

A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROPOSAL
FOR
HONEYWELL INFORMATION SYSTEMS
OFFICE AUTOMATION

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1. WHY THE PROGRAM IS NEEDED

Honeywell is entering the office automation marketplace relatively late. This highly competitive and aggressive market is described by one competitor as "so crowded you almost need a scorecard to keep track of all the players." To compete with several well-established office automation equipment manufacturers, Honeywell needs visibility and a distinctive identity.

Honeywell's office automation products are similar to those of other competitors. Compatibility and integration are primary selling strengths. However, industry analysts believe that "while integrated word and data processing systems are the wave of the future, right now most companies looking to automate their office functions are content merely to replace typewriters with word processors. That is easier to conceive and much cheaper than rewiring the whole office so that everyone is electronically connected to everyone else."

- o James Carlisle, president of Office of the Future, Inc., reports that "most companies don't even have a strategic plan for data processing. It's very difficult to get companies to do a better job in office automation planning..."

Potential buyers are typically less concerned with hardware and with integration features than they are with software and solving immediate productivity problems in the office. However, other companies offer more extensive software. Buyers must also be convinced that they will not be disappointed as many offices have in productivity development. Industry Week (11-16-81) reports that productivity is often retarded because office automation can create resistance and new problems of its own.

- o Vicki McConnell, president of a consulting firm, points out that although "high technology was originally intended to be a solution, now it's increasingly just another part of the productivity problem. Most of the people who are responsible for developing and installing new systems are so concerned with hardware and software that they often forget to ask themselves how the technology is likely to affect the end users. Systems developers frequently sell convenience without considering the consequences."
- o "The human factor will decide whether office-of-the-future technology will succeed or fail," says the director of AT&T's business marketing strategy. "Technology exists to do anything that anyone can dream up. But you just can't fling out technology for technology's sake. You can't forget that office automation is introducing significant amounts of unfamiliar technology into a world where a great many people still hang up when they get a telephone answering machine."

As a newcomer to the office automation marketplace, Honeywell has the opportunity to establish a reputation for understanding the needs and concerns of today's office managers and staff. It can offer solutions, not hardware.

2. POSITIONING HONEYWELL IN OFFICE AUTOMATION: A USER FRIENDLY SUPPLIER

Honeywell's office automation marketing group identifies key purchasing decisionmakers as senior management, data processing and MIS managers, management consultants and word processing supervisors; secretaries are involved as users and may be recommenders of systems.

These potential buyers and users are all concerned about what changes occur in the office with automation. Although all suppliers claim that their products are user friendly, few are seen that way as companies. In fact, the larger and established office equipment suppliers have well-entrenched reputations for being what we might term "user hostile." For example,

- A 1975 Business Week interview with an IBM vice president continues to be widely cited by media and office worker groups: "People will adapt nicely to office systems if their arms are broken. We're in the twisting stage now."

Whether or not that attitude continues to represent IBM and other major suppliers today, it remains the way they are perceived by increasingly vocal office worker groups.

Honeywell can capitalize on what at first appears to be a handicap -- a lack of identity in the office automation marketplace -- and turn it into a public relations advantage. Honeywell can take the lead in establishing an identity as a supplier who understands the needs and concerns in the office as a human workplace as well as a physical environment.

This approach is consistent with Honeywell Information Systems 1982 public relations mission:

- "To improve the public's and media's awareness of Honeywell...as a high-technology company with both the products to automate the office and the required sensitivity to the human aspects of the changing environment...and as a good corporate citizen."

Senior management, consultants and office supervisors are beginning to recognize the importance of emerging user concerns:

- "Technology is only as effective as users permit it to be," says Frank Brignoli, manager of office systems development for the Airline Pilots Association International.
- Race Against Time: Automation of the Office, a widely circulating 1980 report by Working Women, holds that "computer technology has the potential to create an improved quality of life and work" and makes a strong case for "the importance of office workers having a say in the introduction of technology."
- In 1982, office workers unionized Equitable Life in Syracuse, New York. Office automation was a key issue.

Office automation usually begins at the secretarial level. One-fifth of the U.S. labor force are secretaries, and most secretaries are women. It is not surprising that office automation is emerging as a women's issue, promoted by existing networks of women's rights organizations: "Women office workers are in a race against time to protect their future." Working Women, the national association of office workers, urges several actions to begin to reverse the negative effects of office automation, including:

- Congressional hearings to increase public awareness of "the impact of office automation on the working conditions of clerical workers."
- Research by the U.S. Department of Labor, academic groups and other organizations to "thoroughly assess the impact of automation...studies must be designed in such a way that they do not rely solely on employers for data." Topics recommended for analysis include the relationship of automation to job descriptions, promotional opportunities, job skills and reorganization of work and the workplace.
- Possible boycotts of manufacturers to protest their lack of attention and concern for office automation issues.

