

Vernon C. Schranz Distinguished Lecture in Public Relations
John F. Budd, Jr. – 1989

When Less Is More: Public Relations' Paradox of Growth

There's a story I'd like to share with you. It might have been custom-made for my use. It goes like this:

For more than a week Nero has starved six of his fiercest lions to assure the bloodthirsty in the arena good show. But when the first lion is released and races towards its victim, an amazing thing happens. The lion freezes as the Christian whispers into its ear. Tail between its legs, the lion slinks away.

Five more times this occurs-and each time the Christian whispers to each lion. The crowd becomes restive, angry!

Nero summons the Christian. "What did you say to make the lions cower so?" he thunders. "Tell me, and I'll grant your freedom."

"Simple," explains the Christian. "I just told them remember, you'll be expected to say a few words after dinner!"

The honor you accord me, in the distinguished legacy of Vern C. Schranz, also comes with a substantial burden.

I am obliged to add to the considerable wisdom and percipience on public relations that my predecessors have brought to this podium, the most celebrated in our profession.

There's a proverb that says "repetition is the mother of learning."

In this context let me summarize the essence of the astute observations of eight of my predecessors. They provide a solid base for me to look ahead over the next 10 years and beyond.

Last year Jim Tolley warned of our becoming unknowing captives of the process...the communications process, the media process. In 1987, David Ferguson expressed his concern over the vocational accent to public relations curriculum and sequences. Denny Griswold championed for broader-based backgrounds. My good friend, the late Kerry King, defined PR for all time, saying forthrightly that "it involves not what you say but what you do," and argued for action and substance before rhetoric. Pat Jackson emphasized, and I totally concur, that in the real world, it is not so much the facts but the perception of the facts that we must deal with. Chester Burger laid to rest another fable, "It's the media's fault!" Too often, he properly noted, the fault lies with management's intransigence. Dorothy Gregg talked about new social responsibilities. Today, eight years later, to her limited agenda we have added drugs, education, AIDS and the environment. Finally, back in 1980 Doug Hearle warned that business must be more sensitive to the public's interest-and be so guided by public relations counsel. Business's credibility since then has slipped discouragingly.

We do not seem clear as to what business we are in, and correspondingly, the various prognostications of our role and future fall flat when matched to reality.

For example, are we publicists? Counselors? Marketers? Project managers? Semanticists? Facilitators?

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This brings me directly to my thesis.

I will look at some trends within our profession-demographic, geographic and megalographic-a word I've coined meaning bigness-and I'll assess their probable impact.

I will challenge the "accepted wisdom" and tell you why I think it is the single greatest hurdle we have to overcome.

I will point out that we are afflicted with the same short-term mentality as we accuse our management and our clients of practicing.

And, I will briefly explore the myth of creativity. Each of these topics could justify a sermon of its own.

Separately, they fog our vision of our future. Taken together, they suggest an annulment of what we have for decades been proclaiming as our rightful role-counsel to management.

Following that full menu, if you're not brain dead, I'll share with you my vision of our future.

Almost 500 years ago Niccolo Machiavelli said "some princes flourish one day and come to grief the next without appearing to have changed in character in any other way. I believe the one who adapts his policy to the times prospers, and likewise the one whose policy clashes with the demands of the times does not."

In essence, what he said was never forget that times change and that policies must change with them. If we are "agents of change"-as I profoundly believe we are-why do we act as though we are immune to change ourselves? Today, it's not Machiavelli who counsels us but the Robert Heilbroners, Robert Reichs, Michael Porters and the like. None, as a corporate hard-hat would note, "ever met a payroll."

Are they saying anything new? Do they ever? Really? Let me be more contemporary. Last month I was privileged to spend a half day in England with C. Northcote Parkinson, the famed author of the Parkinson Laws.

Parkinson's Law on Communication Vacuum

You all probably know his classic law. To wit: "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." But, consider a lesser known law he reminded me of. "Action expands to fill the void created by human failure." Meaning, if you don't tell your story, others will-with all the probabilities of disinformation.

