

Ethical values define public relations community

by Dean Kruckeberg, Ph.D.
Public Relations Division Head

Few lectures in public relations seem to portend greater collective apathy among students than do those on ethics. And textbooks most often relegate this obligatory discussion as an afterthought to concluding chapters—with perhaps a few professional codes in the appendices.

Practitioners express only slightly more ardor for any examination of ethics, in part because the need for ethical professional conduct appears irrefutable and seems universally accepted. The occasional well-publicized breach only reconfirms to all concerned that public relations indeed can be practiced unethically, but that any such malfeasance is no more than an aberration in an otherwise staid and boringly virtuous professional occupation.

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— DEAN

KRUCKEBERG

Contributing to this assumption of the tedium inherent in the study of ethics is students' and practitioners' presupposition that professional ethics are generally consonant—if not synonymous—with their personal ethical values, or at least with those of their organizations. As with art appreciation, practitioners may admit to knowing little about ethics per se, but will claim to know unethical behavior when they see it—particularly when such behavior includes the perceived moral deficiencies and ethical *faux pas* of their competitors.

Thus, with the syrupy sanctimony of saints, students readily assure their professors that they plan never to do anything unethical in their future careers, and the few practitioners accused of ethical lapses respond with the wounded pride of maligned martyrs caught in the web of unfortunate circumstances.

Given this environment, there's little wonder that few scholars are devoting their research agendas to public relations ethics. Although a small number of public relations educators have been quite active in this area throughout the years, there is much work to be done and great opportunities for other scholars to participate—both now and in the future.

The study of ethics is hardly boring, unless we as educators allow it to be perceived as such by our students. And answers to ethical questions are not nearly as straightforward and clearcut—nor as closely and as simply aligned with individual and organizational values—as many practitioners assume.

Ethical values are important because they allow us to define ourselves as a professional community by defining our relationship with society. It is we—not society—who are the primary beneficiaries of our professional ethics, and we must guard jealously the manifest right and obligation to prescribe and then practice such ethical behavior—and to banish from our professional community those transgressors who choose not to conform.

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PRSA names Judy Turk outstanding educator



Dr. Judy Turk, dean of the University of South Carolina College of Journalism and Mass Communications, recently received the Outstanding Educator Award from the Public Relations Society of America.

Initiated in 1970, the award is given annually to an individual who teaches at the college or university level and has made significant contributions to the advancement of PR education. Turk is only the second woman to receive the award in its 22-year history.

"Even more important than the personal satisfaction," said Turk, "is my gratitude that PRSA recognizes the importance of education and educators. Public relations is about lifelong learning, not just the preparation of entry-level practitioners. This award acknowledges, in a very public and visible way, the centrality of that learning to the continued professionalism of the field."

Turk has received numerous other honors, including the Golden Key Award from *PR News* in 1992, membership in the College of Fellows of PRSA in 1991, and a Presidential Citation for Leadership from PRSA in 1990.

PR update

A newsjournal published by the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Public Relations Division members examine and analyze scholarly, pedagogical and other issues relating to public relations practice and education. We serve educators, practitioners and others who recognize the important contributions made by public relations to an informed society.

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By default, responsibility for the study of professional ethics, for the instruction of public relations ethics to students and for leadership in the resolution of ethical questions facing practitioners must be relegated to the scholars and educators within the public relations community.

Of course, practitioners must be full participants in the resolution of ethical questions, and they are oftentimes in a better position to set the ethical agenda. However, lacking detachment, they are too close to the trees to fully appreciate the complex biosphere of the ethical forest; too, their education in philosophical ethics is usually inadequate to resolve ethical questions at a sufficiently abstract and universally applicable level; and, finally, the temptation is too great to judge others with overly harsh and biased rectitude or—lest they be judged also—with remitting exoneration.

Equally inadequate in the resolution of ethical questions in public relations are the occasional social critic and the resident demagogue. Neither sufficiently understands public relations. The occasional social critic may identify some of the ethical problems, but seldom has corresponding answers. The resident demagogue cannot be appeased because she or he perceives public relations to be a bastardization of an otherwise noble communication discipline and journalism profession. The latter—although oftentimes quick to volunteer—should not be teaching ethics to public relations students.

The scholar in communication ethics has the disadvantage of perhaps not knowing much about public relations, but is very teachable—making an ideal colleague for the public relations educator having a research agenda in ethics. Such communication ethicists have the wherewithal to study public relations ethics, to participate in the instruction of professional ethics to public relations students and to contribute to the resolution of ethical questions facing public relations practitioners. We should be making greater efforts to interest such scholars in the challenges and the rewards of contributing to research in public relations ethics.

The greatest challenges of the future for ethics scholars in public relations undoubtedly will come from the impact of increasing multiculturalism and the closer linkages of public relations practitioners in the world community—with the resulting need to factor "cultural taste" into public relations ethics.

Issues involving public relations ethics are exciting and challenging as well as professionally and socially significant; we as educators must endow our students and our professional colleagues with an appreciation for both the importance and complexity of professional ethics. And we must take leadership in defining the professional public relations community by clarifying—through ethics—its relationship with society. **PR**

FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR ETHICAL PR SCHOLARS:

- Increasing multiculturalism
- Forging closer links between PR and world communities
- Factoring in "cultural taste"

Public Relations = ethical social behavior

by Melvin L. Sharpe, Ph.D, Fellow, PRSA
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Instead of emphasizing professional activities in your classes, have you defined public relations as a form of ethical social behavior that achieves and maintains human relationships? Have you attempted to identify universally accepted ethical standards that can be conveyed to students?

Both exercises emphasize the concept of interrelationship and cause us to see how closely the organizational performance of what society terms ethical conduct and the performance of public relations are intertwined. Yet in my search for those ethical absolutes that one might teach students, I have found only two after lengthy and continuous library research of writers from ancient to modern times. One is honesty or truthfulness. The second is the concept of fairness.

• *Honesty*: Starting with the earliest ancient Persian sages, nearly all writers on ethics identify honesty as a vital ethical principle. A few though, like Benedict de Spinoza in the 17th century, emphasize that concepts of what is true and what is honest differ. He saw humans as "ignorant of the true cause of their actions" and guided by their self "interest in life in common with others." Therefore, our organizational concepts of what is true and honest must also be continually re-evaluated. Perhaps James Feibleman states the needed ethical principle most succinctly when he suggests, "Look for the unaffiliated truth."

• *Fairness*: Confucius saw "reciprocity" as the most important principle for humans to follow in their conduct of life. Christians call the principle the Golden Rule. Spinoza later observed that self-preservation calls for the necessity of a genuine concern for the well-being of others. Erich Fromm more recently pointed to the "fairness" concept as the capitalistic system's greatest gift to the world—that I give you in goods and services value equal to what you give me.

My literature search also caused me to realize that the only two ethical absolutes I had found can be defined also as the behavior required to create and maintain harmony in human relationships. By way of background, in 1980 I was asked by the PRSA Task Force on the Stature and Status of Public Relations to administer a national survey of deans of colleges of journalism and communications to learn their perceptions of public relations. Only one response impressed me. It had actually been written in the margin of the questionnaire as an afterthought by the late DeWitt Reddick. It read, "I see public relations as the lubricant which makes the segments of an order work together with minimum friction and misunderstanding." I liked the definition because it did not use the word "communications" and encouraged me to seek to analyze what makes our field serve as a "lubricant."

Perhaps like you, for years I have recognized that descriptions of the activities that take place in the professional performance of public relations (such as the ones provided by PRSA, *PR News* and in textbooks) fail to clarify what public relations is as behavior. No wonder we continue to have problems with public and media understanding of what "public relations" truly requires. In fact, I saw that so much of what is called public relations in the media (*whitewash*) and defined as public relations by organizations (*one-way communications*) is simply not the behavior capable of achieving long-term public relationships.

