

news & views

Volume 48, Issue 6

PAGE 1

SAVE THE DATE!

Our June 19th program focuses on your career
To be held at Sheraton Four Points, Totten Pond Road, Waltham
How can PRSA help your Career?
See page 14 for details!

APR ALERT: Last Call and Summer Course

If you've been putting off the Accreditation exam for a more convenient time, it's just arrived. After the fall exam in Sept it's a whole new ball-game. See page 19 for details!

PRSA Boston June 02 Newsletter

Welcome to News & Views. This month's guest editor, Ann Getman, has done her usual wonderful job of bringing together a diverse and thoughtful series of articles, this time on public relations research. Ann and her contributors have laid-out a delicious buffet of research treats. We hope you enjoy. Thanks a million Ann.

Here's what you'll find in this month's issue:

- PR Research Intelligence
- The Essence of Discovery: Research and Its Role in the Public Relations Class
- Brookhaven National Laboratory: Research Helped Guide Reputation Turnaround
- Networking as a Research Strategy During a Job Search
- Research Resource Goldmine: IPR
- Survey Says...Our Members Have Spoken And Here's What They Said
- Bell Curves and Public Opinion Research

- Setting Measurable Public Relations Objectives
- June Program: How Can PRSA Help Your Career? Networking opportunities and mentoring are two key ways.
- May Program Review: Designing Websites to Maximize Press Relation
- Letter From The President: Report From PRSA's Leadership Rally
- Sole Profile: "She Can Move Mountains..."

Tids & Bits:

- APR ALERT: Last Call and Summer Course
- Recipient of PRSA Grant, 2001
- 2002 PRSA Boston Grant Winner Will Research How Australia Slashed Drunk-Driving With PR
- Professional Connections
- Solo Practitioners Invited to Address Counselors Academy
- Green Mountain College Names Barbara Wellnitz to Chair Presidential Search Committee ◀

Editor's Introduction

Research: we love and hate it, fear it and embrace it, allow our students, clients and corporations to be intimidated by it - and yet, when it comes right down to the best strategic solution, plan or program, what is more persuasive than objective, measurable research to make a case?

This issue is intended to remind you, reassure you and stimulate your interest in research, to demystify it for beginners, give you some perspective and even talking points with clients, CEOs and colleagues that research is worth the time and effort - and that it needn't take a lot of either.

This issue includes a variety of approaches to and examples of research, including: case studies; research abstracts; teaching research; demystifying the bell curve; networking as a research strategy in landing the best job; a report on the chapter's membership survey; introducing a goldmine of research resources, and a whole lot more.

Your feedback is welcome- directly to me as editor, or through letters to the editor for the fall issue, or by following up directly with the guest contributors.

Ann Getman, APR
Guest editor ◀



: Kara Pernice Coyne, Director of Research at Nielsen Norman Group, posts a 60% success rate for the online press centers she studied.

May Program Review: Designing Websites to Maximize Press Relations by Steve Quigley, APR

Talk about usability. A packed room of Chapter members and guests picked-up plenty of useful information about how to - and how not to - create a web site to meet the needs of journalists. With a mix of survey results, practical advice, screenshots and humor, Kara Pernice Coyne, Director of Research at Nielsen Norman Group, shared insights for making web sites more journalist friendly.

Ms. Coyne highlighted the results of her most recent web usability testing of 10 corporate websites with 20 journalists. The bottom line? Even high powered corporate web sites often leave journalists frustrated. And yes, poor design impacts press coverage.

While all sites she examined had some good traits, every site also had significant usability problems. At some point in every single test session, journalists said that they would have to **leave the site** because it failed to deliver what they needed. On average, users were only able to complete 60% of simple test tasks such as finding financial info about a company or finding the telephone number of a PR representative.

What are journalists looking for when they visit a site? According to Coyne, the answers are pretty basic.

- Find a public relations contact name and phone number.
- Check basic facts such as correct spelling and location.
- Discover the organization's "spin" on a particular story or announcement.
- Check financial information.
- Download images.

Despite the modest intentions behind the test web visits, most reporters left the selected online press centers unfulfilled. In one noteworthy example, the reporter was unable to find the desired information on the company's site, exited, found the information via Google, and returned - but not happily.

What can we do to make our sites more usable for the press? Coyne offers 32 recommendations. Here are ten:

- Feature contact names, phone numbers, email addresses and snail mail address prominently.
- Provide detailed contact information on every press release - new and archived.
- Create a separate and easily reached press section.
- Do not require journalists to register to enter your site.
- Consider providing local telephone numbers for each country.
- Provide links to articles about your organization, including a brief description, title, date and direct link.
- Make it easy to search press releases archives by topic and date.
- Offer links to related information at the end of each release.
- Provide facts - don't inundate with marketing information.
- Post most recent releases first but allow users to re-order based on their preferences. ◀

Got Something to Say!?
Send it to:
stevequigley@attbi.com

PR Research Intelligence

by Ann Getman, APR

You're smart: you already know that research can be a great boon to your company and clients, their customers, and your own professional development. If you've been taking research off the table because clients think it's too time- or cost-consuming, or don't value it; or if you've been relying on your own experience, old data, or the instincts of your clients or your CEO, you're losing your research intelligence.

BEFORE you plan the program, spend the budget, develop the message or call the press, refresh your understanding of what research can do for public relations strategies, programs and practitioners.

PR research can:

- create or gather **market intelligence** to help you stay current and in touch with what your customers, members, stakeholders see, hear and think. It's serendipitous: it helps you discover things that aren't visible in the boardroom, what you're doing well, or why your customers are loyal;
- create or review **channel intelligence**, confirming or correcting whether your messages are reaching their intended audiences;
- give you **evaluative intelligence** on whether

and how well your messages are being received – seen, heard and understood – by their intended audiences;

- shape your **message intelligence**: engaging your audiences in developing or testing messages prevents gaffes and promotes reaching and moving them;
- enhance your **performance intelligence**, creating a better program of two-way communications, more engaging messages, better insight into how to allocate resources for the best results;
- boost your **career intelligence**, increasing your value to your company and clients;
- reduce the **risk of doing damage**, steering you away from the costs of litigation, retractions and corrections, repairing relationships, credibility or reputation, and unwanted surprises.

With that much intelligence available, it's time to stop thinking of research as an 'extra' in public relations planning and programs, and recognize it as essential to consistently good practice.

Ann Getman is principal of Getman Strategic Communications, specializing in stakeholder research, communications evaluation and integrated communications program planning. She is a past president of PRSABoston, an assembly delegate for the chapter, and a member of the PRSABoston Independent Practitioners Network.. Anngetman@aol.com ◀

The Essence of Discovery: Research and Its Role in the Public Relations Class

By Edward J. Downes, Ph.D.

When discussing the importance of research with my students, I tell them that to become the best public relations practitioners and managers we can be, our training should be broad and deep. A "broad" training is one through which we learn the practical skills, the tactics and techniques that make public relations practices "work." A "deep" training, on the other hand, is one through which we come to understand the importance of our field's theoretical foundations in general and its research techniques specifically.

The student training to be a strategic public relations planner, armed with "research tools," can produce a substantive plan to examine a problem; determine publics impacted; focus selected messages; and evaluate the success of such efforts. My students are informed that an increasing number of communications professionals must strive--equipped with research tools--to maximize the resources of their employers by identifying the most important opportunities and constraints to their organization's environment. Research, in essence, tells organizations what to do, how they're doing, and what to do differently.

(Continued on page 4)

(Essence continued from page 3)

"Research" for most students, however, remains a mystery: when they hear the term many think of complicated statistical analyses, long reports with disjointed numbers, and hours pouring over "data." What they do not realize, however, is that research is more exciting than a standard deviation, more fun than a mundane interview, and more useful than a Chi-Square value. Good research, I tell them, is exploration, discovery-and truth.

