

London, Longview's vp of training & consulting. (More from them at mllongviewEAP@aol.com. Goldsmith can be reached at barton@bartongoldsmith.com)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS BUILD LASTING PERCEPTIONS; MAKE INITIAL CONTACT POSITIVE, PLEASING

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression," G. Clotaire Rapaille, international expert in Archetype Discoveries & Creativity (www.archetypediscoveriesworldwide.com) recently told Arthur Page attendees. His work with autistic children led him to develop a new process for understanding how children are imprinted for the first time by what he calls the Logic of Emotion. "No imprinting is done without emotion," says Rapaille, and imprinting done before the age of seven "can't be changed."

What does it mean for organizations, their products/services and relationships? Rapaille's work suggests that we must understand the underlying motivations of those we seek to reach. And, that **each first time connection is critical to the long-term relationship.** But, the initial contact must be linked to some emotion for it to register and "imprint" on the psyche of the recipient. Example:

- **Airbags and children.** While some public awareness campaigns fail or show little success, the recent one on placing children in the backseat away from airbags has made tremendous progress. By 2000, the number of cars equipped with passenger-side airbags tripled but the number of children dying because of them dropped from 35 in 1996 to 18 in 2000. Applying Rapaille's theory, most people are imprinted early in life about protecting and caring for children. The campaign and resulting lawsuits publicized the cases where children died because of improper use of seatbelts or not being in the backseat. Awareness focused on the emotional imprint to keep children safe. The lower death rate is "primarily the result of a shift in public behavior," notes Jeffrey Runge, administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Keeping Track Of Personnel Involved In A Crisis** is a formidable task for IBM, which has 320,000 people in 160 nations and 1,000 work locations, as well as mobile workers. Speaking at the recent Conference Board 2002 Tough Issues in the Workplace Conference in New York City, Harry Newman, director of global employee relations, said that on any given day, about 100 [personnel] are flying. To help in case of an accident, IBM has created a worldwide network of personnel that can put its crisis management plan into effect, including a "crisis workforce" that can be sent to any disaster area. It has crisis management teams at all its locations and it trains 25 HR professionals in the U.S. annually on crisis management and other issues. Rehearsals and drills are key, he says, and advises that they be conducted once a year, at least.

¶ **You Would Think That Coming Close To Death Would Be The Ultimate Motivator** for making a permanent change in behavior. Think again. Recent study of heart attack patients whose continuing health makes exercise imperative, shows participation rates starting at 80% for 3x/week exercise. By *end of third year, participation was at 13%*. Overcoming barriers to performing the necessary behavior (in this case exercise) is very important to continuing the new behavior. More success is seen when participants design their own exercise schedule. What does this mean for behavioral pr? In designing behavioral programs, include ways for participants to design their own method of achieving the goal. Use triggering events to remind stakeholder of why the new behavior is important. (Copy of study from: www.nih.gov/health/exercise/index.htm)

UNIVERSITY FINDS EXTREME OPENNESS WITH PRESS BEST TACK TO DEFLECT NEGATIVE ATTENTION DURING CRISIS

When suspected pipe bomber Luke Helder allegedly planted a series of 18 explosive devices in mailboxes throughout five Midwestern states, officials at University of Wisconsin (Stout) found themselves roiled in a crisis; Helder was a junior majoring in industrial design at their University. **The story unfolded rapidly**, according to John Enger, exec dir, university rels. "The story broke in Texas at 11 a.m.," he told pr. "By 11:15 it was all over the world."

The story was a tricky one for University officials because **it had threads leading directly to the school.** The initial tip off came from Helder's roommate, who told authorities about some suspicious comments Helder made prior to the bombings, and about some pipe remnants found in the pair's off-campus apartment. Furthermore, in a letter to the University's main campus in Madison, postmarked the day before the first bomb was discovered, Helder states that he is willing to die and threatens to hurt others. Finally, while Helder was still at large, there was a great deal of concern that he might be lurking around the campus. "A lot about the story centered on the University."

The FBI contacted the school and told them that a student at U Wisc was under suspicion for planting mailbox bombs. "We knew that given the state of the country after 9/11, this would be big news." The FBI requested the University keep the news under wraps, but **evasiveness had to be abandoned once the floodgates opened.** "Our first call was from MSNBC; then all of the major news outlets began calling."

INTERNAL AUDIENCES ALERTED FIRST

The **crisis management team was in place** to decide

what to do and who to contact. "One of our main concerns was that we needed to alert the campus as to the status of the situation. We sent several e-mails to all students and staff. We also needed to establish contact with UW System Administration and with some other key contacts such as the Baldrige Office. (Stout is the first university recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, see pr 5/27.) "This has created national attention and we needed to assure the office that the crisis would not interfere with inquiries generated by the award."

Previous pr crisis articles from two different schools – where each had to deal with a single, high profile story that was lurid, scandalous, and had threads leading back to both universities – **are also good case studies.** In them, the student – an exemplary campus leader and "good deed doer" who even organized a service to escort girls to their dormitories late at night – hid in the closet of a local anchorwoman and attacked her; he was shot & killed during the attack. He was a student at Drury College and prior to that, at Southwest Missouri State U. Reports later surfaced that the student had been caught peeping into windows and had received counseling. **Both schools had to deal with resulting media and public scrutiny.** (See pr 5/22/89 and 6/19/89)

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION SHARED

Media questions concerned whether or not Helder had ever exhibited signs of being disturbed, whether he'd been in trouble. Enger says that normally this is confidential information – records that are protected under Federal law – but the **University decided to be upfront**. “The fact was, he had not shown any signs.” There was no way the school had any knowledge that this could have happened. Another key message to get across was that he was not in the vicinity and was not posing a danger to the campus community.