This caused me to develop and insert a definition in the revision of Sam Black's book that attempted to identify what I saw as three principles organizational managements must incorporate before effective public relations performance can truly take place. These principles take into account that ethics are not to be grouped as a separate category, but rather are necessarily integrated throughout everything public relations practitioners and their organizations do:

(1) An organization must recognize that its long-range stability is based on favorable public opinion and support. (*Otherwise, it will never take the process of effective public relations performance seriously.*)

(2) An organization must accept the principle that all men and women have the right to information about decisions that will affect their lives. (*Otherwise, members of the management team will always withhold information in their own self-interest.*)

(3) An organization must recognize that if it does not manage its communications to assure feedback, it will be incapable of making change adjustments needed for longevity in society. (*Simply attempting to evaluate how the organization has influenced the social environment is not enough; the organization must be capable of being affected.*) •see Sharpe, page 15

Nominations Requested

Members of the Public Relations Division are requested to submit nominations for Secretary-Treasurer and for Elected Delegate-At-Large for 1993-94 to the Nominating Committee. Shirley Ramsey, Immediate Past Head of the Division, serves as Chair of the Nominating Committee. Other elected members of the committee are Debi Miller and Jim Hutton.

Maria Russell, Vice-Head, Head-Elect and Program Chair, moves up to Head of the Division. Richard Alan Nelson, Secretary-Treasurer, will be slated for Vice-Head. Those interested should send nominations for the two other open positions (Secretary-Treasurer and Elected Delegate-At-Large) to:

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Trouble, Trouble, Trouble . . .

by Gay Wakefield, Ed.D.
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Oh, we have Trouble my friends—right here, I say Trouble right here in public relations; with a capital “T” and that rhymes with “E” and that stands for Ethics. OK. So Meredith Willson I’m not. But the sentiment stands, unfortunately.

Ethical issues continue to be a major national concern. And, like it or not, public relations educators are in the middle of them. In a recent *PR News* “exclusive poll of 30 top executives,” over one-third of the respondents cited ethical lapses as the most negative development for public relations in 1992—the largest area of agreement among those surveyed. Concerning challenges facing public relations for 1993, “ethics was selected by nearly one-third of the respondents as the greatest challenge facing the field today” (*PR News*, 49:1, January 4, 1993).

Ouch! It is rather sobering for public relations educators to realize that they are involved in the education of individuals who may eventually sit in seats of high power, determining on which roads democracy will travel; individuals who may some day hold positions responsible for molding the norms and mores of our organizations and our society. Yet, that is the case.

Students of today will be the leaders of our world in another decade or two. And we, as educators, bear much of the responsibility for guiding those future leaders—as best we can—down ethical and moral paths.

And it’s not likely to be an easy task. Michael Josephson, from the Institute for the Advancement of Ethics, warns that the United States will face even more serious ethical problems around the turn of the century—because the upcoming generation is even less grounded in ethical commitments than is the current generation (interview, *CBS This Morning*, March 8, 1989).

I regret to report that my own research of public relations students’ responses to

an ethical challenge lends credence to Josephson’s warning. For instance:

- Nearly three-fourths of public relations students do not consider it necessary to discuss rationales for their decisions.
- Nearly half of the students blindly accept management’s word as accurate.
- Less than one-fifth of the students consider it necessary to secure more information, on any aspect of the situation, prior to making a decision.
- Only about one-third of the students make any reference to ethical or moral standards and their applicability to the ethical dilemma.
- The thought of trying to counsel management toward a more ethical course of action occurs to less than one-third of the students.
- Responsibility to society as a whole is considered by less than one-sixth.
- Fewer than half of the students analyze the professional ramifications likely to result from their ethical choices.
- Fewer than half of the students recommend a proactive approach to the ethical challenge, with nearly a third of them preferring to go along with management’s strictly reactive approach.
- Less than a third of the students recommend complete honesty about the situation, with more than a third recommending dissemination of only selective public information.

On the positive side: After analysis of the case employed in the study, some of the students reconsider their choices of public relations as a career—with more than five percent deciding it’s the wrong choice for them. Thank goodness they get out early!

PR educators have been talking about the ethics issue for a long time now. From Ivy Lee’s “Declaration of Principles” to society’s current concern for ethics—whether on Wall Street or in the pulpit—we’ve had a lot to talk about.

Though codes of ethical standards are presented in most PR texts and classrooms, students generally are still not educated in specific methods for making ethical decisions in the “real” world. Confounding the situation is research indicating that men and women differ in approaches to ethical dilemmas—a situation which poses many potential problems for a field heavily integrated with women, but still managed primarily by men.

Specifically, my research reveals that:

- Twelve times as many females as males recognize an overriding responsibility to society as a whole.
- Twice as many males as females recognize specific responsibilities to the general public.
- Nearly twice as many females as males recognize specific responsibilities to publics directly affected by the situation.
- Nearly twice as many males as females express a preference for situational ethics.
- Nearly twice as many males as females recognize a need for research prior to making a decision or taking action.

For whatever reasons, men and women studying public relations look at ethics through different-colored glasses. And neither of them is ideal.

Societal demands placed upon business and government today have spurred a new level of accountability to which public relations professionals must be thoroughly prepared to respond, both privately and publicly. Practitioners, educators and students need to accept ethical challenges as opportunities to channel private ethical beliefs into public actions *demonstrating* those commitments.

If the mantle of responsibility is upon our shoulders, let’s shoulder it as gracefully as possible. So consider this discourse a call-to-action. Let’s try a little proactivity of our own. Specific methods for enhancing ethics need to be investigated in our research and reported from instructional experience—starting *now*.

We know we’re good at talking the talk. Now let’s walk the walk.

PR

Can we really teach public relations students to be ethical practitioners?

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If one believes that ethics are intensely personal and that one must never substitute his or her conscience for that of another, one must answer those skeptics who suggest that, by very definition, future public relations practitioners cannot be "taught" to be ethical. Skeptics will agree that one can propose all sorts of reasons why public relations practitioners *should* behave in an ethical manner. They will quickly add, however, that in advancing such rationale one does not necessarily "teach" practitioners—or potential practitioners—to, in fact, *adopt* ethical behavior as their own.

One major roadblock in any effort to "teach" ethical behavior centers around that fact that most people—not just students in public relations—*presume* they already are ethical! Emphasis is placed on the word *presume* because anyone having the inclination and the willingness to spend even a minimal amount of time observing the contemporary scene will have no difficulty producing abundant volumes containing the most obvious examples of unethical behavior. One cannot help but wonder how there can be so much unethical behavior when so few admit to being unethical!

A first key to "teaching" public relations students the importance of ethical decisionmaking, therefore, must rest in convincing them that perhaps they have not yet seriously confronted questions related to what it means—even apart from public relations—to behave in an ethical manner. They must be encouraged to recognize that perhaps they are not yet all that ethical, that they may even hold moral illusions about themselves and their own behavior.

If one can get public relations students to *critically* examine their own behavior, one may have uncovered the first step in persuading—"teaching"—them why it is important that they be ethical and how ethical questions directly related to public relations might be approached. This process can be described in a number of ways. One is to suggest that instructors must make a serious attempt at "stimulating the moral imagination" in order that students begin to "recognize ethical issues."

But can we "teach" someone to be reflective where ethical issues are concerned any more than we can "teach" someone to, in fact, act ethically? If it were possible to "teach" someone the value of free speech, one could legitimately ask why so few Americans *genuinely* support it since one would assume

children in our schools are required to "study" and "learn" the Bill of Rights. The teacher can only hope that by presenting traditional and contemporary theories regarding the value of free expression, students may come to share the intensely personal experience that is the teacher's as a result of this knowledge.

The same is true regarding any effort to "teach" the importance of ethical decisionmaking to students in public relations sequences. "Teaching" ethics clearly involves transmitting evaluative knowledge. So we are not able to "teach" ethical decisionmaking the same way one can teach two plus two equals four or in the sense that one imparts how to write a news release or construct a brochure. The key is in a sharing of knowledge—or, rather, the experience of acquiring that knowledge.

