

Chapter 2:

ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Pat often spoke of the effective practitioner being a member of the management team with a broad, objective view of the world. Practitioners could no longer be tacticians but must be strategic counselors concerned with the organization as a whole and how public relations contributes to the bottom line.

PRODUCTIVITY: THE KEY WORD IN 1982 FOR ALL SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY; WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN IMPROVING IT? FIRST, GETTING THE "RULES" OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE ADOPTED IN THE WORKPLACE

Every organization needs increased productivity in the current economic climate – or “innovation and productivity” to use the more positive phrase. Corporations require it to meet worldwide competition. Nonprofits to survive as traditional funding sources, especially government, fall off. Government agencies to meet demands that public sector costs be reduced. If ever there was an opportunity for public relations professionals to demonstrate counseling and change-agent skills, this is it – because managers everywhere are signaling their inability to grip, even understand the issue. Flogging the employees and blaming scapegoats won't do the trick.

Cases in point: 1) Many managers are slow learners. Productivity techniques so touted in Japanese industry were developed in the U.S. and U.K. beginning in the 1950s. They've been taught in American colleges for a decade – especially business schools. And, as consultant John Cicco points out, small business has traditionally employed them.

2) Ads for Michael Maccoby's new book, *The Leader*, claim the new managers “set people-oriented goals,” are “concerned more with building trust and generating long-term productivity than ‘winning the game’ and advancing their careers.” The “dominant management model of the next decade” will be “humanizing work.” That executives still need to be told such things is an indictment. That Maccoby wrote this book also says something. His previous bestseller was *The Gamesman*, and he did job enrichment studies at Harvard in the 1960s.

CONVINCING IS NEEDED

Evidence that managers haven't caught the spirit is provided by a Fowler-McCracken Commission survey. Reps of leading international businesses were asked to rate 46 wide-ranging proposals “to increase the innovation/productivity capabilities of companies in the U.S. marketplace.” “Ranked 9th was “worker participation in problem-solving,” behind tired suggestions like “reduce regulatory red tape” (#1) and “stability and predictability in regulatory guidelines” (#2).

Top five choices blame government regs for the problem. Improving managers' understanding and skills wasn't even in the survey. It appears that 40 years of research on what motivates or inhibits workers has not convinced executives of the human factor. Frederick Herzberg's classic studies don't mention regulation. They found employees turned on by such qualities as achievement, recognition, advancement, growth; and turned off by company policies and administration or poor supervision – all human factors.

Hopeful note. Respondents gave 6th position to “develop executive compensation system to reward managers for long-term profitability, as opposed to short-term financial gains.”

PRODUCTIVITY EQUALS DESIRE – THAT IS, ATTITUDE

Easy technological advances are hard to come by in the Information Era. Those available also carry productivity inhibitors. Robots, for example, cause

job loss which will hardly motivate remaining workers, and effect of unemployment on GNP negates the gain. The answer, as every foreman knows, is “work smarter, not harder.” Increased productivity is a matter of psychology, not technology. It is the people factor that counts. **It is an issue for public relations.**

Reviewing the publics involved, practitioners must ask whether it is the work force or management – or both – whose attitudes need adjustment if the goal is to be attained. The standard definition of management is “getting things done through people.” This suggests that even if the workers in a particular place are slowing productivity gains, it still is the responsibility of management. The public to concentrate on, therefore, is managers.

THE RESOURCE POOL IS BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

Ironically, trained managers have studied Argyris, Herzberg, McGregor and other proponents of the human side of workplace performance right along. But have not

applied what they learned, or rejected it for macho management styles still so noted among MBA graduates. If all practitioners can do is gain managerial acceptance and application of the two “rules” of psychology in their organizations, the impact will be great:

1. **Involvement leads to commitment:** people will carry out those decisions they participate in making. (How are decisions made in your outfit?)
 2. **There must be a payoff:** people will do those things for which they are rewarded or compensated. (Does increasing one’s productivity – or the department’s – truly pay off in your organization? Is it in job descriptions . . . performance reviews . . . wage increase formulas?)
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THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, 1982

In the revitalization of the court of public opinion underway since the 60s, a broader scope has been opened to public relations professionals. The innumerable case problems shared with us each year mandate six roles for the contemporary practitioner:

