” explains Banach.

intently to the signals people are sending. And they’ll have to realize that things are going to be different for them, too. (For more information and the complete list of Top Hot and Not Hot Issues, contact Bill Banach @ 586/784-9888 or visit www.banach.com)

PR FIRM HAS HANDS OFF – COMPLETELY OFF – POLICY TOWARD EMPLOYEES, ALLOWS EVERYONE TO WORK AT HOME

“We’re a virtual agency,” consultant Mike Bernhardt (Beaverton, OR) told prr. “All of our employees are set up to work out of their homes.” Bernhardt, who started his business ten years ago, made the decision in ‘96 to fold the “downtown office” and let people work from their homes. **The results, he says, have been wildly enthusiastic employees, higher productivity, and happy clients.** He notes how one of his staff members juggles clients and contractors while raising her child. “She runs a business center for us. The trade off is big for her as she is able to stay home with her son.”

PR is one of the few professions that fits independent work from a home environment, and technology boosts that advantage. “Time alone, time to be creative and conduct research all lend themselves to being at home in a comfortable environment.”

Bernhardt has a staff of about 10, and several contractors. He finds that one catch in letting people work from home is that they tend to veer off course, “too far to the left or too far to the right.” He keeps them in the loop with:

- Weekly meetings.** These are held in somebody’s home or a restaurant & “focus on team building.”
- Accountability.** “Everybody is responsible for their own schedules, their own billing, their own progress management systems.”
- Intranet.** Everything is available there for all staff to access. “Things are more passed on than they are shared.” If several people are involved in a project, each person’s edits are evident on the site.
- Contractor involvement.** “If you only call upon them once a year for a project, results are not so good.” So the agency tries to keep pulling them in, even for small things.

Bernhardt also believes in: a) **involving junior staff in all aspects of a project**, from strategy to implementation. “Giving them more responsibility teaches them to be stellar employees and earns their loyalty”; b) **working as a team, in good times and bad.** Though the firm had a banner year in 2000, last year wasn’t good. “We voted to skip a paycheck one week, another week to clock in four days even though we all worked seven.” Bernhardt eventually had to lay some people off, a decision that everyone knew about way ahead of time. “They knew it was coming – no management decisions are made behind closed doors.”

Bernhardt’s firm won Top PR/Marketing Agency to Work for in Oregon for two years in a row, scoring #1 in Leadership, Performance Management, and Organizational Communication. He says the award is based on feedback from employees.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Don’t Write Your Congressman, Use Phone Or Fax,** advises Brett St.Clair of Business & Industry Ass’n of NH. Because of the September 11 attack, the anthrax threat and increased