How practitioners respond to particular ethical dilemmas does matter. Any effort to "teach" students in public relations the importance of ethical decisionmaking must be directed toward helping them become more aware of the important role personal choice plays in that process. The efforts should not be directed so much toward providing specific answers, but rather focus on helping individuals realize "that there are ethical problems . . . and that there are better or worse ways of trying to deal with them" (see D. Callahan, "Goals in the Teaching of Ethics," in *Ethics Teaching in Higher Education*, ed. by D. Callahan and S. Bok, New York: Plenum, 1989, p. 62).

Those "teaching" ethical decisionmaking should not attempt to provide specific answers to each and every moral quandary the practitioner may someday face. *Indoctrination is not the same as teaching.* One must encourage critical thinking in future practitioners, but one must not do the thinking for them. But it is possible to offer arguments supportive of one or another moral perspective that engage the "reasoned assent" of heart and mind. Indeed, putting forth a particular normative doctrine is justified if it helps engender a sense of awareness and appreciation regarding the importance of ethical deliberation in public relations students and is *done in a rational, critical manner* (see F. Canavan, "The Problem of Indoctrination," in *The Ethics of Teaching and Scientific Research*, ed. by S. Hook, P. Kurtz and M. Todorovich, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1977, p. 29).

It should be clear that ethical decisionmaking in public relations can be "taught" if one keeps in mind the qualifications that are placed around the word "teaching." Research suggests that ethical instruction at the undergraduate level can have an impact outside the classroom. That evidence is both a hopeful sign and the best answer to those skeptics who would argue this is an effort not worth taking.

PR

Issues managers considered a necessity

by Edwin O. Haroldsen, Ph.D.
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Can you imagine how valuable an oil public relations employee would be to the company had the following happened?

XYZ Oil has named an "issues manager" in its PR department. This person's job is to anticipate public issues that could hurt the company and help the firm take appropriate action to protect itself.

Examples of such public issues include Middle East developments affecting oil supplies, economic developments, tax policies and rising popular concern over "corporate social responsibility." If OPEC were to suddenly cut back on oil production and supplies or a new destructive war break out, with consumers getting mad at the oil companies as gasoline pump prices soared. Congress, responding to public pressure, in turn might pass a punitive "windfall profits" tax against oil industry revenues.

Avoiding such negative consequences would be the responsibility of the issues manager. An issues manager could help demonstrate that the oil company is not responsible for shortages through disseminating factual information via a combination of grassroots and direct lobbying to important audiences and through direct lobbying.

This process is called "issues management"—a new concept to which Dr. Brad Hainsworth, Brigham Young University professor of communications, has been contributing in a major way

in recent years. Hainsworth's experience in politics has helped in his research on issues management. He was an assistant to President Richard Nixon, deputy secretary of the Interior for land and water resources, and Utah's deputy lieutenant governor.

Only a little over a decade old, issues management is an aspect of public relations that seeks to help corporations make an impact on the public policy process, Hainsworth

says. In the past, many corporate PR managers have been unclear about how to influence developing policies that appear to be unfavorable toward their company. So in the mid-1980s, Hainsworth and a graduate student, Max Meng, began gathering available literature on issues management and searched for common models. There were several important pioneering books by W. Howard Chase, Robert L. Heath and Richard Alan Nelson, and a few others. But no single definition seemed to fit all cases.

Meng sent questionnaires to 50 top manufacturers on the Fortune 500 list asking

whether they had an issues management function and, if so, what it was. Nearly all of the respondents reported they did something in this area, but there was little similarity from firm to firm in what they were doing. In a 1988 article in *Public Relations Review*, Hainsworth and Meng presented an industry-wide explanation of issues management. They defined it as an "action-oriented management function which seeks to identify potential or emerging issues (legislative, regulatory, political or social) that may impact the organization, and then mobilizes and coordinates organiza-

PR Students from BYU Buck Trend

Despite the pervasive national recession the past two years, more Brigham Young University public relations students have been hired as interns and as employees than in any other period in memory, according to PR faculty members. And more were taken aboard by big-name agencies and Fortune 500 companies.

"The one thing that makes BYU public relations students so competitive is that they understand strategic planning and how to use it—instead of just offering entry-level writing skills," said Yvonne Middleton, chairman of Middleton-Picower, a New York PR agency. "Many can actually help solve problems."

Besides BYU's emphasis on teaching strategic planning as a foundation for communications, the students get valuable training in the Communications Department's student-run PR agency.

About one-third of the nearly 200 public relations students enrolled at BYU have the opportunity to staff and operate the agency. During the past school year, more than 60 students have served the needs of eight clients.

Larry D. Macfarlane, faculty advisor, said the agency was the brainchild of former

faculty member Bruce Olsen, who started it during the 1986-1987 school year.

Macfarlane estimates that he spends eight to 10 hours a week on agency business and says "most of the students put in three to five hours a week in support of their clients. They get quite intense about their accountability to the client," he said, "and the resulting quality of their work is very high. Most of them learn faster and become more committed to their chosen profession as they confront the reality of their client's situation."

The student PR agency now bears the name of Dr. Rulon Bradley, a much-revered former faculty member. Bradley gained considerable prestige among his fellow public relations academics and was nominated for the Public Relations Society of America's outstanding educator award six months before his death Dec. 25, 1983.

Most clients of the Bradley Student PR Agency are small businesses or nonprofit organizations with major needs but limited incomes. In many cases, they become clients because they can't afford any other PR firm.

"However, the valuable experience the students gain makes it easy for them to

in world of PR

tional resources to strategically influence the development of those issues. The ultimate goal of issues management should be to shape public policy to the benefit of the organization."

Public Relations Review asked him in 1990 to edit a special issue on issues management which featured a "who's who" roster of experts on the topic. He continues to publish in this area and is also currently serving on international committees for PRSA examining public relations in Asia and AEJMC reviewing education in emerging democracies, especially Eastern Europe. Hainsworth

also was recently given the honor of membership in the Public Relations Society of China, the only American so recognized.

Hainsworth offers this scenario on what organizations and industries should be doing in issues management: "The oil industry right now should be looking at the talk on the need for a cleaner environment. They should take the lead. If they don't, Congress or state legislatures will force them to do so. Then the industry will get reactively involved in trying to shape the effect of what Congress is doing — but at that point it really will be too late." **PR**

ignore any stigma they might feel in working for an 'agency of last resort,'" explains Macfarlane. "Some of the students liken themselves to public defenders in the legal system who take pride in doing something worthwhile at an affordable price—or for no fee at all."

Current Bradley Agency clients include a struggling ethnic restaurant, an annual community-sponsored folk festival for international dancers, a nonprofit center for Downs syndrome and other handicapped preschool children, a track club for summer Olympic-hopeful athletes, a public elementary school for the handicapped, an academic department at the university, a student honor association within a university college, and a small company attempting to market dental software.

Each of the clients is supervised by an upperclass student who acts as account executive. Six to 10 other students make up the account team and assist the account executive. All donate their time in order to learn valuable lessons—and to add to their portfolios for job interviews after graduation.

The student participants say the key to serving clients and bridging the gap between the classroom and the public relations profession is to use the "strategic planning matrix" taught in many BYU PR classes.

Todd Irwin, a former Bradley Agency account executive who now works for the New York PR agency Coltrin and Associates, says his experience in applying the strategic planning process in the student agency helped him emphasize in-depth thinking—not production—as the foundation of communications competence.

PR

Corporate public affairs surveyed



by Raymond L. Hoewing
President, Public Affairs Council
and Foundation for Public Affairs
Washington, DC

The results of the first major survey of the corporate public affairs field in five years have been released by the Foundation for Public Affairs, the Public Affairs Council's affiliate.