1. **Researcher.** All sound pr begins with research. And ends with it, in the form of evaluation. More than half the steps in the public relations process involve research. (Additional training needed: informal research techniques, automation.)
2. **Counselor.** The basic skill whatever your job. Does no good to be a great tactician or strategist if you can't persuade colleagues to adopt your ideas. (Additional training needed: O.D., organizational behavior, systems theory, policy sciences, diplomacy.)
3. **Strategic Planner.** Enables organizations to move from reactive to proactive. Major policy-making influence. (Additional training needed: trend analysis, futures research.)
4. **Educator.** Public relationships are not created or "handled" by us but by everyone in the organization, at every level. They must be made aware of this responsibility and trained to carry it out. Our job is to do the teaching. (Additional training needed: learning theory, group psychology, motivation.)
5. **Communicator.** Our original assignment, now immensely complicated by emerging technology. Internal, external, print, film, broadcast, mass, personal – practitioners must master all. (Additional training needed: diffusion process, the six methods of persuasion, graphic psychology, advertising.)
6. **Cheerleader.** Every group needs cheering on or up. Basic human psychology. Who is better able, or situated, to do it? (Additional training needed: cultural anthropology.)

ADDENDUM: THE ROLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

When pr reporter suggests practitioners campaign for humanizing workplace policies to increase productivity – to use one example – it is based on the six roles of public relations outlined in last week's issue (1/4/82). We should point out that this framework rests on two assumptions:

- A. **Public relations is an integral segment of management.** A key segments, given the configuration of modern society. Nothing the organization does, or proposes to do, is beyond its purview. Those few organizations that deny public relations a seat in policy-making councils only demonstrate their ignorance of contemporary life. As PRSA president Joe Awad said: "Don't fall victim to the old 'we aren't appreciated by management' syndrome. We *are* management." (See pr 11/16/81.)
- B. **The core of public relations practice is knowledge of human nature.** The unduplicated factor that unifies our activities is the question: How will publics respond in the real world of humanity? Our unique skill is understanding and interpreting human nature to other disciplines that tend to see people as numbers, as able to be manipulated, as stupid. When you scrape everything else away, it is the public relations professional who must advise management colleagues that the neat, quantified, computer-based plan won't work because it fails to take account of the people who must carry it out.

– Pat Jackson

SIX LEVELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY

With drunk driving, seat belt, fire safety, health prevention & other campaigns proliferating, it remains clear that unrealistic expectations of public relations activities are widespread among officialdom. Decades of research into the relationship between information & behavior change is unknown or ignored -- such as the recent studies of Jim Grunig (prr 1/31). This creates a major opportunity for practitioners.

One reason mgmt is sometimes critical of the field is because practitioners have not established a hierarchy of public relations -- a useful frame of reference for planning, positioning, explaining objectives & getting needed resources allocated to the work. Such a tool can keep expectations realistic by calling attention to the difference in complexity of various types of campaigns.

1. Public Awareness 1-way communication; emphasizes all types of media to reach as great a percentage of target public as possible; primary message strategy is believability, e.g. "this is a real problem."
2. Public Information Basically 1-way communication but feedback devices useful to answer questions; media emphasized; primary message strategy is relevance, e.g. "this affects you."
3. Public Education Still 1-way communication but uses opinion leaders to motivate public to accept the subject as one they can apply to their daily lives; usually involves uncontroversial topics, or one view of an issue presented in a non-debate format; message strategy is memorability.
4. Attitude Reinforcement 2-way communication with accepted leaders & role models enhancing the resolve of people known to be favorable; media less useful unless targeted to avoid simultaneously reinforcing the opposition; message strategy is shared values.
5. Attitude Change Major application of 2-Step Flow, using media to raise questions & peer groups to offer social rewards/punishments; primary message strategy is to avoid stiffening resistance, secondary is to offer validation for the switch.
6. Behavior Modification Uses all available public relations tools to ask for a willing suspension of resistance to change; adds "enforcement" & "engineering" factors to seek congruence between attitudes & actual behavior; message strategy is repetition of the benefits.

(Readers' comments are solicited to help hone this paradigm for greater usefulness.)

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PUBLIC RELATIONS' RESPONSE TO THE MARKETING REVOLUTION

In both corporate and nonprofit organizations, the structural tension of the last decade has been the questing of "marketeers" into all aspects of operations and policy. As Peter Drucker points out, their cover-all use of the term marketing is erroneous and has led management down many muddy paths. Public relations is one of the departments that has sometimes been victimized.

But marketing, however broadly defined, is concerned with one public: customers. There are four critical tasks public relations is concerned with that marketing isn't:

1. **Internal relations and communications** . . . which *is* the organization.
2. **Non-customer constituencies** . . . publics who may not use your services but who set the political, social, community environments that constitute the operating climate of every organization.
3. The practical **human nature/people** approach . . . which is essential for building trust and loyalty, as opposed to dehumanizing number crunching.
4. **Advocacy** . . . when the organization cannot pander to the needs and values of its publics, but for policy, ethical or operational reasons must attempt to change opinion.