In addition to users and managers, several other groups are actively interested in the human experience of the automating office:

- General and trade media are increasing their reporting of the user experience in office automation, and seek materials.
- Research organizations recognize the public interest in polls on office workers. Harris Polls recently concluded a search for a corporate sponsor of a survey on secretaries: Minolta, a manufacturer of office copying machines.
- Academic researchers are active in office issues, and are regularly meeting to establish an agenda for much needed research. Dr. Mary Murphree, professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, conducts research on secretaries. Her 1981 study of changing work and status of Wall Street legal secretaries received wide coverage, including major stories in the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times. She is organizing a 1983 forum on office issues from a variety of perspectives: workers, management, suppliers, researchers and others. Dr. Murphree has responded with interest and support to possible Honeywell involvement in this area, and will extend an invitation to participate in the forum if Honeywell develops a formal program in this area.
- Honeywell's Human Resources department is designing an internal pre- and post-technology impact study to evaluate changes in job satisfaction, and is interested in participating in research with other organizations.

All groups agree that there is insufficient research on secretarial work and its role in office productivity from the secretarial and managerial points of view. In fact, Dr. Murphree's 1981 review of existing research on secretaries concludes that:

- We even "need better data on who the nation's secretaries are and how they define their work problems. At this point in time, for example, we know next to nothing about how age, work experience, family income, education or geographical region affect one's orientation to secretarial work. Nor do we know how these orientations are changing vis-a-vis rising expectations..."

Understanding these orientations and work problems and comparing them to the orientations of managers to the work their secretaries do is an important step in successful office automation, and a step that many managers automating offices wish they had taken.

3. THE PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH CONCEPT

WE RECOMMEND THAT HONEYWELL POSITION ITSELF AS A USER FRIENDLY OFFICE SYSTEMS SUPPLIER BY TAKING A LEADERSHIP POSITION IN SPONSORING AND PUBLICIZING USEFUL RESEARCH ON THE OFFICE.

Such an approach will promote Honeywell as a company that provides solutions, not hardware. It will encourage understanding of the automating workplace and provide a communications bridge between secretaries and managers, instead of the polarization that often develops when new technology is introduced.

The research objective will be to:

- Compare managers' and secretaries' perceptions of secretarial work, job satisfaction and needs for changes in the office.

A national survey of 1,500 secretaries and 1,500 managers in medium- and large-size companies will be conducted by mail or telephone. The sampling will be done nationally, with breakdowns by four regions and all standard demographic characteristics.

The secretaries will be asked to identify their work concerns and satisfactions, and the needs for change in the office of the future. Managers will be asked what they believe is true for secretaries. Some areas of questioning can include the following:

- What is the most important thing that a secretary does?
- What aspects of secretarial work are most essential to job satisfaction?
- What does office productivity mean?
- Can technology make secretarial work more satisfying? more productive?
- What concerns do you have about the use of technology in your office?
- If management could do one thing to make secretarial work more satisfying, what would it be?
- How could secretarial work be made more productive?
- What tasks take the most secretarial time? what tasks are most important? what tasks are the most frustrating?

We will design the survey and use a Byoir-affiliated survey research firm, whose work is respected by the media, for refining and pre-testing the questionnaire, selecting the sample, conducting the interviews or mailings and follow-ups, and providing computer printouts.

We will use internal facilities to conduct four follow-up focus groups to explore research findings in more depth.

Byoir staff will analyze the research findings and incorporate them into newsworthy research reports and press materials.

4. PUBLICITY USE OF THE RESEARCH

The research will be Honeywell's information product, the news event around which a wide range of materials can be built. Specific story concepts can be developed when the actual research findings are known. The research can, however, be publicized nationally, regionally and locally through newspaper, magazine, trade and broadcast media.

Potential ways of publicizing the research include:

- Announcement of the research findings at a press conference or in conjunction with the national computer conference or major office automation show;
- Use of a spokesperson for a national media tour;
- Use of academic, research and office worker groups for third-party endorsement of the research; this may be done through participation in seminars, symposia and special conferences on office automation, such as that now being planned for 1983 by Dr. Murphree at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York;
- Shareholder, employee and customer communications;
- Feature, wire, syndicate and specially tailored magazine pieces;
- Honeywell management speeches;
- Sales promotion literature;
- Trade show exhibits.

5. TIMETABLE AND COSTS

This program will be conducted over a one-year period. During this time the research will be designed, pretested, conducted and analyzed; story concepts will be developed and materials prepared. Publicity will be planned and implemented, with timetables possibly revolving around major conferences and trade shows.

The cost for this major research-based public relations program, including research, development and initial placement of findings, will be approximately \$100,000.