

Tops in the Big Apple

Howard J. Rubenstein

ELUSIVE. High-profile. Controversial. Very few PR people fit — or would want to fit — this description. Yet Howard J. Rubenstein, arguably New York's most powerful individual PR man, has been described as all three.

Nevertheless, Rubenstein was one of the most frequently mentioned names in our survey. What does Rubenstein do? A little of everything, it seems.

It's been said that his agency — ranked seventh in New York with 135 employees and an estimated \$7m to \$10m in fees — is the toughest and most fertile training ground an aspiring practitioner could hope to walk on.

'If you work five years for Howard,' one pro said, 'you can work anywhere.'

Those aspiring to industry stardom often have to move elsewhere. Rubenstein's people, unlike himself, keep extraordinarily low profiles, surfacing only when absolutely necessary. Some have described the firm as a sweatshop — but a sweatshop that gets results.

Despite his high profile, Rubenstein — whose office is decorated with photos of himself with presidents, politicians, and power brokers — maintains, 'I am a believer that PR should remain in the background.'

Rubenstein numbers among his friends Ed Koch, Mario Cuomo, and among his clients Mike Tyson, Rupert Murdoch, and Donald Trump.

If he has made many friends, it is also true that he has made many enemies. Numerous articles have linked him to the murkier elements of New York's Byzantine political world.

Most recently, *New York Newsday's* Sidney Schanberg laid into the consultant, saying that he was 'emblematic of the patterns of conduct that have made New York an example to the rest of the nation in the arts if municipal cynicism and conflict of interest.'

In response, Rubenstein says, 'The 34-year history of this firm has been built on ethical business practices and has a superb reputation.'



Richard E. Cheney

AS the acknowledged guru of financial relations — particularly during hostile takeover and proxy contests, Hill & Knowlton's Dick Cheney remains one of the top figures in the industry, and one of the practitioners most mentioned by the pros we surveyed.

Cheney, who was named chairman of H&K in January 1987, still handles much of the high level account work involving takeovers.

'Some of my competitors have put out the rumor that I'm retiring,' says Cheney, 'but I really am very much involved. I attract new business, but my role is dealing with some very specific kinds of accounts that call for "brain surgery."'

During the past year, Cheney has worked on a number of major takeover battles,

Who are the best practitioners in New York? What firms are considered the best in the city? What locally headquartered companies have the best in-house communications departments? In an informal survey of some 50 of New York's top public relations professionals, *PR Week* asked these questions and received some interesting results. Leading contenders for best practitioner included Howard Rubenstein, Richard Cheney, Phil Dorf, Douglas Hearle, and Jonathan Rinehart. Harold Burson, James Dowling, and Gershon Kekst were also prominently mentioned, and their agencies are covered on pages 6 and 8.

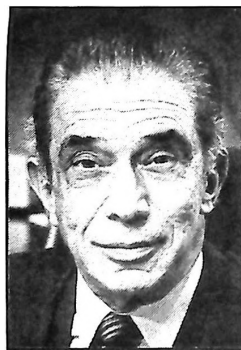
such as the Koppers defense against a bid made by Beazer, the Batus bid for Farmers Group, and the Irving Trust defense against Bank of New York.

How does Cheney view the development of financial PR over the past few years?

'It's become much more cold-bloodedly economic,' he says. 'People look a lot more at price than they used to. The main concern for public relations is to convince stockholders that management is doing the best it can for them, and doing that in the face of an urgent offer is a very difficult matter.'

And what of such unsuccessful bid defenses as Koppers?

Cheney points out that the efforts of the company's management, PR people, and board led to a better deal for both stockholders and the community.



Philip Dorf

PHIL Dorf, evp of Robert Marston & Associates's corporate relations division, was another professional who appeared frequently on our list of New York City's best practitioners.

Dorf is described by one colleague as the 'dean of public relations.'

'He's a terrific teacher. Giving. Selfless. He doesn't simply hand out the assignments, but tries to explain the opportunities within those assignments,' the colleague says.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that Dorf lists building a staff of PR professionals within Robert Marston high on his list of priorities, a task he enjoys as well.