Ironically, these activities are the best marketing of all – because they **position** the organization and give it a U.S.P. (Unique Selling Proposition).

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PUBLIC RELATIONS IS THE MARKETING MIX: THE OLD "4 Ps"
GIVE WAY TO 3 MORE, INCLUDING THE ULTIMATE -- PERCEPTION

Today, relationships more than any other factor are what set an organization apart. Therefore, it becomes clear that marketing & public relations ought to be essentially the same thing. At the very least, they are expressions of the same philosophy -- the one that puts key publics and their needs & values first.

But somewhere along the line the idea was put forth that these terms have very different meanings. A review of tactics illustrates how the techniques fit together:

Marketing used to consist of the 4 Ps: 1) product (or service), 2) price, 3) place, 4) promotion (all forms, from advertising to publicity to point-of-purchase to merchandising to special events). Now there are 3 more Ps.

5. Packaging: Organizations realized there was another powerful way to differentiate themselves. Its slogan is, "If you can't improve the product, improve the package."

6. Positioning: Behavioral sciences became important. Differentiating product, package, price, etc. was not enough. It became clear we have to integrate everything offered our customers, & every relationship we have with all publics, so that we can position our organization in their minds -- and against others competing for this share-of-mind.

"Marketing"
Too Narrow At this point of development, those working under the banner of marketing seemed to be riding high. But then something upset the applecart. Organizations with good products, competitively priced, well packaged & positioned, began to find that some competitors -- often those with less sophisticated application of some of the Ps -- were more successful.

The American Marketing Association sticks with the 4 Ps in its recently adopted definition: "Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception [product], pricing, promotion & distribution [place] of ideas, goods & services to create exchanges that satisfy individual & organizational objectives." It includes the activities of nonprofit org'ns and the marketing of ideas, services, as well as products, according to AMA prez Stephen Brown.

But, as Edward L. Bernays says, modern public relations helps organizations adjust to the needs & demands of publics on which they depend for viability. What is the difference?

How could this be? Evaluation studies showed there is another, and superior, P. One that overrides all the others:

7. Perception: Regardless of the facts of the situation, how do customers perceive our organization compared to our competitors? Are we as friendly? Easy to understand? Open & participative? Socially responsible? Or are we so rigidly businesslike that we are perceived as 2nd choice, even though our other 6 Ps are fully competitive if not superior?

Coca Cola's number-crunching approach to satisfying customers led it astray. People's perceptions of everything about the product must be considered -- not just some new market research that indicates changes are desired.

Further evidence comes from the financial markets. Why didn't every saver/investor jump to the money market funds when they were hot a few years ago? Studies show that even though MMCs could offer 2-5 points more interest, large numbers of people preferred to keep their funds in local banks. They knew the staff there. They felt their money was safe there, whereas the original money markets were located in some far-off city. They also knew they could make withdrawals immediately if needed. And use their deposits as psychological leverage to get loans they might need. All of this is perception ... and it proved more powerful than "facts," especially with average consumers.

That final P -- perception -- is the topic of a training session pictured on the cover of the July issue of United Telephone System's Midwest Messenger. Chalked on the blackboard within the photo is a message every public relations practitioner or marketer knows: "What the customer perceives to be true is always more important than what is true."

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THE NEW ACCOUNTABLE, EVALUATED, BOTTOM-LINE PUBLIC RELATIONS

A careful review of trends in the field, arising over the last decade, suggests the following syllogism:

EMPHASIZES

1. Outcomes -- Focuses on verifiable results. Asks, "Why are we doing this? How will it advance the organization's goals, objectives, business plan...today as well as tomorrow?"

2. Behavior -- The only evaluation that counts. As GM's chrm said, "I don't care if they love our cars; the question is whether they are buying them." Applies Behaviorist psychology when appropriate, designing systems that stimulate behavior first, with attitude change following -- instead of vice versa per the classic model.

3. Relationships -- By personalizing, humanizing, targeting, using opinion leaders & peers, building participation & rewards into all possible activities. Keys on value sharing. Understands the positive aspects of the Hawthorne studies, i.e., what people really want is to be given attention. Events, gatherings, networking, consultation 1-on-1 become major program elements.

4. Perception -- Accepts & works with human nature, which means emotion, intuition, peer pressure, experience, sensory responses outweigh logic & data. Realizes unpredictability of humans so always builds in a fail-safe or fall-back plan. Can live with disorderliness, Murphy's Law, ambiguity.

PLAYS DOWN

1. Process -- Avoids measurement by clips or audience count, number of newsletter issues or pages, speeches given, appearances before analysts, etc. Stops treating more messages, more frequent publication, etc. as anything but wheel-spinning -- unless they deliver behavioral results. Eschews doing things just because they're traditional.

