

lost their minds. The American media were rather stunned. The Canadians simply did their jobs, albeit somewhat embarrassed.

The U.S. news media seem to be kinder to corporate newsmakers and relatively kind to their politicians, but they are innately inclined to destroy celebrities, whether political, corporate or otherwise, especially if they mess up or get too big for their britches. The Eagles' Don Henley had it right about their building them up and tearing them down.

And because of the U.S. entrepreneurial spirit, there is "probably more focus on the influence of corporate products and how people respond to products," says Professor Nolan. "The news media in the U.S. in the final analysis are businesses and competition is fierce. It's quite natural to focus on innovation, on invention."

"I think the U.S. media is a bit more open to corporations and a little more willing to give business the benefit of the doubt. The Canadian and British media are less likely to do so," says William Marks, APR, President, GCI Group Atlanta and Managing Director, Business to Business, GCI North America.

Marks sagely adds that it is imperative for those who work in an international public relations capacity to ensure that PR in Canada is conducted by "on-the-ground PR resources, either on staff or through an agency. It is deadly to try to execute PR with the Canadian media from the U.S."

The state of the news media

One of the first rules of media relations is to know the media. When you know something about the environment in which journalists have to work you appreciate their deadlines and their perspectives, all of which helps to improve your skill in reaching them with your story or news release.

During the past decade the news media, particularly private sector newspapers, magazines, radio and television outlets, have suffered from the same economic turmoil as other private sector organizations. Globalization, recession, national and multinational mergers, and technological revolution have significantly affected the business side of the news media, which has caused upheaval in newsrooms across the country.

The computers and computer networks have enabled the same news reporting functions of 10 years ago to be performed by fewer people while the same technology has exponentially increased the amount of news available for reporting. Consequently, there is more news to be processed by fewer people. Staffing levels have been dramatically cut, roughly 75% in radio, 50% in newspapers and 25% in television.

Furthermore, a dramatic shift in advertising revenues from mass advertising to much more targeted marketing communications has drastically reduced advertising revenues available to the majority of private sector mass news outlets. The rise of direct mail, promotions and specialized media has spread advertising revenues across a much broader

plane of media. The consequence for anyone submitting a news story or media release – the “news hole” (the space in which proactive news can be placed) has dramatically shrunk.

Other trends include a maturing news media. Many journalists, those who survived recessions, mergers and technological downsizing, have stayed in their positions longer. The rate of turnover in the news business traditionally is high but in major news markets such as Toronto there is far less movement than ever before, partly because fewer jobs are available. It still takes the average journalist ten years to get promoted into major markets. Once they arrive, economic conditions keep those reporters in their same jobs, rather than moving up into editorial positions. Because of these factors, journalists are older, smarter, generally more educated, and usually more cynical than their predecessors. Cynicism often breeds distrust, making the current generation of news reporters more suspicious and more formidable than ever.

Specific inundation examples

- Marc Saltzman (one of Canada’s most successful Technology freelancers):
 - 200 e-mails/day, 10 voicemails
- John Valorzi (CP Business Editor):
 - 200 e-mails per day, between 75 to 100 voice
- Ipsos Reid in their 2005 survey found 61% business journalists prefer e-mail compared to 18% phone and 6% fax. 28% said phone is NOT the way they want to be approached.

Canadian news marketplace

- Concentration of ownership
- Electronic highways gridlock
- According to Ipsos Reid, business journalists:
 - Receive about 150 news releases/week. 18 % used.
 - 19 news conference invitations/month, 50 % get reporter
 - 60 annual reports/year. 16% used quickly. 20 media kits/month. 19% used.