A total of 163 senior public affairs executives, a response rate of 32%, replied last summer to questions on business public affairs organization, staffing, functions and trends. The data were compiled and analyzed for the Foundations by the Center for Organization Development, a survey research firm in Rochester. Assisting with the survey was Leslie Swift-Rosenzweig, executive director of the Foundation.

What is the state of U.S. corporate public affairs?

- A majority of senior PAOs (51%) report to the CEO; another 22% report to the chairman, president or executive v.p.
- Four out of five senior PAOs direct their company's federal government relations, state government relations, local government relations, and community relations functions.

- Regarding the number of full-time professional PA staff compared to three years ago, responses were about equally distributed between increased, decreased and the same. Decreases in the number of support staff outweighed increases by a margin of roughly three to two.

- Over half of the companies maintain a Washington office.
- Only 16% of the respondents indicated that the elimination of PACs would have a great impact on their company's public affairs effectiveness; 37% indicated little or no impact. Only 14% of the companies endorse candidates.

- Nine out of 10 companies communicate with employees on public policy issues, while two-fifths communicate with retirees, customers and "third parties."

- Over half of the respondents indicated that their company's government/public policy functions and public relations/communications functions are part of a single department, while only 11% report the functions are fairly autonomous. Almost half said they are more coordinated than three years ago.

- About one-third of those responding indicated the public affairs department has responsibility for public affairs outside of the U.S., but the other two-thirds said their international public affairs capacity was only slightly or not at all developed.

- Four out of five respondents reported their public affairs department measures performance. Almost three out of four companies have instituted a quality program, but just under half have established such programs for public affairs departments.

- The most commonly used approaches for public affairs measurement and/or quality programs are customer survey (67%), benchmarking (63%), and quantification (59%).

Copies of the survey are available for \$25 each from the nonprofit, nonpartisan Foundation, serving as a national information clearinghouse on corporate public affairs and public interest/public policy organizations.

PR



Downsizing: Adopting a Situational Theory Perspective

by Kathie Leeper, Ph.D., APR
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As public relations educators prepare students to become proactive issues managers rather than reactive crisis managers, it is beneficial to demonstrate how theoretical approaches can be employed to analyze issues. Downsizing has become one such issue. According to Emshoff (1991), "downsizing has spread like a plague in the middle management work force" (p. 1). Tomasko (1987) explains, "One of their [management's] objectives is to come out of the downsizing with a strong and committed workforce" (p. 59). However, a hostile relationship between management and workers may develop. In order to create, instead, a strong and committed workforce, management must recognize the impact of downsizing on remaining employees.

This issue can be better understood from the perspective of Grunig's Situational Theory, a framework to look at employee responses to downsizing. The theory can be used to help predict and explain personnel reactions as well as to provide a rationale for making recommendations for internal communication regarding downsizing plans.

In situational theory, Grunig and Hunt (1984) identify three major independent variables: problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement. These "indicate when people will communicate actively or passively about an issue, and in doing so, identify which publics are latent and which are aware or active" (p. 148). The theory predicts that employees can easily move into the disheartened, non-communicative or into the very verbal activist category. Looking at each category separately, publics are vulnerable to changing from either latent or aware publics to demoralized/fatalistic publics who opt

out and affect morale and production or to activist publics who are difficult to work with.

The demoralization develops when, in watching the downsizing process, some individuals conclude that they have no power, no ability to impact on any future decisions. If employees are terminated without care, their demoralization is apparent to other employees and leads to the "spillover" of demoralization noted in many corporations which downsize. "Work reductions can have negative effects on productivity and morale by reducing workers' confidence in job security and overloading workers with new responsibilities" (Jacobs, 1989). Similarly, Davis and Milbank (1992) suggest that "layoffs undermine loyalty."

This helps explain the Curtis (1989) finding that downsizing detracts from trust, lowers morale, and leads to more secrecy. It would explain the Brockner, et al. (1987) finding that employees remaining with the organization often had reduced work performance as well as lowered commitment to the organization. They will join Grunig's (1984) demoralized/fatalistic category described as "these people don't care and make no effort to plan a behavior for that issue" (p. 154). As a result, these individuals have a negative effect on the organization.

However, some publics may change to Grunig's category of activist publics. They create a virtual crisis as they broadcast their message challenging the trustworthiness, motives, and fairness of the organization. Increasingly, employees believe it is their right to know and participate in decisions that affect their lives. Anderson (1992) found that "active publics went elsewhere to get information when they were dissatisfied with the information provided by the organization" (p. 162). Either change creates a problem for the organization; the challenge is to discourage employees from feeling the need to move in either direction. Ideally, the employee communication program can serve as an intervention to publics becoming either activist or demoralized.

The implications are quite clear. In the face of downsizing, public relations must

become much more active. The goal of public relations in downsizing is to prevent internal publics from becoming either demoralized/fatalistic groups with no interest in communication or activist groups fighting the system. Downsizing must be approached as "issues management" or risk communication to keep employees from creating a type of crisis situation for the organization.

Extensive communication appears to be the solution. In order for internal publics to understand management's decisions, public relations must insure that management has communicated adequately within an effective internal public relations program because research supports the need for even more two-way symmetric communication.

Public relations' goal is to help management and employees recognize their common interests, develop a shared understanding and, if at all possible, adopt a "win-win" solution to the problem at hand. If the employee can be aware of the constraints the organization faces, then understanding and perceptions of reality will more nearly match for both management and employees. Looking at the situation from a rhetorical perspective, Toth and Heath (1992) suggest that "how the organization presents itself and asks its audience to think about itself can be crucial to the impact of the public relations campaign" (p. 42). Public relations must heed Bunning's (1990) recommendation that it is important to show the highest level of ethics when downsizing.

In developing this communication campaign, Heath's (1988) suggestions of a long-term commitment, timeliness, honesty, coherence, candor, and openness must be employed. As these are important for external publics, they are even more important for internal publics. The ideal is to manage the communication so that internal publics remain aware and involved. In order to keep publics aware, public relations must continue to demand open and honest communication throughout all stages of the downsizing process. Only then can the organization succeed.

• see *Downsizing*, page 16

Kathie Leeper is a professor and chair of the Department of Speech Communication at Northwest Missouri State University. She completed her doctorate at Indiana University with a dissertation on attitude change theory. She teaches public relations and speech courses and advises the Public Relations Student Society of America chapter.

The academic-practitioner relationship: A new academic's personal viewpoint

by Bill Adams
Public Relations Sequence
Florida International University
North Miami, FL

Many of us who have emigrated to academics—whether via corporate, non-profit, government or other professional route—still have a lot to learn about public relations. Or, to soften that generalization a bit, let's say we have a lot to learn about teaching public relations.

This has nothing to do with whether a practitioner is APR, or even a Fellow; whether he or she has won numerous professional commendations or anvils of varying hues; or even whether said practitioner has been a mainstay in local, regional or national PRSA or AEJMC organizations.

It's simply that so much has changed in public relations in the past two decades that any practitioner making the switch to academe will be lucky to stay a chapter ahead of his or her students. Unfortunately, most practitioners are so busy "practicing" that the excellent educational organizations often get put on the back burner in favor of corporate issues management, a nonprofit crisis plan, a government communications effort, or other more "practical" matters.

Then, only when the "pro" moves into the classroom, does he or she realize the changes the past 20 years have brought to public relations education—even if that pro has spoken on college campuses, attended a few AEJMC meetings, or taken cursory glances at a couple of public relations texts. It's one thing for a practitioner to "guest-speak" to some public relations classes and a PRSSA meeting, but quite another to be suddenly confronted with the responsibility of taking 25 aspiring public relations professionals from September to December and actually teaching them something, not to mention advising them—another daunting experience for the freshman professor.

Sure, that heavy "real-world" experience is great for the students and for the professional's college or university; but, one can no longer get by on "war stories" alone.

The newly-minted educator is also confronted with a public relations "body of knowledge" that continues to grow exponentially—mind-boggling perhaps to the practitioner whose sole educational experience in the field may have centered around one textbook and mostly anecdotal professional journals.