2. Opinion/Attitude -- Avoids treating transitory opinion as a viable goal. Recognizes the long time required to truly change attitudes by finding ways to "usurp existing positive feelings" & associate them with products, services, ideas. When possible, simply does not target publics where attitude change would be required. Still, realizes opinions/attitudes can affect, or more definitively, lead to behavior... so treats them as means to an end.

3. Communication Per Se -- Which is too often impersonal, lecturing, focusing on information transfer, aiming at masses. Realizes that even at its best (when 2-way) communication tends to spotlight facts not feelings. "People can communicate with one another for years and not build a relationship -- which requires risk & openness." But understands that true 2-way communication is a means to building relationships.

4. Facts -- Avoids simply "getting the facts out" since studies of effective persuasion reveal their weakness when compared with perceptual responses. Doesn't expect data, statistics or logic to carry the day. But knows a rational case can be used to validate an emotional appeal.

PRINCIPLE TECHNIQUES OF THE NEW PUBLIC RELATIONS

1. Research: Informal useful more often than formal (i.e., blind samples & statistical calisthenics) due to demand for real-time, cost-effective findings on a continuing flow. Qualitative often more applicable than quantitative, since goal is to discover potential or actual behavior, not just position, opinion, attitude. Some say research now constitutes half the public relations process.
2. Audience/Message/Activity Strategy: Careful plotting, aided by research, of when to say & do what, to & with whom, to bring about specific desired behaviors, i.e., getting publics to do something, not do something, or let the organization do something.
3. Prioritizing Internal Publics: Because true public relationships & reputations are neither built nor validated by the messages from the power (management & pr staff) but by the interaction of all members of the organization with friends, neighbors, casual acquaintances, customers, vendors & other publics. This is where the rubber meets the road...not in news releases or annual reports.
4. Personal Media: Turning on opinion leaders & cheerleaders to understand & beacon the organization's values, messages, positions to the circles in which they move, adding the power of social rewards/punishments, supplying One Clear Voice to the quest for positive relationships.

NEW HARD-HEADED, SHOW ME, SCIENTIFIC PUBLIC RELATIONS IS HERE; WHAT IT MEANS FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW COULD BE REVOLUTIONARY

Preparing for its 30th anniversary issue in September, your editors have been charting the major changes in practice over that time span. In addition, pr just finished reviewing a library of illustrative case studies – both what worked and what did not. Together with what readers have been telling us, they iterate the following trends – which are far more surgical than many seem to realize:

1. **Behavior is the goal**, not image or information transfer. **Outcomes**, not outputs.

- Management asks: Unless key publics can be motivated to do something, or not do something, why should resources be invested in pr?
- Old goals like communicating messages are only **process** – half the job. The question is not whether publics receive the message but whether they act on it.
- Response to a great media placement, a super event or similar is “**So what?** What is changed because of it?” PR is by nature a change agent. Its programs are expected to result in change (even though that sometimes equates with holding position against an attack). Things should be different following effective pr activities.

¶ **Dayton Hudson’s Thwarting of a Takeover Demonstrates the Case for Behavior.** 99.9% of organizations, facing that threat, would have found people saying “What a shame” – but not willing to stick their necks out to do anything! DHC’s key publics leapt at the chance to lobby for changes in Minnesota’s anti-takeover law – enacted within 7 days at a special session because of their outcry. The company is the only one in memory to come out unscathed from raider-mania – no greenmail, no downsizing. What good, what value added, what bottom-line would “good feelings” or “positive image” have been to DHC?? It needed instant behavior, not warm fuzzies. These are ultimate times, demanding ultimate value from pr activities.

“Image” has always bothered many practitioners, since it literally means an unreality – not substance. New evidence indicates building image can be counterproductive. An “image” can exist only when publics have no direct experience of the product, organization, candidate, etc. Once they have such experience, it wipes out the image. Henceforth the frame of reference is their experience, and both previous and future image-building are measured against it. Since the expectations created by much image-building are near-impossible, credibility is damaged. Instead of hyping image, therefore, why not work from the start to build actual experience? Or at least a reputation built on substantiated reality?

2. **Supertargeting** carries the technique forward in two areas:

- First, publics are carefully prioritized both for their importance to the organization **and** for probability of acting on their feelings toward it.

