

Public Looks for True Meaning

Our College of Agriculture finds the act of communicating with the public a necessary means of achieving institutional goals.

All such communications, however, must contain the necessary element, credibility.

Credibility is an emotion, or feeling, which generates an atmosphere of trust, faith or confidence. But, this emotion, also, is based on rational thought.

We are not alone in communicating

with our publics. For there is an unprecedented amount of information flowing to the various publics, today. Beyond the proliferation of hard facts, there is a wealth of "editorial" information in which investigative reporting rivals sports page popularity.

No longer do the publics accept on faith alone the communications directed their way. They look for the true meaning of a term by observing what the institution does with it, not what is said about it.

Members of any public will and examine messages, not only to see if the messages correspond with the performance of the communicator, but also to see if form and content agree. They will look to see if the content of the message is logically coherent. Also, the public will look to see if the form and content of the message impart an understanding of reality on the part of the communicator.

While there are other contributors to the credibility gap, it is the lack of candor which has disturbed most.

Candor in Latin and Old French meant whiteness and purity. As the word passed into English, it came to mean kindness as well. As the modern meanings became evident . . . impartiality and a disposition to frankness . . . it was still complimentary. Finally, candor began to be recognized in direct relations to credibility. It came to signify frankness and straight forward messages.

It is candor, then, that a communicator practices if he wants to earn credibility. It is candor that is perceived by the public which allows for an atmosphere of trust and confidence.

It is very gratifying to me when I see and hear the faculty and staff of our College of Agriculture demonstrate a real concern for Arizona and their problems.

This is one of the reasons why our college continues to effectively serve our publics.

It is because our personnel are willing and able to respond with candor to our publics with increasing speed and effectiveness.

And, when so many of our recommended practices and procedures adopted throughout the state we feel our credibility has a strong basis.

Harold E. Myers

Dean
College of Agriculture, at
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