Enger says the school chose to be open and helpful. “We were very accommodating toward the press. Some reporters were surprised and asked why we were so helpful. Whatever details we could provide, we did.” Reporters were allowed to wander around campus, go into buildings, interview students and faculty. “We told them they could; we’re a public university.” **The result was positive feedback from the press**, says Enger. “We provided the media with whatever information they needed and built positive relationships with them.” (More from Enger @ 715/232-2381)

INVESTOR RELATIONS UPDATE: SHAREHOLDER MEETINGS GRADUALLY MOVING INTO THE ELECTRONIC AGE

The annual meeting is a “dusty old relic,” says Brad Samson, vp of investor rels, Universal Access Global Holdings. Stockholders don’t have to be in the same room to vote on issues when they can vote by fax or electronically. **One-fourth (25%) of investor relations officers (IROs) are planning a webcast of their 2002 annual meeting**, according to 423 respondents to the “Annual Meeting” snapshot survey reported in the National Investor Relations Institute’s *IRUpdate*. But only 10% of the webcasters plan to accept e-mail questions from “virtual” attendees. Several states, including Delaware and Ohio, have amended their corporate laws to allow for electronic shareholder meetings.

Inforte Corporation, incorporated in Delaware, conducted the first completely online annual meeting in 2001. There was no physical location but was held online with e-mail Q&As and voting via fax. **These meetings cost less than a physical meeting, may reach a larger audience, and interfere less with productivity**. But particularly in this post-Enron era, *companies may resist the idea of not providing shareholders with the opportunity to look management in the eye*, says Broc Romanek, editor-in-chief of RR Donnelley Financial’s *realcorporatelawyer.com*. Corporate governance is, after all, the key issue in the 2002 annual meeting season.

PHONY NEWS RELEASES CAN STIR A CRISIS

Ever since a former Internet Wire employee concocted a phony Emulex press release, sending the company stock spiraling, IROs have been on the alert. **Thanks to the practice of monitoring financial message boards, The Knight Trading Group was able to respond quickly to a rumor**, but not before it suffered a 14% drop in its stock price. It departed from its usual practice of not commenting on rumors or speculation in the marketplace by putting a message on its website. Part of the message stated, “Knight Trading Group is not under any investigation by either the SEC or by the FBI.” It also said that it had identified the individual who posted the original message and had turned the name over to the SEC.

Lots of investors, looking for get-rich-quick deals, become victims of Internet scams. To educate the public, the SEC and the Federal Trade Commission’s Bureau of Consumer Protection recently created 14 websites that look like genuine, high-return investment opportunities but instead provide warnings to consumers. More than 150,000 visitors went to one of these sites in its first three days online.

Like individual investors, **IROs should always be on the lookout for red signals that may indicate a phony news release**. David Armon, pres. of PR Newswire Americas, lists these:

1. **Check the source** of a news release to identify the company issuing the news.
2. See if the release **appears on respected news portals** such as Bloomberg.com or the major wire services.
3. Search news sites to see if the release has been **picked up and written about by a trusted news organization**.
4. Check the company’s Web site for the release posting, and **make sure you are familiar with the Web site on which you are reading the release**.
5. **Do not automatically rely on releases read through message boards**; they could be doctored and posted by someone other than the company.
6. **Be aware of misspellings and other grammatical mistakes**, as they are common in bogus stories.

AS 9/11/02 APPROACHES, HELP EMPLOYEES PROCESS EMOTIONS

Unreleased emotions can hold a work team or a company back, says Barton Goldsmith, business consultant and executive coach. “When people are in fear or pain, they use most of their energy to deal with it. Their creative and implementation abilities are minimized because they cannot focus. Without processing, their feelings begin to run their life, and so the life of your company. Everyone feels what’s going on, but no one communicates because this is business and there is zero tolerance for feelings. If we don’t create a change in how this is currently handled we will not survive the current economic downturn or any crisis in the future,” advises Goldsmith.

With the **anniversary of 9/11** not far away, trauma response experts at Longview Associates (White Plains, NY) offer **tips for organizations to help their employees through it**:

- **Be proactive**. The time to come up with a plan is now, not the week before the anniversary.
- **Provide information** to all of your employees acknowledging that many of them may have strong feelings and reactions to 9/11/02.
- Be prepared for some employees to **exhibit work performance problems** – absenteeism, emotional outbursts, fear of travel, etc.
- Provide lists of **helpful resources**.
- Understand that **recognizing the anniversary is vital**. Involve employees in organizing the company’s response.
- Organizing an **appropriate company ritual** may be critical. The ritual should acknowledge where the majority of the employees are emotionally, and it should be organized, limited and appropriate. For example: a moment of silence, a company lunch, a corporate charity event to benefit victims.

There is no precedent for guiding employees through this upcoming anniversary. “It is going to require a different magnitude of responsiveness, creativity and service from all of us,” says Marina