- Some publics, though important, are down-ranked because they are unlikely to take action. The guideline is no longer “public opinion” but “**actionable** public opinion,” i.e., who’s likely to do something about their opinions?
- Once priorities are decided, realistic application of available resources is made. As a result, lower rated groups may not receive attention – because money, time and manpower won’t stretch that far. **No more trying to reach everybody – in vain.**
- Second, within the priority publics efforts are further targeted toward **opinion and power leaders**, recognizing their role model status. Others do follow them.

3. **Focused appeals** solicit desired behaviors directly from the targets.

- Scatter-shot communication gives way to rifle-shot relationship-building.
- Traditional long copy, which research shows to be increasingly unread and unheeded, is replaced by brief, pithy, focused materials.
- Videos that require groups to gather and watch are questioned – since so many never get played.
- Newsletters become single-sheet two-siders, in large type, with full heads and 1,2,3, A,B,C organization or info. Gone is the assumption people will read paragraphic matter and somehow distill the conclusions intended. Now the ideas to be imparted are laid out in indents, charts or other unmistakable form – so the **takeaway is uniform**, not left to chance.
- Strategy is what counts, not Shakespearean prose.

Doubters will find convincing evidence abounding. If USA Today and the 20-second bite of tv news aren’t enough, consider the Lawyer’s Rule: never make more than three points to a jury. Or the Congressman’s Guide: always vote no on anything that takes longer than two minutes to explain.

IMPLICATIONS

- A. **Research** is a basic skill for practitioners, both for planning and evaluating. This means including it in budgets!
 - A. **Counseling ability** is critical. Skeptical managerial colleagues need constant persuasion and guidance – in the public relations arena they know so little about.
 - B. True **editing capabilities** are more important than writing skills (if they can be separated). Practitioners now must select which points are salient and memorable, then present only those – or at least highlight them more than previously was necessary. No more throwing it all in and letting the reader struggle to get the meaning. Even hard core journalism recognizes this now. Reader, viewer, listener, attender friendly is what works.
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9 WAYS PUBLIC RELATIONS CONTRIBUTES TO THE BOTTOM LINE

If the profession could agree on a response to the infamous query, "*Exactly how can pr help our organization – bottom line,*" it would be a giant step in establishing pr's value added. Here's a start:

Process	Principal Activities	Outcomes
1. Awareness and Information	Publicity, promotion, audience targeting, publications	Pave the way for sales, fundraising, stock offerings, et al
2. Organizational Motivation	Internal relations and communications; OD interventions	Build morale, teamwork, productivity, corporate culture; work toward <i>One Clear Voice</i> outreach
3. Issue Anticipation	Research; liaison with all publics; issue anticipation teams	Early warning of issues, social-political change, constituency unrest
4. Opportunity Identification	Interaction with internal and external audiences; "knowing the business"	Discover new markets, products, methods, allies, positive issues
4. Crisis Management	Respond to or blanket issues, disasters, attacks; coalition-building	Protect position, retain allies & constituents, keep normal operations going despite battles
5. Overcoming Executive Isolation	Counseling senior managers about what's really happening; research	Realistic, competitive, enlightened decisions
6. Change Agency	OD, QWL, corporate culture, similar techniques; research	Ease resistance to change, promote smooth transition, reassure affected constituencies
7. Social Responsibility	Social accountancy, research, mount public interest projects and tie-ins; volunteerism, philanthropy	Create reputation, enhance economic success through "double bottom line," earn trust
8. Influencing Public Policy	Constituency relations; coalition building, lobbying, grassroots campaigns	Public consent to activities, products, policies; political barriers removed

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An Issue On Where The Field Is Heading And What Works Now

12 TRENDS THAT ARE STEERING PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE

After years of impending and tentative change, a clear vision is emerging. This is what pr is becoming – already *is* in cutting-edge organizations:

1. **Overriding Trend: Beyond Communication To Behavior.** Communication is not an end in itself, but a process. Information, awareness, sensitivity are way-stations. The desired outcome is motivating behavior. Doesn't mean communication isn't important – just that it's not enough.
 - As counselor and writing text author Kerry Tucker puts it: “The idea that expository writing can lead to behavior change is ludicrous.”
 - Evaluating pr by messages delivered would be like auto sales departments judging their success by cars transported to the showroom. The real test is: Did they *sell*?!
 - ¶ **Result:** development of a new group of techniques and strategies that constitute the other 11 trends – known as Behavioral Public Relations.