"'Research' for most students, however, remains a mystery..."

To start, students must know that research is more than statistics. In fact, an entire qualitative paradigm suggests we can understand public relations problems utilizing research methods that are not numerically based. These include techniques such as participant observations, interviews, and focus groups. This is not to suggest, however, that quantitative, statistical tools for discovering "truth" should be avoided.

In fact, a grasp of statistical principles provides a systematic, objective, and controlled means to understand a problem or to tap an opportunity. Methods such as experiments and surveys offer the tools to measure "truth" numerically.

Whether qualitative or quantitative, research tools aid the student. Developing a substantive understanding of research, many believe, comes only from direct experience doing research-i.e., mastering research methods comes from "on the job training." It is important to have students about to embark on a research project play a role in defining the problem, designing the research, collecting the data, and analyzing results. The more they practice these skills, the more skilled they become.

For two years I taught an applied research class at the Newhouse School of Public Communication at Syracuse University. The class was great fun because, over its 16 weeks, I watched students realize the magic inherent in gathering and reporting research results. The class was divided into two parts. Part I focused on how research is applied to the practice of public relations. Here I presented lectures in which I discussed the nature of social scientific inquiry; explained hypotheses, concepts, and

variables; described advantages/disadvantages of various methods; etc. I also assigned and tested students on chapters from Broom and Dozier's textbook *Using Research in Public Relations: Applications to Program Management*. Part II required students, working in teams, to put away their textbooks, create original research proposals, and present them to a "real world client." Clients included nonprofits such as the American Red Cross, the University library, and an Inter-Religious Council.

Roughly six teams of four students listened carefully each semester to the client as he/she described a public relations problem. For example: the Red Cross needed additional blood donors; the University library needed to be thought of as "user friendly"; and the inter-religious council wanted to know how it could better serve its membership. Each team, in turn, put together a proposal describing how it would solve the client's problem. All proposals were then presented to the client, and those the client deemed worthwhile went forward to the data gathering stage.

Student teams, for the remainder of the semester, carried out a study. For example: they did telephone surveys in the community; conducted structured interviews with employees; performed content analyses of promotional materials; and ran focus groups with customers. After collecting their data they wrote up their findings in a formal, professional, report. Finally, they did a half-hour presentation of their results to the client on the last day of class.

The process of leading a class of 25 undergraduates through the "rigors of research" was most rewarding. Students liked the "real world" application and, as they became immersed in their data collection and analysis, found their work to be fruitful. In fact, the tensions associated with the research process often turned into energy directed toward the client's research problem. Most rewarding, however, was the realization for many that "research" was no longer perceived in grim terms and dark, nebulous formulas. Rather, the students experienced the research process as one filled with vitality-one in con-

(Continued on page 5)

**Brookhaven National Laboratory:
Quantitative and Qualitative Research Helped
To Guide Reputation Turnaround
By Robin Schell, APR**

When people think of research, they tend to think of it in the traditional sense -- statistically-projectable telephone or written surveys for quantitative data, focus groups or intercept interviews for qualitative data.

The following case study illustrates how a balanced research approach provided a foundation for the development of a proactive public relations plan following an environmental crisis situation. Though formal research was conducted, it was really the opportunities for informal research - with Advisory Council members, community opinion leaders and feedback from the organization's employees in the community - that helped the organization rebuild relationships in the community.

Some Background on Brookhaven National Laboratory Brookhaven National Laboratory, a U.S. Department of Energy (D.O.E.) laboratory founded in 1947, is situated on 5,300 acres in the Pine Barrens of Suffolk County on Long Island. The Lab's mission is to create and operate major facilities and to make them available to university, industrial and government personnel for basic and applied research in a variety of scientific fields, from physics, chemistry and materials science to biology and medicine. The Lab has over 3,000 employees.

In 1989, the Lab was added to the National Priorities

List because of historical chemical and waste management practices and on-site soil and groundwater contamination. In 1996, volatile organic compounds were discovered off site, and the D.O.E. notified neighbors in the area they would be hooked up to public water as a precautionary measure - outraging that community. A tritium leak in 1997 served as the triggering event for Brookhaven National Laboratory (Long Island, NY) to begin rebuilding trust with stakeholders who had lost confidence in the Lab and its ability to manage environmental issues.

Research, and a focus on relationship building internally and externally, played a key role in BNL's about-face.

Opinion Leader One-on-One Interviews

Though BNL had built some relationships with key stakeholder groups, they wanted to enlarge the group of opinion leaders they were communicating with and hear their concerns about BNL. They commissioned Jackson Jackson & Wagner to conduct 25 face-to-face interviews and used the findings in 2 ways:

1. To broaden BNL's opinion leader list, and
2. To develop a formal baseline community survey

Formal Community Relations Survey

In 1998, JJ&W conducted 766 telephone interviews which looked at 2 subgroups within the Long Island

(Continued on page 6)

(Essence continued from page 4)

stant flux-one aimed at discovery-and one providing new knowledge.

A discussion of PR research continues in our work at Boston University where PR students-both graduate and undergraduate-are required to take a semester-long research methods class, where discussions of research permeate each PR course, and where select students take-on independent research studies or graduate theses. The end result, almost universally, is the same: I get a kick out of what the students find and they get a kick out discovering-

usually for the first time-the substantial knowledge research tools build for them.

Edward J. Downes, Ph.D., worked professionally ten years for communications programs throughout metropolitan Washington, D.C. For the last six years he has been a professor at Boston University's College of Communication. He teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses in public relations and mass communication theory, and offers a handful of workshops on PR research, media relations, and promotional techniques. ◀

area - those inside the 15-mile radius of the Lab, and those outside, to determine any differences in perceptions and knowledge levels of the issues. The survey explored everything from confidence levels in newly-appointed Lab Director John Marburger to specific behaviors (e.g. likelihood of writing to a Congressional representative on the Lab's behalf).

Some of the findings:

- Over half (60%) of respondents associated the Lab with environmental concerns (e.g. ground-water contamination)
- Only 2% were aware that the Lab was conducting world-renowned research
- 49% did not trust Brookhaven's management to do the right thing
- 60% said the Lab did not provide timely information

A Focus On Open Communication

The Lab Director began by bringing the communications, community involvement, and government affairs functions under one department. Under the new structure, the Community Education Government and Public Affairs (CEGPA) manager reported directly to Marburger.

BNL then developed a community involvement policy and plan with input from the broad community, including internal and external stakeholders. The Lab formed a Community Advisory Council with a broad representation of various Lab constituents, both supportive & non-supportive, which met monthly - Lab Director John Marburger attended each meeting. This forum served as issue anticipation as various Lab issues were presented to and discussed with this group.

In addition, BNL formed CTAP - the Community & Trust Advisory Panel, to lend the outside perspective of senior communicators across the country. This group met, and continues to meet, once or twice a year to conduct an evaluation of CEGPA activities and offer counsel.

BNL also developed Ambassador and Envoy programs, with a focus on keeping employees informed and involved in the community.

The Targeted Approach: Interested Publics

In 2000, BNL conducted a "dipstick study" with an audience defined as "interested publics" - people known to have some kind of a relationship with the Lab -- to check knowledge levels, perceptions and confidence levels. This was followed in 2001 by a telephone survey with a sample of 230 residents of the Long Island community. Although many in the community are still unclear about what BNL does, there were significant behavior-oriented findings including:

- Fewer associations with groundwater pollution. 25% mentioned it specifically top of head in 2001 vs. 41% in '98
- An 8% increase in the number of people likely to advocate to family/friends, 8% increase in the number of people likely to write a supportive letter to the media and a 9% increase in the number of people who would attend a meeting on behalf of BNL
- Almost half - 47% - had either been to the Lab personally, or had a family member who had visited
- Of the 52% who had not visited, 69% said they would if given the chance

The Lab also conducted a written survey with members of the Community Advisory Council to determine their satisfaction levels with the Council and ideas for improvement.