Regardless of whether an ex-practitioner is on a professional or research-oriented track, the fact remains that understanding of communications/public relations theory and research and the ability to teach is crucial to the success of today's higher education programs.

Eventually, as the former practitioner settles into the academic routine—absorbs new knowledge in the field, learns from his or her colleagues and participates in education-oriented organizations—he or she begins to understand the need for a stronger link from the educational community to the professional world. This link has never been more necessary than it is today.

The academic-practitioner relationship has been the subject of panels, seminars and workshops for years and will undoubtedly continue to be featured at future professional meetings. And this is good. Because bringing together practitioners and educators to talk about problems, concerns and opportunities can only bring about mutual understanding and respect, something our profession needs in abundance.

But when it's all said and done, what can we hope to accomplish between the two disciplines? The former practitioner can ask, "Give us more knowledge of the field while we're still out there," and the academic can counter with, "Read our stuff, take our research seriously, and invite us into your organizations."

The twain must meet. There is much both sides can learn. *It should not be just*

those who switch from practitioner to academic who see the need for increased contact and understanding between the two disciplines. The academic certainly learns from practitioners who give their time to speak on campus, advise PRSSA chapters, serve on advisory councils and even adjunct for a semester. And the corporate, nonprofit or government public relations professional needs to understand how they and their organizations can benefit from a better understanding of the "academic" side of the profession; "theory," research and all.

"Facilitation" is the watch word. We must act as facilitators and seek opportunities for cross-pollination between the disciplines: practitioners as part of academic programs (AEJMC, other meetings); edu-

cators involved in the PRSA local, regional, national hierarchy; practitioners in our classrooms; educators brought in to advise public and private organizations, explaining where research and theory can help in a "practical" setting; and more.

Again, we'll be discussing the academic-practitioner relationship at the AEJMC in Kansas City in August in the scheduled pre-convention panel. One hopes it will help point the way to better understanding the roles each discipline must play if our profession is to continue its growth successfully.

Regardless of whether an ex-practitioner is on a professional or research-oriented track, the fact remains that understanding of communications/public relations theory and research and the ability to teach is crucial to the success of today's higher education programs."

— BILL ADAMS

PR



Commercial speech shouldn't have second-class status

by Craig R. Smith, Ph.D.
President
Freedom of Expression Foundation
Long Beach, CA

After years of research, my conclusion is that commercial speech, whether in print or broadcast, should be afforded the same First Amendment protection as political speech. A commercial speaker should be entitled to the same rights as any citizen; legislators and jurists should realize that commercial speech is valuable to Americans, to paraphrase the Supreme Court, even more valuable at times than political speech.

Founding fathers such as Madison and Jefferson believed if the Constitution could not cope with a problem that the nation needed solved, then the Constitution should be amended—not reinterpreted willy-nilly. That tradition has generally been upheld by the Supreme Court. However, there have been times when the Court has invented certain rights out of whole cloth. In those cases, we have to be particularly diligent in guarding our freedoms, for the changing course of the Court presents a danger as much as an opportunity.

Recent rulings in the area of commercial speech fall into that category. The Court has reached several five-to-four decisions that may confuse lawmaking on this issue and compromise *Stare Decisis* (the doctrine that principles decided in prior cases be accepted as authoritative by later courts).

The Founders, who were strongly influenced by enlightenment thinking, considered political expression to be the purest form of speech and therefore accorded it a great degree of First Amendment protection. This category includes expression concerning public affairs, candidates for public office, government operations, and other elements of the democratic process. It appears as campaign rhetoric, editorial comments, and legislative debate.

Broad protection of political speech works to advance two important democratic goals: 1) creating an informed citizenry capable of making educated decisions on matters of public concern, and 2) encouraging a free and open marketplace of ideas wherein the truth would ultimately prevail.

In the end, the Founders' intent serves as a guide to provide status for commercial speech that concerns legal products. Although defining commercial speech has not been easy, it is generally recognized as advertisements or other

forms of public communication that do no more than solicit a commercial transaction. Public relations has often been lumped under this rubric by regulators and jurists unfamiliar with the distinctions practitioners make. However, the distinction often made between noncommercial (political, issue-oriented) and commercial (advertising and public relations) speech is nowhere to be found in the Constitution itself. Regulation because of "scarcity of voices" was not an argument either. The Framers of the First Amendment were well aware that commercial advertising pervaded the eight daily newspapers published in America in 1791 at the time of ratification.

Nevertheless, commercial speech is sometimes subject to government restrictions that would be unconstitutional if applied to most noncommercial speech. Indeed, in 1942, the Supreme Court stripped commercial speech protection under

the First Amendment in *Valentine v. Chrestensen*. The case involved a New York businessman who was arrested for distributing handbills advertising a submarine exhibition. The Court emphatically declared that the First Amendment simply did not apply "as respects purely commercial advertising." Corporate speech that is not purely commercial concerning matters of public importance remained protected.

ARE COMMERCIAL RESTRICTIONS CONSTITUTIONAL?

A four-part test for evaluating the constitutionality of restrictions on free speech was established in *Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp. v. Public Service Commission*.

- To be entitled to protection, such speech must concern lawful activity and not be misleading.
- Is the asserted governmental interest substantial?
- Does the regulation directly advance the governmental interest asserted?
- Is the regulation more extensive than is necessary to serve that interest?

To restrict such speech, the government must develop a case for an overriding interest. For example, it is crucial to understand that informational editorial content in advertisements concerning public issues are protected by the First Amendment regardless of whether the comments promote the economic interest of the corporate speaker.

Coming to clear standards proved a difficult task. Fortunately, great strides were made in reversing *Chrestensen* when consumers and others began to challenge the outright ban on many kinds of commercial messages imposed by the states. A series of decisions elevating the status of commercial speech were issued from 1975 to 1986. The most significant was *Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp. v. Public Service Commission*, in which the Court announced a four-part test for evaluating the constitutionality of restrictions on commercial speech. The first part established criteria for determining whether

commercial speech was protected at all. To be entitled to protection, such speech "must concern lawful activity and not be misleading." The next three parts articulated standards for determining the degree of regulation permissible: "whether the asserted governmental interest is substantial," second "whether the regulation directly advances the governmental interest asserted," and third "whether it is not more extensive than is necessary to serve that interest."

Although technically upholding the Central Hudson standards, the Supreme Court's decision in *Posadas v. Puerto Rico Board of Tourism* supporting a two-tier form of government regulation in 1986 surprised many constitutional scholars. *Posadas* involved a failed challenge to the constitutionality of a Puerto Rico statute that restricts advertising of casino gambling in local media. In an effort to deter legal gambling by residents while encouraging gambling by tourists, Puerto Rico authorizes casinos to promote their "games of chance ... through newspapers, magazines, radio, television and other public media outside Puerto Rico," but not to island residents who by law were permitted to gamble.

The confusion sown in *Posadas* and several subsequent cases surrounds the First Amendment rights of commercial speakers to this day. The Supreme Court has ruled both ways on the issue without establishing a strong precedent. In light of these decisions, we can conclude that commercial speech is protected by the First Amendment, but there are times when the Supreme Court believes that an "overriding government interest" supported by a "narrowly tailored law" may take precedence. A misinterpretation of these phrases can have dire consequences, particularly if the Court, as it did in *Posadas*, or the Congress, as it does with beer and wine advertising, relegate a perfectly legal product to a lower rung on the societal value scale.

Free expression is the foundation for all our other rights and liberties. But some expression is more free than others because different levels of First Amendment protection have been accorded to different categories of speech. Yet whether it is printed or broadcast, whether it concerns how much a product costs or presents a particular editorial view, it is speech pure and simple under a direct reading of the First Amendment. To say that some speech is more valuable than other speech assumes that the government can impose a hierarchy of values on human thought. We all place different values on things, and speech is no exception. *But unless a clear harm and present danger can be demonstrated, all speech, regardless of its perceived social value at the time, should be afforded equal treatment.* This means allowing competition in an open arena where reason and truth are free to combat fallacy and falsehood.

