

PR CAN MAKE THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE*

It would be pleasant to have something as accurate as a watt-hour meter to measure public relations, but that's wishful thinking, J. A. Blay told a combined session at the Metermen's Workshop in Toronto recently.

The director of Public Relations for Ontario Hydro said that public relations came down to little more than establishing and maintaining a good reputation.

"Just as you as individuals want to be known as good citizens in your community," he said, "so do business organizations strive to be good corporate citizens, and, most important, to be known as good corporate citizens."

Public relations could often make the difference between success and failure for an organization, Mr. Blay said, and utilities had an added responsibility because customers were, in effect, shareholders.

"A utility cannot assume," he said, "that because it provides an essential service, it will be appreciated. If we make a poor impression, we have only ourselves to blame."

But the image reflected to the public had to be an accurate and deserved one.

"In the final analysis, public relations can do little more in the long run than reflect the policies and attitudes of an organization. It cannot forever soothe complaining customers unless the policies or actions which cause the complaints are corrected."

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PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE

Professional attitude is a difficult factor to define. Much has been written on this subject, pro and con, in the last few years, demonstrating more an awareness of the problem than definitive suggestions regarding the model attitude that engineers should possess. In the writer's opinion, the formula which has proven most successful in the majority of cases can be summarized by advising the developing engineer to think professional and then act professional. If the engineer thinks of himself as a professional person and then conducts himself in a professional manner, his attitudes will soon be truly professional.

Unfortunately, many engineers (some of whom are leaders in the profession) feel that the conferring of the title automatically creates a professional person, ipso facto. The thinking seems to be that, when the title is obtained, then one's attitude also becomes immediately professional. Such ideas are entirely incorrect. Professional attitudes are developed from contact with professional people in positions of responsibility. Regardless of the title, the engineer can develop a proper professional attitude. Conversely, a few engineers never develop truly professional attitudes even though they progress far in the engineering profession.

The professionally minded engineer seeks to enhance and advance the profession he serves in every way; he seeks to serve his clients or superiors in the best way possible; he is ethical in his relationships with clients, the public, and other members of the profession. In so doing, he becomes a true professional engineer in deed as well as name.

* Excerpts from - "Professional Development of the Young Engineer" - by Rodney W. Johnson, M. ASCE, in Journal of Professional Practice Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Vol. 89, #PP1, January, 1963.