The Ultimate Measure of Success

In December of 2000, Brookhaven was given a "good neighbor" award by a local well-respected weekly newspaper, recognizing BNL's high level of community involvement.

In 2001, the IAP2 (International Association of Public Participation) named BNL "Organization of the Year."

(Continued on page 7)

Networking as a Research Strategy during a Job Search

By Maria Foley

In today's tight public relations job market, job hunters must be even more strategic and efficient in pursuing new professional opportunities than ever before. The truth is that most jobs are not advertised in the newspaper or on the web. Instead, positions are filled through employee referral programs and through recommendations from professional colleagues. This is where networking comes in and why it is so important.

Networking is not a job search tactic, but rather a strategy that requires research, identifying key audiences, and formulating specific messages about your interests and your qualifications. During my job search last summer, it was networking that was largely responsible for me receiving multiple job offers. Here's a look at how networking works and why it works so well.

One Contact Leads to Another

Networking is based on successful interpersonal communication, something with which all of us in public relations should feel comfortable. It is all about developing positive relations with others. In many ways, networking creates a snowball effect in which one professional lead develops into another and then another. Before you know it, your list of contacts has doubled and then tripled. This happens because networking does the following:

- It develops the all-important personal contacts that you need to learn about job opportunities and to break into industries that are new to you.
- It gets you in front of people you otherwise would not know or be able to meet.
- In speaking with these people, you gather more contacts with whom you also approach. This creates additional leads and more people with whom to talk.
- By way of speaking with so many people, you develop personal relationships with them, that later can serve as personal and/or professional references.
- Most important is that through speaking to all of these people, you learn of job opportunities that you would not know of otherwise. In many instances, networking allows you to get your resume in front of key decision makers or hiring managers without going through a human resources screening of dozens, if not hundreds, of other competing resumes.

On another level, networking keeps your emotional spirits high during what can be a very difficult and stressful time. Meeting with people and gathering job leads keeps you focused and optimistic. Networking keeps you plugged in to the professional world, learning what's happening in the industry and fields in which you are interested, and talking to people in those areas who can be so helpful. It is these many people who will support and guide you with encouragement and suggestions during your search.

(Continued on page 8)

(Brookhaven continued from page 6)

Continuing Research

The Lab continues to evaluate the success of their education and public affairs efforts by having the Community & Trust Advisory Panel annually review CEGPA activities. The results are shared with the Department of Energy.

The Lab continues to conduct quantitative and qualitative research internally and externally. This is especially important in a year where significant

change has occurred at the Lab (specifically, the departure of Lab Director John Marburger).

Robin Schell, APR, is Senior Counsel at Jackson Jackson & Wagner, where she has worked for 17 years. She is an accredited member of PRSA. Her PRSA leadership has included past president of Yankee Chapter, former chair of the Northeast District, former chair of PRSA's Environmental Section, and current co-chair of the Section Council. She is a frequent presenter at PRSA National

(Networking continued from page 7)

Networking as a Strategy:

A key element in networking is to know your goal. What kind of public relations focus are you looking for in your next position? For example, media relations, internal communications, or marketing communications. It's very important to have a fairly good idea of what you want to do because you need to communicate this to others with whom you meet through networking. They need to understand what it is that you're looking for and how they might be helpful. It's perfectly fine, and I think preferred, to leave your options open on the level of position or even the industry in which you might work. But knowing what you want to do, as well as what you can offer is more important. The bottom line is that you're not looking for any job that comes up. Focus your search on the work that interests you most.

Here are other important strategies:

- Develop key talking points about yourself. What are you looking for? What are you interested in? What are your unique skills or qualifications? Most important, what would you like the person you are networking with to do for you? They are providing you with their time and expect you to ask them to review your resume, suggest other people with whom you should meet, or inform you of opportunities they may have heard about recently. Again, remember that it's not so much a question of, "do you know of any open positions?" but rather, "do you know of anyone I can meet with who may know of other opportunities?" You'll be surprised how you can meet with someone on Monday who doesn't know of any job searches, but then calls you on Thursday to tell you that one opened in their best friend's company!
- Know your audience. Do enough research to know something about the company or the person with whom you are meeting. The focus is not so much on them as it is on you, but still take time to learn about them and their interests and background.
- If you know that you are looking to break into a particular industry, ask those with whom you

meet if they know of anyone in that industry - even if it is someone who does not work in public relations - with whom you might speak. Many times these people can lead you directly to hiring managers or those in key decision-making roles.

A Personal Case-Study

My strategy for breaking into the biotechnology industry included the following networking strategies:

- I called on former professional colleagues who worked in health care and who had their own professional contacts in the biotech industry to circulate my resume and forward it to the corporate communications department of a company that I knew had a current opening. In this way, I was getting my resume in through the backdoor of the company, going direct to a hiring manager, and being presented as someone highly regarded by another professional colleague.
- I sought out people who worked in the biotech trade organization for their inside leads and connections to companies. I met with professional search firms who worked with biotech companies. I also introduced myself to lawyers who represented biotech companies, news reporters who covered the industry, and others who didn't work in biotech, but had professional contacts in the industry.
- I asked everyone I networked with, even those who were not in biotech, if they knew anyone who worked in the industry, regardless of their position. I would then call that person, introduce myself using the referring person's name, and politely ask for a time to meet. I never asked for a lot of time - usually a half-hour.
- I used my talking points and always stayed on-message. I told them what I was looking for, gave them my resume, and later e-mailed it to them so that they would have an electronic version to also pass along. Again, I asked for any recommendations on others with whom I should talk.
- I visited a few job fairs for the purpose of gathering company materials, meeting people and

(Continued on page 9)

(Networking continued from page 8)

getting their business cards, and then following up with them - again with my key message points and resume.

- I always stayed in touch with my networking contacts, giving them updates and letting them know the names of other people with whom I also had met. This usually led to additional suggestions, or better yet, many instances where the people I first networked with knew others I had most recently talked to and agreed to do their own calling on my behalf.

Lessons Learned

- Don't be hesitant to talk to anyone about your search and what it is that you're looking for. I passed my resume along to my former real estate broker, next door neighbors, hairdresser, and friends and family.
- Follow-up with everyone with whom you meet. Don't forget to send a quick thank-you note and pass along your gratitude again via e-mail when sending your resume.
- Stay in touch with those who helped you even after you land your new position. They will want to know how things worked out and will be happy for you. In addition, you are now a contact for them to use in the future.
- Always remember to extend the same kindness

and generosity of time to others who are networking and involved in a job search that you received during your search.

- Keep your networking active to continue to build your professional contacts. You never know when they may be useful again.

Looking for a new job can certainly be one of the most challenging experiences of your life. But, it is also one of the best ways to meet new people, develop professional and personal relationships, and learn a great deal about yourself in the process. Keeping an open mind on networking and following strategies such as these will definitely make it that much more successful and meaningful to you. Good luck!

Maria E. Foley is Associate Director of Public Relations for Genzyme Corporation. Her networking strategy over a four month period resulted in the development of more than 85 contacts with whom she met or spoke, representing a wide range of industries including financial/banking, higher education, health care, biotechnology, insurance, energy, public relations agencies, and trade organizations. In the end, she entertained five very strong job offers before accepting her position with Genzyme. Maria can be reached at (617) 591-5690 or a.foley@genzyme.com ◀

Research Resource Goldmine: IPR

www.instituteforpr.com

edited by Ann Getman

If you don't yet know about IPR, the Institute for Public Relations, you're about to discover a gold mine of best practices and professional development tips.

IPR's mission is to improve the effectiveness of organizations by advancing the professional knowledge and practice of public relations through research and education.

IPR is the only independent foundation in the field of public relations focusing on research and education, and has distinguished itself for pioneering in-

volvement in the field of public relations through publications, lectures, awards, symposia, professional development forums and other programs, to promote and encourage academic and professional excellence.