'Public relations is very much a people business,' he says. 'I try to be fair, stimulating, and to build a staff that is competent and professional.'

According to Dorf, his staff is one of reasons the agency is able to retain clients for long periods of time.

He also sticks to the following rather

unusual agency policy: never solicit business. 'All of our business is done by referrals and we have been very successful adhering to that philosophy,' he says.

Dorf adds that he is not interested in the growth of the Robert Marston agency per se, but is much more concerned about increasing the business that is presently represented.

'We aren't interested in growth for growth's sake,' he explains. 'Our goal is to provide quality services.'

Dorf has recently been spending his time supervising the expansion of the firm's computer system — which will eventually increase the number of terminals for staff access as well as word and data processing capabilities.

And for the future? Dorf says his priorities fall into three areas: complete the computer system; continue to develop agency staff; and keep building a better organization for staff and clients.

Concludes Dorf: 'I love public relations because it gives me the chance to still learn something new everyday.'



Douglas Hearle

INNOVATIVE, capable, and unpredictable were some of the words used by respondents to describe Doug Hearle, president and CEO of Douglas Hearle & Associates, who was nominated as one of New York City's best practitioners.

Hearle spent 20 years at Hill & Knowlton, holding what sounds like every position in the agency. His resume includes jobs as varied as publicity and marketing division chief, American international division head, and human resources worldwide head. He ended his H&K career as an evp and board member.

For the last two years he has been president and CEO of his own firm, which specializes in corporate public relations and crisis communications. A sampling of his client roster includes accounts from

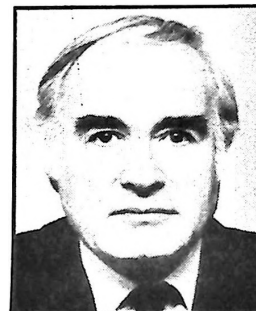
Occidental Chemical, RJR Nabisco, Philip Morris USA, and Helmsley Enterprises.

Hearle's work is based on what he calls fundamental values of public relations — full disclosure of information in an honest and timely fashion.

'The majority of my clients are involved in situations where they have important stories to tell,' says Hearle. 'Often, too much time is spent on hand wringing when it should be communicating. I try to get them to communicate in an honest and believable way.'

Described by one of his associates as having the ability to turn the diverse nine members of his staff into an effective working machine, Doug Hearle values teamwork.

'Although the agency is mine,' Hearle says, 'I prefer to be seen as a colleague who works as part of a team to resolve the problem.'



Jonathan Rinehart

PERHAPS reflective of the high level of consultant required to deal with financial relations, three of the leading practitioners named by the people we spoke with are regarded as specialists in the financial field — Dick Cheney, Gershon Kekst (whose firm is profiled on page 8), and Jonathan Rinehart.

Rinehart, 58, leads a somewhat harried existence at the moment — he is chairman of Ogilvy & Mather Public Relations Group and chairman and CEO of its Adams & Rinehart unit.

'I'm enjoying the fruits of a lifetime of labor by really having two full-time jobs,' he observes somewhat ruefully.

After serving as svp-public relations for Eastern Airlines, Rinehart started his own firm, The Jonathan Rinehart Group, in 1974. That agency merged with Mel Adams & Associates in 1977, and then A&R itself was sold to Ogilvy & Mather in 1986.

Even with his increased managerial responsibilities, Rinehart continues to deal directly with clients.

'I've always done a lot of senior corporate counseling,' he says, ticking off examples of work he is currently doing for Consolidated Gold Fields in its defense against Minorco, and American Brands in its attempt to counter interest by New York investor Bennett LeBow.

Rinehart is also active on the firm's flagship account, Seagram's, Manufacturers Hanover, and Tenneco's recently announced recapitalization and sale of some of its oil and gas assets.

On top of all that, Rinehart also devotes time to his high-priority goal of building O&M PR into a major international operation. To accomplish this aim, he has had to spend a significant portion of the past year in Europe and the Far East. With annualized 1988 revenues of \$45 million and 750 employees, O&M PR is well on the way to achieving that goal.

'We're growing rapidly,' Rinehart says, 'but that's less important than keeping the same quality shop at the highest level.'