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He also reminded me what we tend to overlook in our zeal to be activists-that there is a fundamental difference between transmitting information and actually communicating. The message not only has to be received but must be comprehended and even accepted.

I introduced Machiavelli and Parkinson simply to underscore that we don't need popularized gurus to tell us what history can teach us about being successful.

We need not more advice, but greater scholarship...more intellectual curiosity...more psychological research into human attitudes...and a good dose of what the poets call the spirit of "divine discontent"-a cultivated impatience with the status quo!

Unfortunately, we still perceive our responsibilities as "explainers" rather than as "influencers." We perform our functions of explication with much the same tactics and techniques of those who've preceded us; advances in communications technology notwithstanding. Every problem is reduced to a communications contest-that's what we know best and can best do. What worked before should work again, so old formulas are recycled.

We act as publicists, yet we talk of counseling. We perform as technologists in communication, but we aspire to be decision-makers dealing in policy.

Partly because we don't challenge ourselves to do and think otherwise. And partly because what we do is what we've been taught.

If you read the beamish newsletters of our field, you will wonder what cave I've been in for the last decade.

They tell us that public relations has "arrived"...that CEOs can't do without it and that they realize this. We're taught to read beneath the headlines...so, let's do it.

One letter boldly says "public relations is maturing...moving into areas of policy," yet in that same newsletter one of the most respected practitioners makes 10 persuasive points why public relations is the best marketing vehicle around. He unashamedly equates public relations with marketing. I don't! In another newsletter overview, one of our esteemed elders flatly states that PR "has come of age"...that "we're past the fluff-image stage and have taken on substance." "We are seen," he maintains, "as problem solvers." Then comes the denouement: "but not enough of us are equipped to fill that role!"

Self-criticism also comes from a respected international public relations pro who recently warned that "the pool of qualified professionals is shrinking...meanwhile we're raising a crop of instant pros looking for a quick fix."

Short-tem Mentality

We are, in my opinion, victims of the legacy given us by our predecessors and the consequence of our own job experiences. We are trained and expected to produce immediate and tangible results.

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This short-term mentality is as deeply ingrained in us as bottom-line profit and quarterly earnings are the catechism of any MBA.

I broke into this business as a staff writer. My work was measured quantitatively...number of stories produced, number of clippings generated. Later, I was responsible for developing programs that were measured quantitatively...media coverage of new products, etc. Still later, I directed other staff whom I measured by the same standards I'd had to contend with earlier.

At no point in these early years was I concerned with, nor thinking about, such considerations as strategic planning. We were hired to do a specific job. I was assigned to get it done, period!

My elders worried about the what and the why. I concentrated on the how and the when-and the IF!

No different from the career path of young business executives. They are trained to be managers focusing on the next quarter, not leaders with visions of the next decade.

In my own case, slowly, gradually, by some sort of metamorphosis, I began to question doing things by rote. Wasn't there a better way? Why did we always do it this way? Isn't this what everyone else is doing? Maybe I got my curiosity and my impatience from my dad. He was an entrepreneurial sort-restless, always hatching new ideas; questioning, improving, going that extra step, thinking that extra thought. It worked; he became very successful and highly regarded.

Left Brain versus Right Brain

I read all I could about human communications as a process. How do people change their minds? Why? I read what psychologists thought about it, the sociologists, the anthropologists and the political scientists. I reread some history and studied linguistics and semantics. I learned that the impact of mass communication was grossly overstated.

I learned that the "mimeograph mentality" (of my day; today it's word processors) was off target and was probably counterproductive. People don't change opinions because you buried them in newsprint!

I examined what I did. The development of the inevitable press kit. The menu of news stories to be written; fact sheets to be compiled; speaking platforms arranged; video and radio scripts written.

I was busy all right...but was I being effective? Was anybody listening? Understanding? Why did what I was so committed to doing seem contradictory to what sociologists suggested was the way to change opinions?