 2. **1-On-1, Personalized Relationship Programs.** Usually aimed at opinion or power leaders or top 10% customers, shareholders, etc. Some examples:
 - *Constituency relations* or *ambassador programs*, where “key contacts” meet face-to-face with opinion leaders on a regular basis to listen, try out ideas or policy/product proposals, then record findings.
 - *Coalitions*, both with interested publics for frank exchange about differences while uniting on common interests; and with seemingly disinterested 3rd parties, e.g. senior citizen groups, minorities, etc.
 - *Databased relationship* or *loyalty programs*, best when integrated with database marketing so key constituents get a steady flow of messages and interchange opportunities about products, useful info, research questions, invited events and other value-added ingredients.
 - ¶ **Result:** issue campaigns switch from ads and media, as reported in several pr case studies in the past year. This is powerful stuff in tough situations: some companies have literally saved themselves from bankruptcy using these methods.

 3. **At Last, Research Is A Given** – both for planning and evaluation. But pr still uses other disciplines' methods. Or shoddy stuff, like evaluating media coverage and even assigning ad-cost numbers – but pretending it's ok because now it's done by computer.
 - ¶ **Needed:** develop definitive pr research methods specifically for the actionable decisions practitioners must make to motivate behavior.
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4. **Using Risk Management Principles.** Everything in the Unforgiving Decade of the 90s contains risk. We've always known any message/position turns some on, others off. Environmental, economic and other risks exacerbate this.
- People have lost faith in the old, proper ways of expressing themselves. From the LA riots, to the Balkans, to civil disobedience, to litigiousness, to corporate democracy gone wrong – watch out. You may be next.
- ¶ **Result:** intense application of Issue Anticipation Teams, Scenarios, Environmental Scans, Psychological Modeling, Rough Sets, et al.
5. **Feedback Systems** are so widely used to create participative dialogue that organizations without one (or several) appear unfriendly.
- *Managements of all type organizations have lost credibility*, are viewed with extreme skepticism. Consider once impregnable CEO slots at GM, IBM, Westinghouse, Amax, etc. And why not? *They screw up*, but others get fired or lose on their investment.
 - *The Quality movement*, so continuously bragged about, has raised expectations of customer satisfaction and product/service quality.
- ¶ **Result:** far beyond the suggestion box, or even 800 numbers, to real hotlines or info lines (live humans answer), uncensored Q&A columns, “Lunch With” programs (extremely popular and successful). And exec dining rooms, parking and other divisive class symbols are going.
6. **Real Culture Change Efforts Supplant Gimmicks Like TQM** – and pr leads, or co-leads with hr or OD. Here the deepest pr philosophy is at last being applied. But Deming said Quality is really continuous open communication that leads to solid working relationships.
- ¶ **Result:** opportunity to develop Total Relationship Management strategies that bring the whole pr toolkit to bear – and leave no doubt about pr's place at the senior decisionmaking table. But you'd better understand group psychology, OD, organizational behavior, etc.

ON THE COMMUNICATIONS FRONT, EVEN SACRED PRACTICES ARE YIELDING

7. **Go Direct; Avoid Intermediaries; Or Use New Media To Supplant News Media.** President Clinton's grassroots meetings and phone-ins to sell his economic plan parallel the direct relationship-building of no.2 above. Phil Donohue says that's “stiff-arming the media” – as millions cheer. Reportorial-journalistic media with their penchant to editorialize (or interpret what you just saw or heard as if you were stupid) give way to access-entertainment media where you go direct to your publics.
- *Media want to be mediators and intermediaries* since it lets them create conflict and the sensationalism they need to “sell papers.” That's their right – but also their marketing problem. More and more practitioners are asking, “Why should we get caught up in this? Why not talk directly with our publics?”

- *Radio talk shows are arguably the most potent access medium* because the discussion is candid and wide-ranging. Their hosts are now organized nationally, so if a topic works in San Diego it will soon pop up elsewhere, maybe everywhere. TV talk shows are far more scrubbed – and may lay booby traps for entertainment value.

¶ **Result:** the demand for participation, first seen in government decisions, then all organizations' decisions, has now reached the media. This is a precursor of 21st C. interactive technology, so get ready now.

8. **The Low Profile Makes Sense Again In Many Cases.** Effective strategy: avoid the spotlight, tend to *servicing* your key publics – with direct communications, of course. If pulled into the spotlight, politely decline to engage in the battle and stay your preplanned course, i.e. don't let them take your emphasis off *your* goals.

- *Mass communication activates competitors and opponents* as well as supporters, so not the most effective strategy.

¶ **Result:** reputation is the object, not image. The latter by definition is unreal, false. It is usually braggadocio, creating expectations that can never be met. The former results from *personal experience* with a product, service, organization or person. This experience immediately drives out image.

9. **Seeing Employees As The #1 Public, Treating Them As Adults Is New Internal Relations Strategy.** If customer satisfaction is to be delivered, then "*The Customer Comes Second*," as a successful CEO's book title puts it. Accountability is the watchword. Therefore colleagues can be expected to take responsibility for keeping informed.

