

relatively little is known about public relations efforts targeted at them," writes Gibson. This issue addresses that deficiency. (prquarterly@aol.com; 800-572-3451; Box 311, Rhinebeck, NY 12572)

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **2002 O'Dwyer's Directory Of Corporate Communications** lists 18,000 pr and communications professionals in 5,300+ companies, 2,100 ass'ns, 187 foreign embassies and 130+ federal gov't dep'ts, bureaus, agencies & commissions. Also includes CEOs as well as corporate secretaries and others who handle or supervise pr for the organization. Listings include address, phone, fax, statement of business & pr dep't duties, key execs & working pr pros. About half of the com'n dep'ts report to the chrm, pres &/or CEO. About one-sixth report to adv'g or mktg, and another one-sixth to a vp of administration. Approximately 80% of the companies have formal pr/com'ns titles or dep'ts. Companies use a wide variety of names for the pr function, although the trend in the past few years has been away from use of "public relations" and toward "corporate communications." (\$130; contact www.odwyerpr.com)

¶ **K-Mart To Focus On Minority Publics.** K-Mart is boosting its new branding strategy with grassroots public relations reaching out to multicultural stakeholders. Along with an ad campaign that will be regionally based and feature original music by African American and Hispanic entertainers, the chain plans to launch grass roots programs that will complement in-place policies that empower store managers to build merchandise selections and facility operations around the communities they serve. Values it hopes to convey are a) family first, b) value for money, c) practicality and convenience. Black and Hispanic shoppers together comprise 39% of K-Mart's consumer base.

¶ **Web Most Popular Medium With Execs.** C-level execs (CEO, COO, CFO, etc.) spend an average of 16 hours a week on the Web, nearly twice the time spent with tv (8.6 hours); nearly three times the hours spent with radio (5.7 hours); magazines (6.6 hours) or newspapers (6.6 hours). Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents visit eight or more websites a month searching for business and financial info. This survey, conducted online by Research.Net for Forbes.com, is just the latest research on Internet use by high-level executives. According to the U.S. Census Bureau report, "A Nation Online," 67% of all managers and professionals access the Internet regularly from work.

¶ **Hire For Attitude, Train For Skill,** is the counsel of Barbara Bartlein, president of Great Lakes Consulting Group. "Attitude is everything to personal and professional success. It colors our vision of how we see the world and other people. Attitude affects our beliefs and our behavior. It impacts teamwork, customer relations, motivation and the ability to deal with change. Attitude makes the difference between a pleasant working environment and a place we dread to go. Unfortunately, I have never had any success 'adjusting' someone else's attitude. I learned early in my management experience that it was easier to teach new skills than it was to change attitudes," writes Bartlein.

China And Europe Are The Main Targets Of Growth, notes GE's CEO Jeffrey Immelt speaking with Wharton MBA students. According to Immelt, the importance of China cannot be overstated. "In your lifetime and in my lifetime, China is going to be the most significant economic force." Western companies must look to China either as a key market or the launching pad for future competitors, he notes in *Knowledge@Wharton* (www.knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu). **This week's tips & tactics addresses practicing public relations in China.**

HANDLING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS: ONE APPROACH SHOWS VARIOUS PITFALLS

How do you broach the touchy subject of weight with your stakeholders? George Ziolkowski, dir, Pupil Personnel Services, East Penn School District (Emmaus, Penn), says he dreaded the idea of sending a letter to parents telling them their kids were too fat, or in some cases, too thin. The idea to do so came from the district's 77 school nurses. They are government-mandated to record a student's weight and height and compare the figures with the Body-Mass Index (BMI), a scale that shows normal body weights according to height and age

"About two years ago, they presented data to me about children being overweight and underweight, and the related diseases," Ziolkowski told prr. According to a recent federal report, about 13% of children and adolescents are overweight or obese. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Atlanta) says the percentage of kids K-12 who are defined as overweight has more than doubled since the early 70s. "The nurses said our school district's population (6,800) is 'looking larger' – though some kids are underweight. They wanted to send letters home to parents, just as they would if they found something wrong in an ear test or an eye test. I said, 'do you know what this would mean?'" It wasn't until this school year that Ziolkowski was persuaded to do so.

"We finally decided to develop a letter, which we drafted about eight times," says Ziolkowski. The idea was to maintain sensitivity and not blame the parents. "We also developed material on fitness for elementary school, middle school and high school students, and included the BMI indicator for height and weight. The letter went out to parents saying, 'your child may be at risk.'"

EXECUTING THE DRAFT, HANDLING THE BACKLASH

The package sent to parents outlined the problem and warned of the potential danger and the associated diseases, "all of them preventable," says Ziolkowski. "Parents were advised that they could come in and talk to the school nurse or talk to their own healthcare provider." The children were not made aware of the letters. To say that the initiative created a public clamor is a "gross understatement," says Ziolkowski. He expected a reaction, maybe, in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, but not one that would resound worldwide. "I have personally appeared on six to seven national news shows and some local shows, and about 35 to 50 radio shows." The story was picked up by the London Times and as far away as an Australian news outlet. "Weight is one of those politically incorrect topics that you're just not supposed to address."

JEERS AND CHEERS FROM PARENTS

The letters (about 380) initially went to the parents of elementary school children. "We heard from about 50 parents; half of the calls were negative, half positive. It was the negative feedback that got a lot of play." Objections: a) it's none of your business; b) a school's job is to teach reading, writing and arithmetic; c) it's an infringement on our privacy as a family.

Other parents applauded the effort. "One child visits the school nurse because he wants to know how he's doing. He and his parents have changed their eating habits; he says that he feels much better."