Unbeknownst to myself, I was beginning to use my right brain. I was starting to think, analyze and reason qualitatively.

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You've read I'm sure, of the left-brain / right-brain studies-how each half of the brain specializes, in complementary fashion, in different modes of thinking, both highly complex.

The left hemisphere analyzes, counts, plans step-by-step procedures and makes rational statements based on logic-all quantitative judgments. Using the right hemisphere, we dream, we create new combinations of ideas, we apply intuition and we have leaps of insight-all qualitative.

Unfortunately, as neuroscientists now tell us, in our school system, and in our early job experiences, the right brain goes largely untaught and unused. We concentrate on verbal and analytical skills. Our culture is slanted toward rewarding left-brain results.

We don't have courses in imagination, in visualization, in perceptual or spatial skills, in intuitiveness or inventiveness.

I suggest that the perennial-and crowning-goal of public relations, that of contributing to major decision-making processes at senior management levels, is a qualitative function. To put it in practical context: That is the true and distinctive value-added dimension a public relations person can and should bring to management councils.

The MBAs can't do it; the lawyers can't; nor the financial executives, the engineers, the production or operating heads. Their experiences have been totally quantitative. If it can't be measured, charted and persheeted, it doesn't count!

We've got to exercise that right hemisphere ourselves...challenge, question, dream. We must force ourselves to resist orthodoxy...to think qualitatively...to fight the status quo as though it were cancer! We should never be satisfied. It can always be done better, done differently. Your left brain will bring you financial reward. But, if you really want to make a difference, to stand apart from public relations journeymen, trust-and use-your right brain! Now, to my next point-some provocative demographics.

The composition of our profession is changing materially. Today, according to PR Reporter, fully half of those in public relations are women-and some 70 percent of all students taking public relations courses are women.

This obviously presents enormous challenges to women and men. Challenges which they must be aware of, and willing to tackle, for their own career benefits and for the long-term direction and future growth of the profession itself.

Many women, presently, are in entry- or mid-level positions earning, on average, less than their male contemporaries. Marketing activity, which today dominates public relations agendas, is people intensive. Because people, in this context, are essentially overhead, firms staff up with the least expensive people available. These happen to be women. As this week's TIME cover story points out, women who work full-time earn only 66 cents to a man's dollar.

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It isn't a question of whether women are lower paid because they're less skilled or less skilled because the job doesn't attract the better-qualified. That's an egg and a chicken argument, and it isn't relevant.

The fact is that they are here-and in increasing numbers. These aspiring counselors face some tough hurdles before they can achieve their career goals. Serious questions have been raised by their own contemporaries. Let me quote some women who have made it to the upper reaches of public relations.

"Women don't have the large picture...they lack vision."

"They don't think they can get the plum (top-level counseling) so they don't try."

"They give management the impression that they are not ambitious."

And finally, the ultimate denouncement, "women want instant gratification...but it takes damn hard work and perseverance to reach the top."

As new work force, women are naturally preoccupied with getting a foot in the door so they willingly do the press release writing, the events-arranging and other public relations "amenities." In business at large, TIME noted that fully 59 percent of women were in "pink collar" jobs.

If more than half of our upcoming talent sees "busyness" as the ultimate job achievement, it would take a saint not suggest that this will give public relations, overall, a soft image.

I understand the stress they must feel. I was the only non-writer ever hired (in my time) by Carl Byoir. I was totally intimidated by the professional caliber of the staff –ex-editors, ex-commentators, magazine editors-in-chief, columnists, etc. In those early days I can assure you that the only thought on my mind was to keep my head down and do the best I could.

If public relations is to achieve the higher destinies its leadership regularly projects for it, women are going to be the catalyst because they will increasingly represent numerically the majority of the practitioners.