- *No more bombarding them with multiple iterations of the same message*, as if they were grade schoolers. Publications of record – which may be audiotapes, local radio shows, online systems – are expected to be "read," with questions asked, when there are any.

- *Supervisors are the firstline communication medium, not publications.* Every study ever done shows workers want to get their need-to-know info from them.

¶ **Result:** pr's job is to train supervisors, monitor info flow, strategize messages as well as, often rather than, edit publications. And set up internal feedback systems per no. 5 above.

10. **Lateral Communication And Relationship-Building To Promote Teamwork** gets the emphasis, away from up-and-down directed. The real need and value, on a behavior-motivating basis, is realized to be department-to-department, manager-to-manager, worker-to-worker.

- *Externally this translates to priming opinion leaders or key customers to beacon your messages laterally* to their spheres of influence, often by using the techniques in no. 2 above. Good old super-effective WOM (word of mouth), but strategized and organized.

¶ **Result:** even publications folks concentrate on such vehicles as managers newsletters. Practitioners develop briefing books, plasticized wallet cards for key messages, other prompts to One Clear Voice communication from person-to-person, not company-to-masses.

OTHER DIRECTIONS THAT DEMONSTRATE PR HAS PROFESSIONALIZED AND ARRIVED

11. **Intense Utilization Of Professional Networks**, sharing knowledge and ideas, cooperating on projects. Old competitive attitude gives way to collaboration, because everyone benefits.
- *PR firm networks* like WorldCom, PR Exchange, Pinnacle Worldwide share salary and managerial info, gather data to pass along to members, help prepare work and presentations. State and regional nets form.
 - *Professional societies* become giant networks at national and local level, with proliferation of specialist sub-groups.
- ¶ **Result:** even staff training is shared, e.g. San Francisco Academy or local accreditation courses. Loyalty to the *profession* is becoming the norm.
12. **The New Social Responsibility Links Philanthropy To The Bottom Line.** You must do well in order to do good. But now employees run the programs, gifts are given in their name rather than the organization's, customers and opinion leaders help select targeted projects – i.e., the method is participative. Wise execs guide but do not drive.
- *Works because its fruits show the behavior of the organization, not its words.* Some predict this may be the basic segment of all pr programming before the decade ends.
- ¶ **Results:** pr's old role in contributions is reinforced, based on ESI (enlightened self-interest). But volunteerism, gifts or services in-kind are even more important. And together they become the centerpiece of relationship building with key publics.

TRENDS THAT MIGHT HAVE MADE THE LIST; IT'S YOUR CALL

- 1) **Training:** not just media and presentations but team building, interpersonal communication and much more.
 - 2) **Reader-Friendly Print Media** that lead the eye, are brief, summarize, make it easy to understand and remember the message.
 - 3) **Integrated Communications** where all pr vehicles, personal and impersonal, are synergized and programmed with advertising, events and rituals, sales promotion – everything that sends a message.
 - 4) **The Excellence in PR Movement**, based on research demonstrating what pr can do to add value.
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DEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS' PRECISE ROLE AS CHANGE AGENT

One of the nine ways pr impacts the bottom line is as change agent (pr 5/9/92). In a time when change is pandemic, this is a vital contribution. But what exactly are practitioners supposed to – and able to – do to implement change within organizations? Three patterns emerge:

CHANGE LEADER Practitioners 1) identify needed changes, on their own or in concert with executive colleagues; 2) then propose programs to bring them about. In short, they position themselves as the change agents.

Some among many programs that might be proposed:

- Adopting **Customer Satisfaction Modeling** (pr 5/23/94) to improve sales or customer retention, possibly leading to a regularly surveyed Customer Satisfaction Index (pr 10/2/95);
- **Team Leader (or Supervisor) as Key Communicator** (pr 5/30/94) to improve internal relations, productivity or communications;
- **What's in the Way?** (pr 1/13/92) to improve morale, confidence in management, or operational efficiency;
- **Constituency Relations** to involve employee volunteers in reaching opinion leaders for purposes of issue anticipation and participative decisionmaking, in order to improve community, customer, government or other stakeholder relationships (pr 1/25/93).

CHANGE MODIFIER 1. After years of the program of the month, many organizations are programmed out. Senior management keeps coming up with one new initiative after another and no one tells them employees are drowning already. PR's task here is to provide **reality therapy** – using research, examples or whatever it takes to slow the pace of change initiatives and let previous ones be digested.