All of its independent research papers are non-proprietary, practice oriented, and available on line -at no cost.

For this research issue, we've included summaries of two papers on PR measurement, and a sample of other titles available. Check it out, bookmark it and visit often: it's a great resource to practitioners in every functional area and at every stage of practice.



Bell Curves and Public Opinion Research

By Ellen Boisvert, APR

Is there such as thing as a normal bell curve when it comes to public opinion on a hot topic? Is there a magic number that is favorable? How extreme are the negative group? There are many questions that we are faced with when public opinion comes into play. One question for the pr practitioner is when do I need quantitative research (larger samples with more statistical power) and when will qualitative research do?

Dr. Phil Lesly's model (see below) showing where "the sampling universe" stands on an issue is a tool that can lead you to decide what type of research you need to do. The question to ask is: "Where are the lines drawn on your issue?"

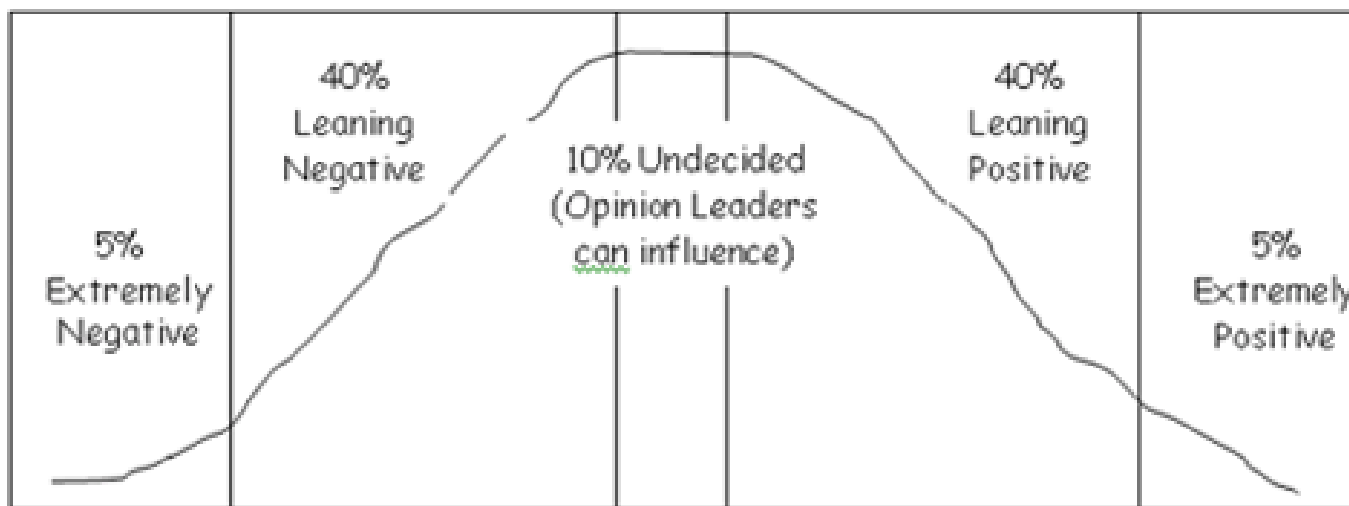
Typical Breakout of Public Opinion on Any Given Topic

Use Quantitative

- When you cannot estimate where the public stands on your issue according to the model
- Also for benchmarking and tracking over time
- When you have the time and resources for a comprehensive research study

Use Qualitative

- When you already can estimate, with some degree of confidence, where the public stands on your issue according to the model
- Then you can apply qualitative techniques to the segments of the group, or
- You can use qualitative research to verify your initial assumptions ◀



Green Mountain College Names Barbara Wellnitz to Chair Presidential Search Committee

The Board of Trustees of Green Mountain College, Poultney, Vermont, has appointed alumna and trustee Barbara Wellnitz as Chair of its Presidential Search Committee. Barbara, President-Elect of the Boston Chapter, earned an A.A. degree in liberal arts when Green Mountain College was a two-year

women's college. She is president of Ryan Wellnitz & Associates, a public relations and investor relations firm based in Foxboro, Mass.

Barbara will chair the 11-person committee charged with recruiting a successor to outgoing president Thomas L. Benson, Ph.D., whose resignation takes effect at the end of 2002. The committee is made up of representatives from the college's faculty and staff, student body, alumni and trustees.



Guidelines and Standards for Measuring and Evaluating PR Effectiveness

By Dr. Walter K. Lindenmann

(Summary from IPR copyrighted archives)

Overview

What is public relations evaluation?

Basically, it is any and all research designed to determine the relative effectiveness of a public relations program, strategy, or activity, by measuring the outputs and/or outcomes of that PR program against a predetermined set of objectives.

Interest in public relations evaluation has surged in recent years, as the public relations field has grown in size and sophistication, and as those who practice in the field have found themselves more often than ever being asked to be accountable for what they do.

Those who supervise or manage an organization's total communications activities are increasingly asking themselves, their staff members, their agencies and consulting firms, and their research suppliers questions such as these:

- Will those public relations and/or advertising efforts that we initiate actually have an effect -- that is, "move the needle" in the right direction -- and, if so, how can we support and document that from a research perspective?
- Will the communications activities we implement actually change what people know, what they think and feel, and how they actually act?
- What impact -- if any -- will various public relations, marketing communications, and advertising activities have in changing consumer and opinion-leader awareness, understanding, retention, attitude and behavior levels?

As questions such as these have increased in number in recent years, many public relations practitioners -- as they seek to justify what they, themselves, do -- have sensed a need to establish guidelines or criteria that the industry can follow, when it comes specifically to public relations measurement and evaluation.

This guidebook has been prepared by a special task force of the Institute for Public Relations Research & Education to begin to define minimum standards when it comes to designing and conducting PR evaluation studies.

Some Guiding Principles

In focusing on PR measurement and evaluation, here are some guiding principles or key factors to consider at the outset. These guiding principles are discussed in more detail in the main sections of this booklet.

- Establish clear program objectives and desired outcomes before you begin, to provide a basis for measurement of results. PR goals should tie directly to the overall goals of the business program.
- Differentiate between measuring PR outputs, which are usually short-term and surface (e.g. the amount of press coverage received or exposure of a particular message), and measuring PR outcomes, which are usually far-reaching and can have more impact (e.g. determining if the program changed awareness and attitude levels, and possibly behavior patterns).
- Measuring media content, while of great value, needs to be viewed as only a first step in the PR evaluation process. It can measure possible exposure to PR messages and actual press coverage; however, it cannot, by itself, measure whether target audiences actually saw the messages and responded to them in any way.
- There is no one, simple, all-encompassing tool or technique that can be relied on to evaluate PR effectiveness. Usually, a combination of different measurement techniques are needed. Consideration should be given to any one or several of the following: media content analysis ... cyberspace analysis ... trade show and event measurement ... polls and surveys ... focus groups ... experimental and quasi-experimental designs ... and/or ethnographic studies that rely on observation, participation and/or role playing techniques.
- Be wary of attempts to precisely compare PR

(Continued on page 12)

(Guidelines continued from page 11)

effectiveness to advertising effectiveness. The two forms of communication are quite different from each other and the fact that placement of advertising messages can be controlled, whereas placement of PR messages usually cannot be controlled, needs to be taken into

- PR effectiveness can best be measured if an organization's principal messages, key target audience groups, and desired channels of communication are clearly identified and understood in advance.

The PR evaluation process should never be carried out in isolation, by focusing only on the PR components. Wherever and whenever possible, it is always important to link what is planned, and accomplished, through PR, to the overall business goals, objectives, strategies and tactics of the organization as a whole.