The professional gauntlet is theirs to pick up. Women have to push determinedly upwards by the same measures of personal discipline some men adopt. Male executives-and they hold sway in the agency management echelons-for their part have got to be less chauvinistic and give the same encouragement, the same level of mentorship and opportunity they readily provide male interns.

Which leads me to ask, "What is the state of our profession today?" We've grown, enormously, in numbers. But have we increased our value? Enriched our own persona? I don't think so.

The timing couldn't be more unfortunate.

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I sincerely think that never before has senior management-CEOs most certainly included-been in need of truly creative, objective counsel, externally and internally, as now. And, never before has it been in such limited supply.

Every generation believes, of course, that it faces unusual-and unique-problems in communications. Contributing to today's problem agenda is the exponential impact of instantaneous communications via technology.

It is also a fact that writers and perpoeters are more knowledgeable (many are MBAs); that the public's tolerance of corporate "speak" equivocation is nil; that the demands for accountability are severe; and skepticism, insofar as corporate motives are concerned, has never been more rampant.

Where are the seasoned, sure-handed public relations practitioners capable of rendering the needed advice and intuitive counsel? Except for perhaps a baker's dozen, they're busy administering conglomerates or soliciting new business to cover mushrooming overheads. They are assiduously attending to new priority-or new in its overriding importance the bottom line!

I'm not naïve. I know that creative services like public relation cannot exist on eleemosynary sustenance!

Public relations is big business! Make no mistake about that! Some \$8 billion worth per annum, says a recent study. And it is expected to grow at an enticing 20 percent, compounded, a year over the next four years. Little wonder that Wall Street-and the United Kingdom's equivalent-is interested.

The numbers are there for all to see...but what are the derivatives of those appealing statistics?

Marketing, not public relations. It is no state secret that advertising is going through rough times. Its impact and its effectiveness are in question. While it reexamines itself and finds its role, companies more and more turning to alternative means of making their case and promoting their products. Public relations seems a less costly, more effective way to do this.

I say let public relations pick up the slack left by advertising's bland, faded efforts at creativity. But call it what it is-marketing, not...public relations.

I'm not being elitist-as some of my peers will no doubt accuse. They're all intelligent, articulate people. They can make a defectively plausible case to embrace marketing under a public relations function. To me, this is just so much sophistry. The dictionary defines "marketing" as..."business activity involved in the moving of goods-'things'-from the producer to the consumer."

Public relations, in my view, is engaged in the "moving of ideas." Ideas aren't "things"...they're abstracts. Creating ideas isn't a process wherein the most cost-effective system works.

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Furthermore, ideas are born and nurtured in minds untroubled-or undistracted-by such secular issues as profit margins, revenue volume, overhead. Creativity can only flourish in situations where independence of thought and action are called for, not where conforming behavior is expected.

This leads me directly into two major trends I want to discuss with you-trends I have considerable difficulty becoming comfortable with or rationalizing. I speak of the public ownership of creative enterprises- and of the conglomerization of them.

Public ownership automatically makes the client second to the income statement, to debt obligations and to profit enhancement. A simple dictate of public company life is that earnings from one quarter to the next, one year to the next. If the growth isn't what investors think it should be, eyebrows are raised and the pressure begins. Short of buying earnings-through more acquisitions (and good ones are harder and harder to find)-the conventional route therefore is to reduce costs, cut overhead, be more "efficient."

This, of course, generally means fewer people, the only inventory a creative agency has. It means discipline over creativity. Risk-taking and all ideas embody risk-is discouraged, if not outlawed.

I fail to see how these elephantine federations of public relations and advertising agencies, servicing upwards of 800 clients under one logo, can consistently give personal service, a basic tenet of our profession.

The prevailing theorem is that such an aggregation of talent and services, in fact, enhances the value of service to the client by meeting all his needs-with benefits of economics of scale.

It is also suggested that there is a synergistic spin-off.

It is also contended that it leads to a more efficient organization...more orderly, business like, and disciplined than the former loose, flexible, entrepreneurial style of management.