Craig Smith is one of America's leading experts on the First Amendment and media regulation. He has served as a consultant to CBS News, as a full-time speechwriter for President Gerald Ford and automaker Lee Iacocca, and has written eight books. Currently, Dr. Smith is Director of the Center for First Amendment Studies and Chair of the Speech Communication Department at California State University, Long Beach. For a free copy of Craig Smith's book on this topic, All Speech is Created Equal, contact him at the Freedom of Expression Foundation, 5220 S. Marina Pacifica Drive, Long Beach, CA 90803; Phone: (213) 598-3444.

PR



Letter from the Beltway

by Susanne Roschwalb,
American University, Washington, DC

"It is in the creation of a public conscience that the counsel on public relations is destined, I believe, to fulfill the highest usefulness to the society in which he lives," said Edward Bernays in his classic *Crystallizing Public Opinion* first published in 1923.

His words still ring true today. First hand observers of William Jefferson Clinton's installation are talking about the creation of a renewed public conscience in the nation's capital.

Few could have predicted that 800,000 persons would attend the Inaugural festivities—the largest audience in U.S. history. Or that many of these would be people from across the country, who had never attended an Inaugural before.

Problems that hounded the planners of the five-day series of events represent a microcosm of interest groups that are likely to play a role in similar situations. Events planners are forewarned.

At an Inauguration billed as "An American Reunion," it was a drawback to be nonunion. Several catering firms which thought they would have lucrative jobs were booted out when it was learned they had nonunion employees. Health and anti-alcohol organizations tried unsuccessfully to prevent the world famous Budweiser Clydesdale horses from participating in the parade. Anheiser-Busch had contributed \$100,000.

For the first time, panels from the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt were carried by marchers in the parade. Although the Quilt has been in Washington four times in the last five years, this was the first time that a president asked for the quilt to be brought to him within hours of taking office.

PR News, published in Washington by Phillips Business Information, Inc., surveyed top executives on the best and the worst PR developments for 1992. Ethical failures were selected by nearly one-third of the respondents as the greatest challenge facing the field today. Almost one-half of the respondents made specific references to ethics controversies which hounded Hill & Knowlton during the year. Howard Paster, who had been named to head the H&K Washington Office, instead accepted the offer by President Clinton to head the Congressional Liaison office of the White House. Former beltway insider Bob Gray, meanwhile has opened an office in Florida. He's asked Ann Marie Radice, past acting head of the National Endowment for the Arts, to join his staff.

When the conscience of the nation was unleashed, the roleback of Zoe Baird's nomination as Attorney General proved inevitable. In the absence of any organized campaign to promote Mrs. Baird, public outcry forced the abortion of her nomination. The key: thousands of people who loudly protested to talk radio, their Congressional delegations, and the White House in telling this Administration to keep its word in ethically "playing by the rules." The first Executive Order signed by President Clinton concerned the Ethics Code banning top appointees from working for foreign governments once they leave public service.

Finally, Clinton campaign strategist James Carville, speaking at the National Press Club on Jan. 19, referred to Joseph Heller's book, *Something Happened*, in explaining the public opinion change. When reprimanded by Animal Rightists for serving alligator at an Inaugural function, Carville candidly answered, "Where I come from, you either eat them or they eat you."

PR

Journalism in the two-year college: A foundation for public relations specialist or generalist

by Thomas A. Buckner, Ph.D., APR
McLennan Community College
Waco, TX

Most of our graduates in public relations eventually find their way into work in a specific job description, whether it be as an advertising account executive, fund raiser, political staffer, research assistant or news release writer.

But, if they are to grow in the profession, they not only will need to excel in that specialty. They also will need to have seen the "big picture" of public relations, crisis management, external and internal publics, special events planning and other management functions while using as many communications skills as they can muster.

I've observed that careers of many successful public relations practitioners usually start in a specialty—evolve into a job involving the skills of a generalist—and then funnel back into a specialty on the expert or "consultant" level.

How best to educate these future practitioners in a rapidly changing profession is the hard question, a question we should continually ask and ponder. The educational experience these students forge in their first two years of college is an area worthy of greater study. A fact often missed is that it is at the junior and community colleges where their PR foundations—excellent, average or bad—are being formed.

The numbers are significant. In recent years, almost two-fifths of all students enrolled in colleges and universities in this country have been enrolled in two-year schools. Rising costs and crowded enrollments in universities may cause even more to enter two-year schools. In 1990 in Texas, for example, enrollment at universities increased from 405,682 students to 407,688 (an increase of 2,006), while community and junior colleges grew from 371,299 to 387,707—an increase of 16,408.

While we have hard statistics on these general college enrollments, a paucity of information is available on the specific area of education for journalism and mass communications and its related field of public relations in two-year colleges. Nevertheless, if the broad enrollment and graduation statistics can be dissected into areas of journalism and public relations, then about half of all such students have attended two-year colleges.

The Community College Journalism Association assumed the task of accumulating a database of such information. A census of two-year college journalism programs is underway with questionnaires mailed to more than 1,700 schools in this country and Canada. Preliminary findings from this effort may be helpful in exploring the question of what is being done to prepare public relations practitioners of the future.

By July of this year, 385 (about 23%) had been returned. Of those, 267 schools reported they taught journalism or mass communications. Of the 118 who said they had no

journalism or mass communications programs, 41 did have some type of student newspaper. This indicates that journalism education in some form is present on campus. Thus, 307 of the 384 return (80%) had some form of journalism.

BASIC JOURNALISM COURSES OFFERED

Only 26 two-year colleges which returned questionnaires (23 in the United States and three in Canada) said they taught a course in public relations. This is just 8% of those schools which have some form of journalism. Two of these schools offer an associate degree in public relations, and another school offers three public relations courses.

For the most part these are listed as "non-transfer" courses which may explain why a small number are offered in two-year colleges. Most university programs list public relations courses as upper level, expecting students who migrate into the PR sequence to fulfill basic journalism requirements in their freshman and sophomore years. Thus, such courses as "Reporting I" and "Reporting II" and "Editing and Headline Writing" are the typical offerings for freshmen and sophomores at two-year colleges and at the universities which accept transfers of such courses.

OTHER PR INSTRUCTION

One of the most popular of the transfer courses, "Introduction to Mass Communication," is offered by 154, or about half of the schools with journalism replying to the survey. In most cases, these courses contain a one-to-three classroom hour unit devoted to public relations. However, almost all of the "Introduction to Mass Communication" course content should prove helpful to the student entering public relations.

More specific "specialty" skills used in public relations—news gathering/writing, editing, publication design, computer publishing—are taught in the other basic reporting and editing courses of the 266 schools which offer journalism. These courses also offer considerable background for the "generalist"—communications history, communications ethics, problem solving, media management and teamwork.

For all except history, community college journalism students may have learning-experience advantage over their large-university counterparts for the following reasons:

1) Most journalism programs in two-year colleges are small, and thus all students can be active staff members and often leaders.

2) Student editor positions are held by sophomores and sometimes second-semester freshmen. (The community college "senior" is a sophomore.)

SYNERGISTIC EDUCATION FOR PR

In any discussion of public relations education, whether it be for "specialists" or "generalists," courses outside the journalism or mass communications department should be considered. For instance, business courses such as sales,

marketing and accounting would be appropriate along with art and computer courses in design and interpersonal communication from the speech department. Psychology, sociology and a foreign language, especially Spanish, would help. At our school, advertising is offered by the business department.

The census of journalism programs in two-year colleges has not progressed to the point of conclusive evidence, but trends have been shown. In the area of public relations, early findings show that few two-year colleges offer specific public relations courses. In almost all cases, these courses are introductory in nature, providing "generalist" background for the student. In most cases, these courses are not expected to transfer and take the place of a similar course at the junior-senior university level.