(This research paper can be downloaded in full from IPR, in PDF format) ◀

Setting Measurable Public Relations Objectives

by **Forrest W. Anderson and Linda Hadley**
(summary from IPR copyrighted archives)

The goal of virtually all public relations (PR) is to help an organization achieve its "business or performance objectives." How does PR do this? It begins by setting measurable objectives. Measurable objectives in public relations do two things:

1. They facilitate and support business objectives, thus demonstrating that PR activities support the business or performance goals and are thereby "strategic"
2. They enable PR practitioners to show they have achieved what they set out to achieve, and thereby demonstrate accountability

Link PR Objectives to Business and Organizational Objectives.

Getting a clear understanding of an organization's business or performance goals is the PR practitioner's first step in setting measurable objectives for a communications program, yet it is probably the most often overlooked. When management asks what it is getting for its PR investment, it is asking for evidence that communications activities have advanced business goals. If public relations practitioners do not have a clear understanding of what these business goals are, public relations can succeed only by chance.

Business goals might include:

1. Increasing share price
2. Increasing sales
3. Increasing market share
4. Increasing productivity
5. Reducing employee turnover

How do we obtain this information? In the ideal world, senior PR staff has been at the table with the rest of senior management helping to set the organization's objectives. So senior PR staff knows. However, in some organizations, PR has not yet achieved this level of influence. If this is the case, other avenues for determining business goals are to engage senior managers in discussions of the organization's goals, and the factors that managers think will impact achieving these goals.

Ask to see business plans and marketing plans. Talk with those involved in other communications disciplines about what their programs are designed to accomplish. Do your own research into industry issues and trends and your target audiences. Make this kind of situation analysis a routine element of program planning.

Of course, understanding the organization's business goals is easiest when the public relations practitioners who develop the communications plan take part in setting the organization's overall objectives as well.

(Continued on page 13)

(Objectives continued from page 12)

To help ensure that PR objectives are linked to business objectives, ask the following questions:

1. What is management trying to achieve and what will help or hinder its success, from a communications perspective?
2. How are stakeholders likely to respond to management decisions?
3. What response would management like from target stakeholders?
4. How can PR programs help achieve these goals?
5. What is the most effective role for PR in relation to other communications disciplines? What can PR do more effectively than advertising, promotions, management consultants, etc.?

Answers to these questions will help identify business goals and guide PR efforts in the most productive directions.

Tying Objectives to Measures of Program Success
The foundation for effective program evaluation is setting objectives. Program evaluation is the process of measuring progress toward objectives. If the objectives are unclear, the evaluation will be weak. Further, the creation of objectives is critical to managing expectations for the program, especially where specific targets for outcomes are set (e.g., increase awareness by 20 percent).

Creating Measurable PR Objectives

In the case of objectives, wishing (or simply calling something an objective) won't make it so. An objective must:

1. Specify a desired outcome (increase awareness, improve relationships, build preference, adopt an attitude, generate sales leads, etc.)
2. Directly specify one or several target audiences
3. Be measurable, both conceptually and practically
4. Refer to "ends," not "means." If your objective outlines a means by which to do something, (often prefaced by the words "leverage" or "use"), you have a strategy, not an objective.
5. Include a time frame in which the objective is to be achieved, for example, by July first.

In general, process goals, such as "get publicity," "launch a product" or "create a brochure," make poor objectives. They do not relate to broader organizational goals and are not measurable in any specific, concrete, or truly meaningful manner. ("I did it"/"I didn't do it." does not count as measurable.) A useful way to replace these "process" objectives is to ask yourself, "What is the purpose of (insert objective)." The answer to this question is likely to move you closer to a clear, actionable objective.

(This research paper can be downloaded in full from IPR, in PDF format)

A sampling of IPR research papers available through www.instituteforpr.com (click on research button) includes:

- **Public Relations Research For Planning And Evaluation**
Dr. Walter K. Lindenmann
- **Research Doesn't Have To Put You In The Poorhouse**
Dr. Walter K. Lindenmann
- **Toward An Understanding of How News Coverage and Advertising Impact Consumer Perceptions, Attitudes And Behavior**
Bruce Jeffries-Fox
- **Selling Research Internally: Changing the Mindset About Communications**
Lisa Richter and Walter J. Barlow
- **Guidelines for Formative and Evaluative Research in Public Affairs**
James E. Grunig and Larissa A. Grunig
- **Setting Measurable Public Relations Objectives**
Forrest W. Anderson and Linda Hadley



Deadlines

Everyone's participation in News & Views is encouraged.
Deadline for text is the 21st of the month prior to press.

PRSA Boston Grant Winner Will Research How Australia Slashed Drunk-Driving With PR

Samantha Snitow Also Wins Fullbright Fellowship

By Henry Stimpson



2002 PRSA grant winner Samantha

Talk about going a long way to pursue important research!

This winner of the second PRSA Boston Grant, Tufts University senior Samantha Snitow, will be going for her master's degree Down Under at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Snitow will be researching anti-drunk-driving initiatives in the Australian state of Victoria, focusing on the PR and ad campaigns that have been implemented in the last dozen years. Victoria has slashed its death rate on the highways by 51% in the last six years.

Snitow also won the prestigious J. William Fullbright Fellowship for her studies. "My project will shed light on the world's most successful anti-drunk driving campaign and discover the intricate details in its success in changing a society's mindset. I hope the same positive results can be converted to save lives and minimize suffering in American society," she says.

When she's done, she'd like to work for an organization like Mothers Against Drunk Driving or the National Commission Against Drunk Driving and use her Australian research to put together a new national communications plan to get drunks off America's highways.

Snitow, who majored in sociology with a minor in communications and media studies, has interned in Tufts' PR department since last summer under Cindy Pollard, PR director.

"Samantha immediately established herself as a natural leader among the department's interns," Pollard says. "Her energy is infectious, and her dedication to her work is impressive. She thinks creatively and strategically about communication challenges, understands the value of solid research, and is keenly aware of the subtleties that separate powerful messages from ineffective ones."

Snitow will receive \$1,000 from PRSA Boston to support her in her studies.

PRSA Boston will be accepting application for its 2003 grant next January.

Henry Stimpson, APR, of Stimpson Communications, chairs PRSA Boston's Endowment Committee. ◀

Our June 19th program focuses on your career. Join us at Sheraton Four Points, Totten Pond Road, Waltham

How Can PRSA Help Your Career? Networking opportunities and mentoring are two key ways.

Everyone knows that networking is critical to career success, so our June meeting is geared toward helping you make the contacts you need in our industry. We'll provide the dinner and a facilitator for each table to help get the ball rolling. We'll also plan the

seating to make sure you get to meet other people in your sector at all stages of their careers.

But there's more. Finding a good mentor is another great way to enhance your career. And if you're not lucky enough to have a mentor where you work, the PRSA can help match you with a senior level practitioner that can help you answer career questions. We'll tell you about this important free service from PRSA at our meeting and give you the chance to sign up for a mentor - or apply to become one.

Look for additional details in an upcoming e-mail and on our website. ◀

Recipient of PRSA Grant, 2001

By Pam Borland

PRSSA President, Emerson College

If you were wondering, “So, whatever happened to that girl who won the PRSA grant last year?”, then today is your lucky day! I am currently a senior public relations major at Emerson College and president of our PRSSA chapter. Emerson is a very small private school with astronomically large tuition fees. I get some scholarship money and spend my summers feverishly working to make up for the rest of it. The grant I received was used for tuition and to help me breathe a little easier over my summer vacation.

I have been intimately involved with PRSSA for four years. In addition to the fact that it is a great resource for aspiring PR students, it is a place to build personal and professional strength. When I attended my first PRSSA meeting, I had no idea that several semesters later I would be the confident looking one at the head of the room explaining to a room full of semi-interested faces why they should become members. Now my college career is coming quickly to an end and I can say with pride that PRSSA has been a crucial part of my learning experience.