These are not entirely convincing arguments. In fact, a case could be made, especially relative to the advertising agencies, that the conglomerates were a response to stagnating business.

More to the point at issue, the arguments in favor of these alliances inevitably underscore how the advantages benefit the agencies themselves-more precisely the stockholders. They are economic measures. Quantitative ones. Lost in the litany of rationalizations are examples of qualitative benefits, long-term, to the client.

Nowhere is mentioned the recruitment of fresh talent, the research and development into gaining a better understanding of how opinions are formed or the motivation of existing talent (the inventory). Implicit, they'll say! Not material (to their objectives), I say!

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I grew up in this business committed to the client. It was a article of faith for us in the early Byoir organization of the '60s to say to ourselves daily, "What did I do today for the client that justifies my being hired by him tomorrow?" Even though we had one-year contracts, minimum.

I have also sensed in my exposures to the big public relations agencies that their formal, machinelike discipline defrauds the staff of one of the great strengths of the smaller, more free-wheeling enterprise. I refer to close peer relationships and support...praise for a job well done, sympathy for a failure.

How can one get an emotional high from an act of brilliance when it is matter-of-factly seen as an expected contribution to bottom line, rather than a personal tour de force?

It eliminates the psychic income that counts as much as hard currency to creative souls.

My new friend Parkinson in his Third Law wrote: "Expansion means complexity and complexity, decay."

Parkinson was athwart the tide. Today we read about the need for innovation, more entrepreneurship, decentralization.

Restructurings, the gospel of leanness and meanness, speak to smaller, not larger, entities.

Finally, let us recognize that because of the need for the direct and intimate involvement of the CEO, public relations counseling is as much a matter of personal chemistry as it is of wisdom and experience. Counsel often becomes alter ego to the CEO. The regular interjection of anonymous staff faces between the two-inevitable result of the top staff spreading itself thin to cover hundreds of clients-breaks the momentum of the relationship; it interrupts the symbiotic rhythms basic to the bond.

Now, as I promised earlier, a brief word about creativity. Creativity has always been considered the sine qua non of public relations; thus, our common denominator.

In my opinion, a gross overstatement.

What is creativity? The blindingly brilliant idea...a new gimmick...the different...the bizarre...the unusual? Possibly, but too often they're nothing much more than spin-offs or variations on what others have done.

My colleague, Howard Chase, is fond of saying that "problems not yet solved will be solved only with solutions not yet tried."

When that happens successfully, that is what I define as being creative.

A truly creative person puts unreasonable demands on himself by rejecting accepted wisdom and searching beyond.

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It is said that part of Einstein's genius, like that of all creative thinkers, was his refusal to understand or accept the obvious.

If creativity were a process, it would long ago have been reduced to a formula.

Next we come to geography-globalization.

Then enthusiasm by which public relations people embrace business "buzz" words says more for their ability to imitate than to innovate.

Case in point: "global"-my next bone of contention. No longer is one international or multinational in alignment. You've got to be global.

Thus public relations firms, playing an expensive and, to me senseless game of "follow the leader," are rushing pell mell abroad to set up foreign outposts.

They are also building massive overheads and ignoring culture diversity by imposing American-or English-methods and standards of performance.

Even if that may be argued as being where the market is, consider the nature of the media in that market. In many countries executives are only beginning to cope with public accountability. The press is often politicized. News, as we understand the term, does not exist in many of the emerging countries. It is, as Nkrumah, president of Ghana, said, "an integral part of society...and as such, must help to establish a progressive political and economic system."

In short, the press is an instrument of the government. Even in media-saturated in Japan that has the highest per capita daily newspaper circulation, their unique practice of news homogenization is inhospitable to conventional public relations practices.

So, by and large, public relations is reduced to its lowest denominator...producing and publicizing events and marketing support of products. Agreed, this can generate sizable revenues. But what concerns me is that it further locks our profession into the marketing function.