LESSONS LEARNED

Ziolkowski says it's too early to tell whether or not anyone will use the letter as a model of what to do or not to do, but he did receive hundreds of requests from schools, healthcare providers and school districts wanting to take a look at it. But if he were to do it again, "there are things I'd do differently," he notes:

1. **Alert parents ahead of time** about what's being planned;
2. **Inform educators in advance** via the district newsletter. Include in the newsletter the risks of being overweight and underweight, the BMI and the associated diseases.

Ziolkowski doubts that the parents who reacted negatively have changed their minds [reinforcing that **awareness doesn't change attitudes, it merely reinforces what's already believed**]. "I think the people who were unhappy have maintained their point of view – that it's not the school district's business." But, he notes, **the effort ultimately was worthwhile**. "We discovered two or three cases of serious health problems, one that required the child to be hospitalized. For that child, I think it was worth it."

¶ **Of Related Interest: Obesity is fast becoming a workplace issue**, especially now that the IRS says it will allow Americans to claim weight loss programs as a medical deduction, even if that treatment is implemented without a doctor's directive. Next, insurance companies and government programs (e.g., Medicare) may begin offering coverage for obesity treatment.

ENRON COLLAPSE IS TRIGGERING EVENT FOR NEWLY FORMED CENTER FOR VALUES BASED LEADERSHIP

46% of Americans believe that Enron's debacle damaged capitalism in the US, according to a poll by Sacred Heart University Polling Institute (Fairfield, Ct). This group is slightly larger than the 41% who do *not* feel it damaged capitalism. But 85% believe criminal as well as civil charges should be filed against Enron execs if they misled employees or acted fraudulently.

On the heels of the Enron crisis, Sacred Heart University is hosting the newly formed Center for Values Based Leadership. The Center's advisory board includes chairmen & chief exec officers from Clorox Company, Dun & Bradstreet, Guardsmark, Nielsen Media Research, Pitney Bowes, SBLI USA, Veterans Corporation, and Walker Information. They are joined by former CEOs from Brooks Brothers, Drake Beam Morin, and Price Waterhouse World Firm Ltd.; senior exec officers at Conseco, Deloitte & Touche, IBI Whitehall Bank & Trust, Louis Dreyfus Corp, and Radio Shack; as well as the president of Sacred Heart University, the Wharton School's vice dean and director of the Undergraduate Division, an associate dean and director of the CEO Leadership

"Sadly, today's business news is dominated with far too many examples of leaders who have violated the public's trust, basic integrity and respect for employees and other stakeholders as core values.... New laws and regulations alone will not solve the problem and restore the public's trust. **The solution to this serious leadership crisis rests in developing a new generation of principled leaders,**" says William Redgate, the Center's founder and director.

Institute at Yale, a prominent NYU professor, an author and a venture capitalist. A Connecticut Congressman also sits on the board.

Center will provide seminars, forums, research, lectures, consulting, databases and advocacy to extend the base of knowledge on the subject of values-based leadership. It will share its expertise with practitioners in all sectors. The Center's first annual forum will be May 21. (More info from: Redgatew@sacredheart.edu; 203/319-0069)

HOW WELL DO WEBSITES COMMUNICATE TO EUROPEANS?

"There are now 171+ million Europeans online. Companies doing business in Europe need to establish a new level of dialogue – a new quality of relationships – with their stakeholders online," says Mark Dober, managing dir of APCO Online. In light of the upcoming .eu domain name change (once approved by EU member states) and the "common European identity emerging in society and business," APCO did a study of the world's 50 largest (by revenue) companies' websites on how they communicate to Europeans. 75% do not have a corporate website that focuses on Europe as a regional body. Study also benchmarked these 50 sites to assess how they communicate to Europeans overall. Key findings include:

- Fewer than one-third have a phone number for their European corporate headquarters on their corporate website.
- Only half answered an e-mail request for info on their European operations within one week.
- The majority failed to communicate in a language other than English.
- Of the 10 highest scoring sites, four are European companies. (More from Dober in Brussels, mdober@apco-europe.com, or Evan Kraus in D.C., ekraus@apcoworldwide.com)

¶ **Of related interest:** The five most off-putting e-commerce errors, according to Internet marketing authority Marcia Yudkin, are: 1) Lack of quick orientation for first-time visitors; 2) Explanations that don't explain; 3) Missing prices and shipping charges; 4) Unreadable text – creativity gone haywire and lettering too small for over-40 eyes; 5) Inconsistencies that leave the site visitor saying "huh?" The good news is these are easy and inexpensive to fix. (marcia@yudkin.com)

HISPANIC VOTING PUBLIC GROWING

According to an overnight omnibus TeleNación poll of 600 Hispanics, 42% reported watching the "State of the Union Address" and of those, 85% had an overall positive impression of President Bush. On the issues, 81% approve of his educational policies, 84% approve of how he's handling the job of being president, and 72% feel very/somewhat confident about how he will help the economy. Over half of all respondents (51%) were registered voters. Poll's margin of error is 4%. Strategy Research Corp, which conducted the poll, says that the parties have an eye to the future size of the Hispanic-voting public. **There are now about 13.6 million Hispanics eligible to vote.** If trends continue, **Hispanics may become the largest minority-voting bloc in the nation as soon as 2006.** The poll is meaningful, says SRC, because it shows that Bush has made inroads in a mostly Democratic constituency.

Recognizing the growing influence of Hispanics, the Spring 2002 edition of *Public Relations Quarterly* offers a special feature on Hispanic Public Relations edited by Dirk Gibson, assoc professor of communication & journalism, U of NM. "The 2000 Census located about 35 million American Hispanics, approximately 12.5% of the entire population. Despite the impressive size of this group,