I have previously held the positions of vice president publicity and national liaison. I am now honored to be president and have used the opportunity to try and give back to the organization as much as I have received. What I have learned is that trying to do that is like a dog chasing its tail. It simply can't happen because the more I give, the more I get in return, and the cycle goes on.

I have, however, been able to help facilitate some pretty significant accomplishments over the past year. I would not be doing my job as president if I didn't take this opportunity to highlight them! We finally have an official office space with a functioning phone and computer. We developed and distributed press kits. We have had several guest speakers including representatives from the Boston Business Journal, Business Wire, and the Fleet Center. We sent a team of four people to the National Conference and a team of three to the National Assembly. Ten of our members attended the February PRSA meeting. We made holiday cards for kids at the Mass General Hospital and are putting together a team for the Walk for Hunger in May. Our membership has increased 25 percent and attendance by approx. 300 percent. I could go on for several pages, but I think you get the idea!

“I would like to thank PRSA for supporting my education with the grant I received last year.”

Now election time is around the corner and I am happy to report an overwhelming interest among our members to run for office. I am so attached to the organization, I have taken the liberty of establishing an ‘immediate past president’ position. I will be a mentor for PRSSA as I embark on my journey into ‘the real world’.

I would like to thank PRSA for supporting my education with the grant I received last year. It made my tuition bill a little less painful, helping to assure my return to Emerson this fall. It is initiatives like these that foster the growth and development of successful public relations professionals. ◀

Letter From The President
Report From PRSA’s Leadership Rally
By Jeff Seideman, APR

I’ve just returned from PRSA’s Third Annual Leadership Rally in New York City, simultaneously a sobering and exhilarating experience. “Sobering” because the venue was the Marriott Financial Center Hotel, just a block south of Ground Zero, where the World Trade Center once stood. The Red Cross had been headquartered there.

On the taxi ride into Manhattan, there was the venerable Empire State Building, staking out its turf in midtown, but its taller and more famous kid brother was gone and there was nothing to mark the southern tip of the island, or the victims. Looking down from the hotel’s top floor, I was able to see the last remnants of cleanup activity. We’ve all seen news footage of the attack and months of workers sifting through the debris, but I was unprepared for the emotional impact. It took my breath away.

Back in the Marriott’s function rooms the Leadership Rally was buzzing away. More than 80 Presidents and Presidents-elect attended, from chapters of every size and spanning the country from Alaska to Florida. Also participating were most of PRSA’s senior staff, section and district leaders, board members and the current and future national Presidents. The two days were packed with general and breakout sessions on future society plans, new developments, financial advice, membership recruitment, chapter management skills and open-ended discussions with representatives from similarly sized chapters. Boston was part of the group for the largest chapters, those over 350 members.

Beyond the tips and tricks shared and some impenetrable discussions of tax filing requirements, two areas are worth reporting upon -- member re-

cruitment and chapter programming. The national society has a plan for boosting membership; local programming is more complicated.

The society is feeling the pinch from our industry’s downturn and is currently experiencing flat membership growth. It could easily turn negative, or, with aggressive incentives, it could grow. I’m pleased to report it’s feeling frisky and aggressive.

As a result, June is being called Chapter Appreciation Month, which means the national society will pay the local dues for new members. Any new member signing up by June 30th will save have his or her local days waved for the first year, a savings of \$55. Additionally, as has always been the case, five or more applications submitted as a group will have their initiation fees waved, a savings of \$65 each. Translated, this means an agency signing up five employees for PRSA membership would save \$120 each, for a total of \$600. Not bad.

There are also significant incentives for former PRSSA (student) members to become full members. For the first two years after graduation, ex-PRSSA members will be full-fledged PRSA members for just \$60 per year. Notices will soon be sent to all Chapter members about this program and the new member sign-up discount.

What both formal and informal surveys have shown us, and what was reconfirmed at the Leadership Rally in the large-chapter breakout session, is that members want programs that address their individual needs. To this my daughters would reply, “Well, duuuuh!”

Less obvious, though not surprising, when you think about it, is that all large-chapter memberships, ours included, are divided into three broad categories: account executives and specialists, who do the

(Continued on page 17)



Workshop presenters: (Left to right) Tom Vitelli, Salt Lake City, Rhoda Weiss, Board Member, Santa Monica, and David Henry, Health Academy, New York, lead the membership roundtable discussion at the recent PRSA Leadership Rally in New York City.)

Solo Practitioners Invited to Address Counselors Academy



Barbara Wellnitz, APR (left), and Ann Getman, APR (right) at Counselors Academy Conference after their presentation on Solo Practice.

Ann Getman and Barbara Wellnitz, both members of the Counselors Academy section of PRSA, led a breakout session, "Changing Markets, New Opportunities for Sole Practitioners." at the 2002 Spring Conference in San Antonio in May. They discussed the benefits and drawbacks of solo practice, positioning solo or small-agency practice as senior-level counselors to management, and criteria for effective

collaboration with other independent practitioners.

Barbara and Ann discussed the forming of alliances and collaborations of solo practitioners in Boston and around the country as a way to expand resources for clients and deliver multiple, integrated services. Among the criteria for choosing colleagues for collaboration offered by our two PRSA/Boston speakers are:

- look for compatible standards and expectations;
- check client and colleague references;
- establish who owns and leads the client relationship;
- define roles, matching strengths to client needs;
- reconcile fees and rates; determine who will be paid, for what;
- ensure mutual accountability among team members;
- streamline communications with client, with one account manager.

The criteria will be featured in an Inc. magazine online article, thanks to a lead from Julie Dennehy, to accompany an August article on collaborations. ◀

(Letter from the President continued from page 16)

work; senior managers/executives, such as directors and vice presidents, who set strategy and manage client and internal corporate relationships; and executive vice presidents and above, including owners, who are business people who focus significant portions of their attention on external matters and the general business climate. All three of these groups have both social and professional development needs.

Most of the Chapter's programming efforts have been targeted at delivering professional development services to the first group, which is probably the majority of our membership. We've done a poor job addressing the needs of the second and third groups. If it's any consolation, most of the other large chapters are in the same boat.

The Board has already had one meeting devoted primarily to these issues and we'll continue to work

them through the summer and fall. One quick and easy step we'll be taking is to list the national society's Boston PD programs, webinars and teleconferences on our web site's programming area. While we're at it, we'll redesign the web site to make it more functional.

But for the larger issue of locally produced programs, my suspicion is that we need to address each of these groups individually, possibly with three programming groups or committees, each developing content for their target audiences. Assuming that's the case, we'll also need more volunteers to staff these positions.

It's a dynamic world, with constantly shifting needs, so volunteer professional organizations like ours are always seeking perfection, but never achieving it. Stay tuned to see how our eternal "work in progress" develops. ◀

Professional Connections

YOUTHBUILD USA JOB ANNOUNCEMENT Communications Specialist

About YouthBuild USA

YouthBuild USA is a national organization providing technical assistance and support to an expanding number of community organizations implementing YouthBuild programs in their local areas. It also sponsors the national coalition for federal funding for YouthBuild programs and numerous state coalitions. It participates with other national organizations in developing and advocating for public policy that will benefit low-income youth and their communities.

The YouthBuild program involves unemployed young adults in the creation of affordable housing in their own communities. The program design includes: construction training through housing rehabilitation and construction, academic skills building toward completion of high school diploma or GED, individual counseling and peer support, leadership development and youth governance, and job and placement, and economic opportunity beyond the program.

The Goal for the Communications Specialist: Use media relations and marketing communications to increase the impact and visibility of YouthBuild. Facilitate communication with the media, youth, policy-makers, the general public, political leaders and funders in order to gain additional resources, change public perception of lower-income youth, obtain greater private support and influence policies affecting lower-income youth and communities.