It should be noted, however, that not all community college students plan to matriculate to universities. Employed persons may be taking a course or two for continuing education, or some may be seeking a certificate in a two-year program such as nursing or an associate degree before entering

the work force. More than 1,700 schools in the census include a number of technical and vocational institutions offering more specialized training rather than general academic curricula. Even these, however, often have student publications where a student, who may find his or her way into public relations, can learn the skills of the specialist or the background for the generalist.

AEJMC and the Public Relations Division should not ignore the impact of the two-year college. I believe we should take a more active interest in learning what these journalism programs are doing, showing support, working in easing transfer credits, and perhaps helping with curriculum design and quality of instruction. By establishing greater cooperative links, we will prove more successful as educators. Our graduates—the future professionals—will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

The remarks by Dr. Buckner are taken from a longer paper he delivered at the Montréal convention.

PR

Teaching ethics through reviewing films

Most of us would agree that integrating movies into teaching public relations can be a useful teaching technique. Jason Berger, who is currently teaching at Duquesne University and will join the Communication Department of Central Missouri State University in the fall, recently assigned his class to see *Glengarry Glen Ross*. He discussed this project in a presentation on active learning to PRD members attending the Mid-Winter Meeting.

Glengarry Glen Ross was written by David Mamet and is adapted from his play. According to Berger, "Mamet's works are perfect vehicles to stimulate discussions of public relations ethics because he essentially focuses on moral choices made by relatively decent individuals who are functioning literally as 'caged rats' fighting to survive in an amoral world."

In *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Mamet introduces the audience to a group of real estate salespersons fighting among themselves to obtain a list of sales leads. These salespersons are "con artists." Their customer leads are essentially suckers, or, to use the words of the streets, "easy marks." The film represents marketing communications at its worst form, says Jason. He assigned the film to "shake up" his students and to force them to think about ethics by writing a review. Rather than having Jason discuss with us how his students responded to the assignment, we felt it would make better sense to publish in this newsjournal one of the best papers. Marcy Kirkwood is a business major and a communication minor. The following is her essay.

Glengarry Glen Ross, reviewed by Marcy C. Kirkwood

After seeing *Glengarry Glen Ross*, I hardly know how to go about writing my impressions. The following paper may seem fragmented, almost sporadic, because many of my thoughts are incomplete ideas. A powerhouse cast, including Al Pacino, Jack Lemmon, and Alec Baldwin, give Oscar-caliber performances in this dark, suspenseful tale of disreputable, small-time real estate salesmen competing in a high-stakes battle to sell "vacation" land in Florida. *Glengarry Glen Ross* (rated R) exposes a ruthless, competitive world where desperate people resort to cutthroat tactics—and survival of the fittest is the only game in town.

What was perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the movie was the way in which it relates to the material we have discussed in class. Most of us would like to believe we can accomplish our career goals by taking what we are learning now and combining those principles with ambition and creativity. AIDA, AEIEE—

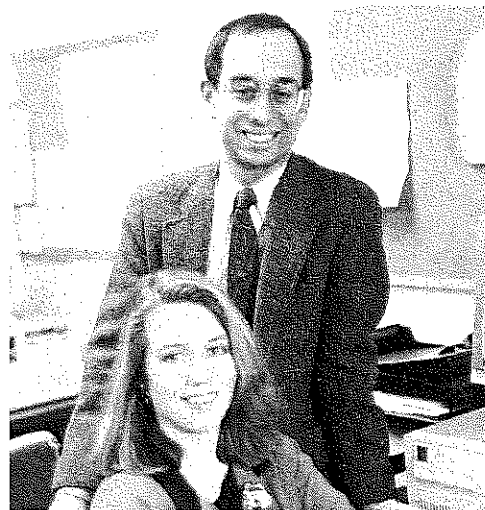
sure we can follow these models and simultaneously adhere to some semblance of personal ethical code, right? The characters in this movie smash our collegiate, youthful ideology and send it tumbling down to that part of you that once believed life was supposed to be fair. *Glengarry Glen Ross* is a sinister portrayal of the ultimate quest for the end without any regard to the means of getting there. And what scared me the most—realizing this is a reality I might some day have to deal with . . . and I am not so sure I would act any differently given the same situation.

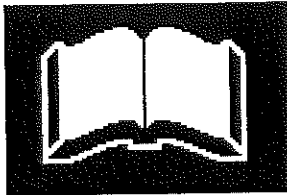
"Cognitive dissonance," I thought. This movie was actually causing me to experience cognitive dissonance—something I must learn how to avoid as a future PR professional. And no wonder, it's incredibly uncomfortable, especially when you are actively conscious of what is happening. I began to rationalize: this doesn't really happen, my job won't be like this, movies always sensationalize everything. But the business world just isn't that soft and comfortable. Although this case scenario may be extreme, I have no doubt these situations come up.

What blatantly jumped out at me as the essential problem of the office was the horrendous miscommunication and misunderstanding of various publics by the hierarchy. Management, the salesmen, and the potential buyers did not understand each other, nor did they attempt to alleviate the difficulty.

•see *Glengarry*, page 16

• PRupdate/April 1993/13





Software, book, and

Featured Review

Managing Systematic and Ethical Public Relations, by Mark P. McElreath (Dubuque, IA: Brown & Benchmark, 1993; Educator hotline for desk copies: 1-800-338-5371); and *Systematic Public Relations Software (sPRs)*, by Mark P. McElreath (sPRs, Box 183, Greenbelt, MD 20768).

At last, we're starting to get quality textbooks for the public relations campaigns management course. In 1992, *Public Relations Campaign Strategies: Planning for Implementation* by Robert Kendall of the University of Florida (New York: HarperCollins, 1992) proved a valuable addition to the marketplace. This new book by McElreath, a faculty member in the Department of Speech and Mass Communication at Towson State University and chair of the IABC Ethics Committee, should also quickly find widespread adoption.

Using a systems approach, McElreath integrates public relations theory and ethical considerations throughout the text—one of its major strengths. A number of practical exercises focus on establishing a framework to make ethical decisions. McElreath also introduces alternative critical perspectives which challenge the conventional wisdom, although the emphasis throughout remains on "empirical, applied communication theories useful to public relations practitioners." Given the diversity of statistical expertise by our students, he wisely starts at the beginning to walk readers through simple to more advanced research concepts.

Part Two of the book utilizes the results from a series of Delphi studies to stimulate student interest in advancing the field once they enter the profession. Intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, and organizational factors are not neglected—something that too often occurs when the mass communication components of public

relations are overemphasized. A concluding chapter reports on current job descriptions and offers practical career advice.

Besides a useful teacher's guide, educators get a free copy of *Systematic Public Relations Software (sPRs)* with student bulk orders. sPRs, which has undergone a 3-year development and beta-testing period, is designed both as a stand alone software tool for practitioners and to supplement the textbook. This software normally costs \$59.95 each for professionals and \$20 each for students in bulk orders of 12 or more. At Towson State, sPRs is on a network which operates in both a special classroom and in the main lab of the university's computing center. It's written in Clipper 5.0 for IBM and IBM-compatible pc's with hard drives and 640K memory. Versions for Macintosh and Windows should be available in 1994. The software package contains many useful public relations research calculation tools.

According to McElreath, "Most of my students have installed sPRs on their per-

Grunig Awarded J J & W Behavioral Science Prize

by Donna Peltier, APR
Public Relations Director
Public Relations Society of America

James E. Grunig, Ph.D., a leading public relations educator and researcher, was named the 1992 recipient of the Jackson, Jackson & Wagner Behavioral Science Prize.

Grunig, a professor in the College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, College Park, received the award at the October 1992 Public Relations Society of America Foundation Brunch in Kansas City.

Established by Jackson, Jackson & Wagner, Exeter, NH, the prize recognizes significant social science research findings that public relations professionals can use in their work. The public relations firm's \$35,000 gift to the PRSA Foundation endows an annual research award.