I think that the urge to plant the corporate flag in 15 or 25 countries, to siphon off local business, is a perverted corporate strategy, a colonization complex offsetting rational judgment. In our own case, we have one office abroad-Rome-yet we have successfully executed assignments for clients in eight countries. Contacts, facsimiles and phones can accomplish a great deal-and at less downtime and overhead.

Realistically, what counts most is the wisdom and logic given in one room-not a dozen. For the foreseeable future that room is where the CEO is-in the U.S. or London, by and large.

I may be guilty of parochialism; but I think that before we export our know-how, we'd best confirm our status with top management here at home.

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Now, to conclude this long review my peroration of the future, as I envision it.

IOutlook-Year 2000

In just 31 days we'll begin a new decade. This brings the year 2000 into realistic view. It is within strategic planning distance.

In my opinion, the mega-agencies will not be a material factor then. They will have dematerialized one way or another...most likely cannibalized by new owners to extract maximum profit from the pieces. They were stitched together as financial vehicles in the first place. The geniuses that created them will have bailed out, not for them to skid by as growth-and profits-flatten. The straws are already in the wind...Saatchi & Saatchi has brought in a professional manager, some say to straighten them out and to improve their market value-and just last week they announced that they would let one of the units, a \$303-million agency, buy its freedom. The principal owner of Shandwick has been selling his stock and taking his profit.

Please understand I am not making the case that small is beautiful or better. An elephant is as functional as a fox-each for different roles, each at different times.

Public relations' transformation into primarily marketing will demand large staffs so there will still be "big" agencies but not of the labyrinthian composition of today's mega-agencies.

Furthermore they will not be quipped any more that they are today to deal with the custom-made thinking, planning and idiosyncratic analysis that undergirds a company's-and a CEO's-long range strategic planning. These very special needs will become the province of small boutiques-or niches-of senior professionals who bring mature perceives, independent judgment, front-line experience and a degree of irreverence to conventional wisdom to the assignment.

My view of the future does not embrace the multitudes engaged in public relations. There are, I'm told, some half million people with public relations of some sort in the job titles. Public Relations Society of America alone has over 14,000 members.

No, I solicit the attention of those one or two hundred professionals who are willing to pay their dues and work, study, read and challenge themselves...the true disciples of the "spirit of discontent!"

The CEO of the era beginning in the year 2000 will face a legacy unlike anything in our century. By then Europe will have faced up to its 1992 challenges...Hong Kong, its reunification with China in 1997...free enterprise will be implanted in the booming nations of East Asia...deregulation of the economies of eastern Europe and in the bastions of socialism, the Soviet Union and, I'm convinced, in China, under the pressure of its one billion restless population.

At home we will face conundrums in three major policy areas. First, there is the matter of the CEO's credibility and corporation's integrity. Will it have survived intact the question now being raised?

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Last month, Fortune ran a trenchant cover story. Title; “The Trust Gap.” They wrote of the dawn of participatory management, of empowerment, of the perception gap and of employees’ need for respect, for a higher standard of management ethics and for honest communication! Confidence in management’s competence is collapsing, it was reported. Michael Jensen, of Harvard, a guru with current popularity, says the public corporation has outlived its usefulness. He votes strongly for takeovers, corporate breakups, leveraged buy outs, attributing to these disruptive practices every known value...efficiency, productivity, shareholder, value, etc.

He’s entitled to his view. My concern is that other pundits will pick up the theme and vie for attention by being even more hyperbolic.

Thus, a trend sets in...By the year 2000 resulting turmoil over whose rights are paramount-shareholders or stockholders-will have been played out. Hopefully, capitalism will have a tenuous plurality.

Second, pressure to protect the environment will be even more intense and even more complicated-politically, scientifically and legally-than it is today.

Third, the residual aftermath of takeovers, restructurings, et al., will introduce a new social compact between employer and employee...one that demands a higher level of management attention and sophistication...and a more flexible, intellectually oriented managing structure. Employee loyalty and the perceptions of their work life has already dropped some 20 percent, a recent survey indicated.