Specific responsibilities and objectives:

- Assists in the planning, development and communication of information designed to keep the public informed of YouthBuild's programs, accomplishments and youth-related issues.
- Prepares and distributes fact sheets, news releases, photographs, scripts, motion pictures or

tape recordings to media representatives and other persons who may be interested in learning about or publicizing YouthBuild's activities or message.

- Develops ideas and opportunities for feature articles, interviews, presentations and other public relations activities that promote awareness of YouthBuild, its programs and youth-related issues. Maintains media contact list, briefing sheets and speaking points.
- Fields and directs responses to media-related inquiries.
- Assists and coaches YouthBuild staff with public speaking engagements, presentations and preparation of articles for publication.
- Writes and edits press materials and copy for marketing materials and publications.
- Monitors YouthBuild and related industry coverage; collects and distributes relevant clips.
- Catalogs and maintains YouthBuild library of videos, photos, quotes and personal stories.
- Secures speaking engagements for the president, staff and youth of YouthBuild.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

Qualifications:

Candidates must have 2-4 years of experience in public relations. Some PR agency experience preferred. This individual will be a team player and self-starter with excellent knowledge of the media and its processes, writing and presentation skills, as well as being results-oriented with a proven track record in prioritizing and managing multiple projects.

Salary: Commensurate with experience

To Apply: Send resume and cover letter to: Search/Communications Specialist, YouthBuild USA, 58 Day Street, P.O. Box 440322, Somerville, MA 02144 or email us at jobsearch@youthbuild.org or fax us at (617) 623-0222.

YouthBuild USA values a diverse workforce and is an EEO/AA employer

(Continued on page 19)

APR ALERT: Last Call and Summer Prep

Change is Coming

If you've been putting off the Accreditation exam until a more convenient time, it's just arrived: after the fall exams in September, it's a whole new ballgame.

September is the last time the APR exam as we know it will be offered. The next opportunity will be July-Sept '03, and it will be a new exam in three important ways: new questions, new criteria for reviewing, and a new delivery method. You'll have to take and pass the orals part of the exam to be eligible for the written exam, which you'll schedule and take at an educational testing center, via password, on a computer.

If you want to take advantage of the resident exper-

(Connections continued from page 18)

Non Profit Girls Self Defense organization seeks pro-bono Public Relations Assistance:

Girls' LEAP seeks the assistance of pro bono Public Relations support in developing a strategic plan and appropriate materials to disseminate in the year 2002-03.

Girls' LEAP (Lifetime Empowerment & Awareness Program) is a non-profit safety and awareness program developing self-defense and personal awareness for girls ages 6-16 yrs. LEAP uses an innovative curriculum, incorporating confidence and awareness building, self-reflective skills and physical self-defense techniques. LEAP is one of the few free programs in the United States for girls that combine both cognitive and physical skills. Programs are lead by women with professional social work and/or physical skills training, and supported by a group of college women who serve as mentors and teaching assistants, allowing for extensive personal attention to the developmental needs of each girl. LEAP empowers the girls who participate, and also enables the teachers and mentors to enhance their interpersonal development and articulate a sense of responsibility for community action. Contact: Deborah Weaver, 781-283-2904, dweaver@wellesley.edu ◀

tise in your chapter, and be part of a peer group studying, discussing and role playing for the exam, NOW is time to get ready. Deadline for the September exam is August 4th.

Summer Study Course

In a final push to help you through the exam as we know it, the chapter is offering an 8-part APR study course over the summer for those eligible for and intending to take the exam. Eleven people are conspiring to make the process painless, accessible, affordable and engaging for you.

When and Where: Wednesday evenings, 6-8:30 PM July 10- August 21. Simmons College on the Fenway; free parking, cafeteria on site (brown bag- dinner will not be provided.)
Cost: \$15 per class or series subscription for \$75, paid to the chapter in advance.

Content: presentations, review and panel discussions covering:

July 10 Background and basics: definitions, benefits, key opinion leaders, external and social context of PR : Ann Getman, APR; Kirk Hazlett, APR; Lynda Beltz

July 17 Publics and Public Opinion: Jack Agnew, APR

July 24 Research: Ann Getman, Ellen Boisvert, APR

July 31 PR Practice Susan Schumacher, APR, Lisa Franklin, APR

August 7 PR Programs: defining the problem, program strategy, tactics, and evaluation: Peter Morrissey, APR

August 14 Communications Theory and Models, including exercises in message development: Steve Quigley, APR

August 21 Ethics: law and regulations, cases, review of ethics guide. Panel of senior practitioners; Nancy Sterling, APR

Optional: Group review and practice exam sessions: to be organized by participants; facilitation available Kirk Hazlett, APR

For more information about the summer study program and information about registering, please call contact Ann Getman, Accreditation chair, Boston PRSA, at anngetman@aol.com. ◀

"She Can Move Mountains..."

by Peter Golden

For the uninitiated, seeing Liz Goldsmith in action can be a puzzle. Prodigious stores of energy and a willingness to engage on just about any topic can be perplexing to those used to the Sphinx-like pronouncements of "marketing gurus." Listen to her for more than a minute or two; however, especially if you need to communicate the benefits of buying technical products in arcane industries, and any ambiguities clear up quickly. The short take on Liz Goldsmith? This is one very experienced, very bright public relations practitioner who can plan, write and execute in any arena.

"She can move mountains," says Elissa Traher, former creative director at Redgate Communications where Liz worked with agency head Ted Leonis prior to Redgate's sale to American On Line. "I watched her handle a client once who realized the need to create a presence in a national trade event on extremely short notice," adds Traher. "In only a few days Liz had found a racecar and driver, created a backdrop and got the whole act pulled together with a solid promotion. The client was the hit of the show!"

In fact, Liz moves more than mountains, having somehow found a way to integrate an independent public relations and marketing communications practice with family life (two kids, an entrepreneurial husband and a burning desire to cut out the 80 hour work weeks and get off the road).

So what's her secret? That extra quotient of brains we mentioned earlier, plus plenty of Moxie. But if there's one characteristic that distinguishes Liz Goldsmith from her colleagues in the Independent Practitioners Network of the Public Relations Society of America's Boston chapter, it's her absolute relish in engaging with the products and services of her clients. And the more complex the merrier!

Liz's experience and skills become immediately apparent when looking at her website (www.goldsmithpr.com), which is as stylish and

appealing as it is brief and intriguing. One look and you'll want to find out more.

Here's just a bit of background: Born and bred on New York's East Side, Liz's first break after college came as a darkroom manager for Parsons School of Design's offshore program in Paris, followed by a similar assignment in the south of France. Then followed a few years as an art photographer.

Liz's epiphany came, however, not with camera in hand in a field of Wild flowers in Provence, but in Allentown, PA where, after returning to the States, she took a deep breath and went to work as marketing communications manager for a manufacturer of lighting products.

"They didn't know what they wanted and I didn't know what I was doing, but I had absolute freedom, and I learned a lot," says Liz, who clearly learned much, because her next assignment was with Dick Moritz, a highly regarded marketing communicator from Philadelphia. Dick took her in, began to teach her the ropes, and established a pattern that she followed for the next decade of her career: always work with mentoring geniuses in top-flight agencies.

"Dick inspired incredible loyalty from his clients, who are great people and with whom I'm still in touch 15 years later. I learned so much from them and Dick. And I had a chance to dig into this absolutely non-Martha Stewart type stuff, like automotive aftermarket parts, with all the cylinder heads, valves and camshafts. It was fascinating."

Next level up on a rapidly rising escalator was Major Mentor Number 2, Ted Leonensis of Redgate Communications fame. Serious PR industry observers will remember Ted as the guy who sold out to AOL in the mid-'90s and still plays a major role there. During their time at Redgate, Ted assigned accounts to Liz in telecom and semiconductors.

She ate them up, further strengthening her rapidly developing skill set.