Best known for his research on the communications behavior of organizational publics, the strategic management of public relations, and the cognitive psychology of

public relations effects, Grunig currently serves as project director for a six-year, \$400,000 study of excellence in public relations and communications management funded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Foundation.

"Jim Grunig richly deserves this award," said James K. Van Leuven, APR, chairman of PRSA's Body of Knowledge Board, which selects the recipient of the Behavioral Science Prize.

"His program of research in public relations is clearly the most extensive and sustained effort undertaken by any scholar in the field," said Van Leuven, chairman of the Department of Technical Journalism, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO.

A prolific writer, Grunig has had articles published by *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *Public Relations Review* and many other journals.


He is a co-author of *Managing Public Relations*, published by Holt, Rinehart &

Winston. He also edited *Excellence in Public Relations and Communications Management* and wrote eight of its chapters.

Grunig was named the first winner of the Pathfinder Award for excellence in academic research by the Institute for Public Relations Research and Education.

In 1989, PRSA named him its Outstanding Educator. Grunig also belongs to several other professional and academic societies, including the PR Division of AEJMC, IABC, and the International Communication Association (ICA).

The PRSA Foundation was established in 1990 to foster public relations excellence by supporting research and education. It is a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are deductible for federal income tax purposes.

PRSA is the largest organization of public relations professionals. The 15,462 members represent business and industry, counseling firms, government, associations, hospitals, schools, professional services firms and nonprofit organizations. 

video reviews

by Richard Alan Nelson

sonal computers. From my side of the lectern, I find classroom discussions occur at a much higher level when students use sPRs—not only because the software does the calculations, but also because sPRs logically integrates theoretical relationships into the development of public relations campaigns. Most of the information in the teacher's manual is based on checklists contained in sPRs. So, students, too, have access to much of the same material." Further details are reported in the printed version of McElreath's 1992 AEJMC Convention presentation, "Teaching Budgeting and Cost Benefit Analyses Using Case Studies, Class Projects, and Systematic Public Relations Software (sPRs), a Database Management Program," which received a top teaching paper award from the PR Division and an award of excellence from IABC.

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Public Relations Education Program Case Study #1: P.R. Response to the Clemens Terminal Fire (Videotape # S-315 and accompanying

handbook) and *Public Relations Education Program Case Study # 2: Curing the Quarry Qualms* (Videotape #S-446 and accompanying handbook), both available at no cost to educators from Phillips Petroleum Company, Bartlesville, OK 74004. Contact: Cheryl Finkenbinder, Phone: (918) 661-6600.

Two of the best teaching tools on the practical problems facing corporate public relations practitioners are available again from Phillips Petroleum as a public service to the academic community. These are no whitewashes, as students are exposed to real issues and choices which faced the company during the 1980s. In case study #1, a well blows up, killing several men employed by a subcontractor. The news is bad and the company has to move into crisis relations.

Part one of the 22-minute tape takes viewers through the problem and then sets up a series of questions for students to discuss during the pause. Part two outlines what

Phillips actually did. Similarly, in the Quarry Qualms case, Phillips faced unexpected opposition to a gas refinery in Texas. PR was brought in a little late and asked to fix the situation. This presents a good opportunity to divide the class into teams of four-to-six students figuring out how they might tackle this problem if they worked for Phillips. Students get the assignment of trying to identify the publics, short- and long-term goals, research considerations, controllable and uncontrollable variables, etc.

These tapes were originally prepared when Bill Adams, now on the faculty at Florida International University, served as Director of Public Relations for Phillips. They have become classics that every PR student should be exposed to.

Phillips is also making available several other free tapes of interest, including: *The Performance Story: A Case History* (#S-200), *History of Phillips TV Advertising* (#PP-143B), and samples of their corporate television program called *Inside Phillips*. **PR**

Our Readers Write!

• *From Mack Palmer, Ph.D., Professor, Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Oklahoma*

Ere more time passes and my short-term memory loss quietly clicks into longer-time malaise, thanks for the "You're a Newsmaker" note and additional copies of *PR update*. Not only did I appreciate the courtesy, it is a testimonial to PR savvy. There's nothing like recognition to keep the serfs "serfing."

I put you to use the other day. Sort of. At the end of one of my diatribes to our gargantuan Intro to Mass Comm mob, I encountered the usual after-class seekers of knowledge and/or sycophants. In any event, one fellow wanted to get off on the curse of media bias—a legitimate topic, but premature at this time in the course. I recalled your column about the two recent, philosophically diverse books on the subject. I mentioned you and the existence of the books and told him I'd bring *update* with your stuff next class period. I did. He didn't show up after class. So it goes. **PR**

Sharpe: ethical behavior

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Acceptance of these principles allows us to look at public relations, not in terms of what professionals do, or even in terms of what public relations accomplishes, but rather as the social behavior required to maintain an organization's or individual's relationships. In seeking to amplify the terminology, I recently came to the following conclusions. The behavioral criteria required to maintain public relationships once established and the reasons for the behavior can be described in performance terms as follows:

The social role of public relations practitioners involves harmonizing an organization with its environment by working to assure the organization . . .

- communicates honestly so it will have credibility (with constant analysis of organizational concepts of truth);
- is open and consistent in its actions so it will have public confidence (requiring internal monitoring and "walk your talk" controls);
- evaluates the fairness of its actions so it will reciprocally receive fair treatment (with the commitment to public participation in decisionmaking);
- accurately researches its social environment and evaluates its image so it can communicate its positions more effectively (to be a constructive force);
- maintains continuous communications so there can be mutual understanding and respect (to build relationships and prevent alienation); and
- takes corrective adjustments when its actions are no longer serving a public interest (an explicit willingness to change). **PR**

• Freebies for your mind

Useful free resources of interest to AEJMC public communicators include:

- *Target Marketing Through the Yellow Pages* is a 32-page booklet by Dr. Alan D. Fletcher available in quantity with accompanying lecture notes, videos and other educational resources from Yellow Pages Publishers Association, 340 East Big Beaver Road, Troy, Michigan 48083. Phone: (313) 680-8880.
- Free legal help for professors and college students who feel their rights to freedom of expression and inquiry have been violated, from Academic Freedom Defense Fund, Center for Individual Rights, Washington, DC, (202) 833-8400. The Center also publishes a quarterly newsletter.

Downsizing

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Glengarry

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Management: To them it's be great or be gone. It's that simple—you sell, regardless of the extenuating circumstances, or you're canned no questions asked. Never mind that your salesmen have leads they can't possibly close. Hey, that's not your problem.

Salesmen: Stuck between a rock and a hard place. You have an unsympathetic management who doesn't really care that you can't be expected to work miracles. You have a clientele whom you must close a deal with, causing you to pressure them so hard they run like scared chickens. You have your fellow salesmen who should be your support group, never mind that you've all been put in such cutthroat competition that you can't trust each other. And on top of all that you are fighting a battle with your own self-esteem that you can't even run from.

Clients: Truly the clueless wonders of the whole movie. Why is this idiot bothering me so late at night with this B.S.? How can I possibly be expected to make a financial decision that might break me in less than three minutes? I'm tired, the kid is sick, my wife's at her parents—why won't this guy just get out of my house and leave me alone? The clients had no idea they were seeing a desperate man whose job was on the line and whose spirit had already cracked.

Thus the true nature of the office failure was the failure of its human components to know what they were dealing with. They hadn't done their homework, and did it ever cost them.

I learned a great deal from this movie. More than I realized, now that I wrote this paper. I'm a bit more cynical, but in a way that will work to my advantage. And I feel a small boost of confidence that this type of analytical thinking is something I am starting to get a handle on. After all, there may come a day I get a call from someone just like Williamson to salvage his public relations nightmare otherwise known as an office . . . and he's expecting me to be the expert. **PR**

Congratulations—Douglas Ann Newsom and Bob Carrell got married!



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