A New Flexible, Responsive Executive Structure

To better cope with all of these issues I envision a rather fundamental but logical, it think modification in the system of management at the chief executive level.

The present arbitrary division of responsibilities between the chief executive officer and the chief operating officer makes no practical sense. On paper one is the leader, the other the manager. One has the vision, the other control. One thinks about the future, the other the next quarter. It’s as though consideration of each was independent of the other.

A classic confrontation of left versus right brain.

It need not be. Companies need the best of both brain hemispheres. Short-term results have to be accommodated. They’re too critical; without them there will be little need for long-term visions.

Let me suggest, therefore, a concept that could enhance coordination, not conflict...beget cooperation, not collision.

I conceive of an Office of the Chief Executive, with two co-director; one, the CEO for external affairs and the other, the CEO for internal affairs.

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Since they would share short and long term considerations, there should be now personal competition for wisdom. Things being done today would lead to tomorrow's goals. Both would contribute managerial and leadership skills. Theoretically, this would mean that each issue, each problem, is studied for its shorter and long term implications simultaneously. This union of talent should make for a more cohesive, effective direction of the company.

Guiding them would be a cabinet-level structure which I call "The Secretariat." It comprises an executive vice president of ideology, an executive vice president of legal affairs and an executive vice president of human affairs.

They will share counsel with the two CEOs because the problems and the responsibilities are indivisible, externally and internally, short-term versus long-term.

The two latter executive vice presidents are self-explanatory given the litigiousness of our society and the critical watershed unfolding in relations with employees.

Why ideology, not public relations?

I think it's time to recognize that public relations as a term has been debased by misuse overuse and abuse.

More importantly, in a decade's time the enhancement of-and the protection of the creditability of a company and its CEOs will have outdistanced the rote, formula thinking of public relations' accepted wisdom.

It will require, as a prerequisite, people skilled in the advancement of ideas, in building broad non-political coalitions and support. It will need people comfortable in dealing with abstracts and converting them to realities. In short, it requires people with minds of originality, endowed with the intellectual resources needed to deal with subjective views, attitudes and behavioral patterns. In short, and ideologist.

An ideologist is one who deals with systems of ideas...explaining them...gaining understanding. I chose this term not to be provocative and it may to be the perfect title but because it thinks it comes closest to what we're about. It is unencumbered by all the baggage of distortions surrounding public relations. To me, it is counterproductive to continually defend public relations as a management value that CEOs rarely accept. Let's change the venue and get on with our lives.

Reporting to the "executive vice president of ideology" will be three senior officers. One, responsible for information and communication; another, for public policy and issues; and the third, academic relations. Again, umbrella job titles to enhance the three major issue areas as I see them a decade or so from now.

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In my view, it is a tight, no-nonsense, lean bureaucratic organizational setup focused sharply on the major issues beyond normal operational ones.

To sum up...the prospects never looked brighter and the problems never looked tougher!

As John Gardner once said so succinctly, “anyone who isn’t stirred by both of those statements is too tired to be of much use to us in the days ahead.”

A final story...

The public relations officer sits in his office contemplating a stack of rejected ideas and programs when he notices a visitor grinning at him from a corner chair.

“Who are you?” he demands.

“I am the Devil,” say the visitor, “and I’m here to offer you a deal. I will guarantee that for the next 20 years you will sell every program you suggest to management. You will become the principal advisor to the CEO. He will listen to no one else. You will become famous and rich, the idol of all public relations students and the envy of your peers. You will be the public relations luminary of your generation. You will enjoy these benefits for exactly 20 years. They you will die quietly in your sleep and you soul will become mine of all eternity.”

The public relations man takes a long, thoughtful pause, then he says,

“Okay, what’s the catch?”

The catch, my friends, as Browning said, is that a “man’s reach should always exceed his grasp...or what’s heaven for?”