(Continued on page 21)

Survey Says... Our Members Have Spoken, and Here's What They Said

By Michael Morgan and Barbara Wellnitz

Over the past several years, the PRSA Boston Chapter's Membership Committee has taken a hard look at why former members have left the Chapter and has now examined what it might take for current members to stay.

The focal point for this research was the development of an in-depth survey instrument by Ann Getman and the Membership Committee (Vic Beck, John Boyle, Arthur Dimond, Cherylann Dorsey, Lauren Knebel, Michael Morgan and chair Barbara Wellnitz), who devoted a significant amount of time and effort to recruit chapter members to think about their wants and needs, and analyze findings.

Seventy three members responded; 11 participated in an evening focus group, and 62 respondents to the e-mail survey.

The survey was field-tested with the help of Susan Schumacher of Brodeur Worldwide, who hosted the focus group facilitated by Ann Getman. Most participants were senior-level practitioners who had

been members of PRSA and our Boston Chapter for more than a decade; they worked in agencies (3), corporations (3), solo practice (3) and nonprofit organizations (2). They discussed their expectations of Chapter membership, as well as their views on Chapter programs - and on whether they felt they were getting value for their dues.

Based on focus group input, the survey instrument was fine-tuned. Postcards were mailed to all chapter members, alerting them to the e-mail survey to be transmitted a week or so later.

Who Responded:

Of the 425 chapters members, 62 (14.5%) took the time to answer the in-depth survey questionnaire. These included:

Level:

- 48 senior-level practitioners (11 or more years of experience)
- 7 mid-level (with 6-10 years)
- 7 young professionals (5 years or fewer)

(Continued on page 22)

(Goldsmith continued from page 20)

Post Redgate, Liz jumped to Creamer Dickson Basford, where she quickly became a vice president and worked with clients in telecommunications, risk management and synthetic diamond film. "CDB was a tremendous place to work," says Liz. "I learned a phenomenal amount from my account teams and had the opportunity to work for clients who were always pushing the envelope with new technologies."

In the early 1990's, Liz went independent as a way to integrate career and family interests. Working from an office in Lincoln, Massachusetts, where she rides regularly for exercise and to blow off steam, Liz increasingly is moving toward digital media in her professional work. "Part of the fun of working in this business is helping clients take

advantage of new ways to reach their target audiences," she says.

Although she still works with companies in the fiber optics industry, in light of last year's downturn, she says she's grateful that she diversified into specialty chemicals a few years back. She's also finding increasing work developing information architecture and content for web sites. In a flat economy in which many PR practitioners find their practices are slowing, Liz finds she is busy all the time. She may not be moving mountains these days, but she clearly still has the stuff to leap tall buildings in a single bound!

Peter Golden is an independent public relations practitioner and principal of the Natick, Massachusetts-based Golden Group. ◀

(Survey continued from page 21)

Work sector:

- 26 solo practitioners
- 12 corporate PR
- 11 agency professionals
- 8 non-profits
- 1 between jobs and 1 retired.

Membership longevity:

- 29 people (46%) had been PRSA members for at least 11 years
- 21 (33%) had been PRSA members for 5 years or less
- 24 (38%) had been Boston Chapter members for 11 + years
- 23 (37%) had been chapter members for 5 years or less

Time priorities (top three areas where time is spent):

- 37 (59%) strategic planning
- 24 (39%) program management
- 24 (39%) media relations
- 19 (31%) project management
- 17 (27%) account management

RESULTS

Chapter members were asked for input on their expectations of chapter membership, their level of activity and involvement, whether they derive value from national and chapter membership, awareness of services provided by the national organization and the chapter, communications, and how PRSA Boston could be more relevant to them.

Member Expectations and Satisfaction

Members were generally satisfied with the range of opportunities and services the Chapter offers - programs, directory, newsletters, job postings, etc.

Most members expect PRSA Boston to provide them with a chance to network with colleagues and keep them informed about issues, activities and educational and career development opportunities.

They were generally satisfied that all these opportunities existed for them, although many pointed out that work and family obligations had affected their ability to participate.

Most respondents were happier with the Chapter and its programs than they were with the national organization (Chapter membership . . . it offers me better value in terms of meeting people and an exchange of ideas and information"). Some members were critical of National ("I'm frustrated by National's workshops and programs that are rarely offered in Boston.") and would prefer to just be members of PRSA Boston if they could, although others were impressed by National's publications.

Several respondents offered suggestions on conditions that might make them more active members, especially around programs: more flexible meeting times (breakfast, lunch and evening meetings without supper) and locations (South Shore or west of Boston); more forums for senior-level professionals; and more networking opportunities for young professionals.

Networking and Programs

Focus group participants saw, and survey data concurred, Chapter membership as an opportunity to network with colleagues, make contacts and exchange ideas. They generally felt the Chapter met their expectations, which were tempered by their general lack of availability to participate in meetings and other events. They expressed a desire for more senior-level, "big picture" programs, such as dealing with client expectations, point/counterpoint discussions, agency management, more focus on trends, and content-rich programs on issues in specific industries.

Suggestions included a panel of lawyers and public relations practitioners to represent differing sides of an issue; and a roundtable discussion on issues relevant to agency management.

They thought one "powerful" meeting a year for each of the four sector groups to enable members to work together on ideas and programs that would

(Continued on page 23)

(Survey continued from page 22)

enhance the value of their membership. Both the focus group and general membership felt the Soles Group could be a model for other Chapter affinity groups. (Plans currently are in the works for a young professionals sub-group.)

Others felt a need for more variety in programming ("Periodically poll members on the subjects they'd like to see covered"), as well as in location (inside or outside Rte 128), vendors and menus.

Chapter Communications

The majority of respondents prefer to receive chapter communications by e-mail, although some noted there they receive too much e-mail in general and will deal with job related communications first, before PRSA. Virtually all members believe the combination of e-mail and fax to be redundant. While most respondents prefer e-mail for the ease of receiving, downloading and deleting communications, several said they would prefer to read News & Views in hard copy format and some would like the newsletters sent by US Mail,

Several respondents appreciate the e-mails announcing the next edition of the newsletter online but those should not be sent until N&V is actually posted on the chapter web site.

Value to Chapter Members

Most respondents are happy with the value they receive, and feel a connection to the Chapter.

Most did not feel cost is a factor in their perception of value, but half of the non-profit contingent's respondents would be likely to leave PRSA if their employers did not pay the cost of membership. Consistent with concerns raised with other non-profit members, cost may be a major factor in why chapter participation is low among non-profits. A few other respondents believe the combined cost of National and Chapter memberships is too high. A few people suggested group discounts on PR-related services, or discounts to companies hosting programs.

The primary value factor cited by respondents is the relevance of Chapter programming. Most members said that their inability to participate in Chapter activities is more of a factor than anything PRSA Boston does -- or does not do.

Some respondents feel there has been too much emphasis on Soles, "Meet the Editors," and high-tech programs. Others view the opportunities for interaction among the Soles as a potential model for other Chapter affinity groups. Other respondents see more of the human touch as a way to enhance value, having Chapter officers meet and greet people before and/after Chapter events and having more networking opportunities.

A number of members felt the Chapter can do more to orient and integrate new members, for example, "As new members join, host a new member networking event that tells everyone what PRSA has to offer and introduces them to the board." Some suggested we use other media to tell each other more about who we are, such as, "Maybe a future edition of the Chapter Directory might include a couple of paragraphs about our backgrounds," or putting photos on the web site.

Accreditation

Most respondents are not pursuing APR certification due to the same time constraints that limit their Chapter involvement. Many agree that accreditation is a good idea but many more feel strongly that accreditation should not be a requirement for National office.

In Conclusion

In summary, the focus of the membership committee and board will be to address the clear mandates identified in the focus group and survey:

- offer more content-rich programs for senior-level professionals and more activities targeted to entry-level colleagues;
- schedule meetings at different times of the day and in different venues;
- be more welcoming of new members; and integrate new members into the Chapter more quickly. ◀