2. Many change initiatives simply fail or do not deliver as hoped. In many cases, Quality in its many guises fits this description. Practitioners can **revitalize such existing programs**, and by bringing success out of disappointment further position themselves as the change agents. For instance, Quality consists of three elements:

- a) **cycle time reduction** – here pr can foster major gains by designing systems for better memos and meetings, the principal barriers to reducing managerial and operational cycle time (pr 7/11/94)
- b) **zero or reduced defects** – here a *What's in the Way?* program may identify the problems, or *Team Leader as Communicator* may smooth work flow and other hazards to quality products, services or operations.

- c) **customer satisfaction** – again *Customer Satisfaction Modeling* can improve this greatest of all competitive advantages.
3. Organizations with several programs in various states of implementation usually report confusion among employees and managers, and lack of trust that senior management knows what it's doing. Here, pr can **put a unifying umbrella over** all the programs to show that there is a rationale, a central focus or direction. Try:
- Graphically portraying the programs in linking diagrammatic form.
 - Scrapping individual program names and substituting a unifying one.
 - And ineffective elements can be dropped.

These simple steps can revive change initiatives and restore confidence in management.

CHANGE FACILITATOR In this role practitioners use their traditional skills in communication and understanding human nature to anticipate the expectations and perceptions of employees and work groups – to help them cope with or embrace change.

Greatly feared changes – like restructuring, reengineering or downsizing – usually require a four-step facilitation:

1. Preconditioning to deal accurately and honestly with expectations
2. The announcement and its immediate aftermath
3. Catharsis or mourning
4. Returning survivors to productivity

Even when pr is acting as change leader or change modifier this task will probably also fall to it.

A 4TH POSSIBILITY The greatest value of pr often is what doesn't happen. Perhaps pr's greatest role in change is having the positive relationships, effective communication methods, mutual trust and teamwork in place before change initiatives are launched – so fear, resistance, sabotage and other negative outcomes are largely avoided.

WHY PR PROS ARE NOT & SHOULD NOT BE THE COMMUNICATORS

Our employers and clients are competitively disadvantaged, vulnerable and weakened if we are the ones who must send the information and engineer all the symbolic messages or triggering events. Those communicators should be:

1. **The CEO** as ultimate *personifier of the organization* and its values, strategy and culture; or a surrogate “face” for the organization if the CEO cannot or won't.
2. **Other senior managers and key personnel** who are the *subject-matter experts*.
3. **Frontline supervisors** as the most effective and credible *source of internal communication and team-building*.
4. **Employees, retirees and their families** as *believable ambassadors* for their workplace and its values, culture, products, services, positions on issues, et al.
5. **Opinion leaders** who form the *third party line of defense* against attacks and rumors, and the *line of opportunity* for positive portrayal.
6. **Customers** who are so satisfied and delighted that they become loyal – and share this experience with others to *create and sustain a good reputation*.
7. **Neighbors** in the communities where we operate who know from experience we are open in our communications, willing to listen and let stakeholders have a voice, and that our *policies and behaviors deserve their support*.

INSTEAD, THE ROLE OF PRACTITIONERS IS TO :

- A. **Assure that our organizations deserve a good reputation**, even when powerful elements propose cutting corners or fail to see the implications of their actions/policies;
 - B. **Devise strategies that make these key communicators want to do this job** for our organizations, despite the overbusyness and apathy of so many;
 - C. **Counsel and train and champion and reward** them for doing it.
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- D. **The critical tactic is building relationships** with these, our true communicators, that create trust and motivate mutually supportive behaviors.

IF DUBIOUS, REMEMBER ONE BASIC FACT:

These groups and individuals are already communicating about the organization informally. They talk, plenty – to our vital publics. The only question is whether we want to influence this natural process.

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TREND PRACTITIONERS SHOULD BE AWARE OF

THE MOST COMMUNICATED TOPIC EVER SHOWS HOW INEFFECTIVE WE ARE

AIDS has been described as such. It's part of comic strips and sitcoms, safe sex is taught in schools etc etc. Is this info transfer working? Consider these data, showing adults and children living with AIDS/HIV at end of 2000 – and the percent increase *in the last year*:

North America: 920,000 (+5.1%); Latin America: 1.4 million (+12%); Western Europe : 540,000 (+5.9%); Eastern Europe & Central Asia: 700,000 (+55%); North Africa & Middle East: 400,000 (+25%); Sub-Saharan Africa: **25.3 million** (+17.7%); East Asia and Pacific: 640,000 (+25.5%); South and SE Asia: **5.8 million** (+16%); Australia and New Zealand: 15,000 (+3.5%)

UN's AIDS unit, source of this data, calls it a global epidemic. Drug companies are donating \$millions in medicines – but sooner or later individual workplaces, educational institutions and other organizations will have to make this a survival priority – perhaps in 2001. Just read the numbers
