**To Do or Not to Do**

I was thinking about our first week and the chapter on ethics. This drew me back to the time I taught Critical Thinking. In that critical thinking class, I taught my students to be critical reviewers of information that they consume. So I thought I would share these 20 or so points, which you can use in public relations or NOT, depending on where your ethics fall. If you are the ethical sort, try to be aware of these and avoid making use of such techniques.

1. Infer causation from simple correlation. We might be able to show a correlation but to say it is the cause between two phenomena is tricky and often not accurate.
2. Band wagon effect …. Discuss how everyone else is doing something so it must be right
3. Ad homium….. attack the person in order to attack an issue or policy
4. Slippery slope … just because we advocate for some gun control does not mean we want to take away all guns. But some people will want you to believe it.
5. Ambiguity and vagueness…. Keep things vague or with possible double meanings so that you can always have an argument
6. False premise … build your arguments and conclusions on false premises or false assumptions, even though you present them as fact
7. False analogy … compare one thing to another more appealing thing to gain approval
8. In group … show how your idea is part of a group that others will want to join; be a part of the in-group
9. Proof or evidence … sources can often be questionable; consider a study you present as proof that might have been funded by a group that is on our side of the arguemtn.
10. Small sample size … poll or sample a small group in a biased fashion to get the results you want to present
11. Red herring … you have an argument and position and to gain acceptance you bring up other matters that are agreeable totally off the subject., yet still agreeable
12. Stick a name on it…. Call a situation with an inflammatory name in order to gain support for your side; in the debate about abortion, pro-life infers that the opposition is pro-death
13. False dilemma … create a false situation or emergency that distracts from the original arguments
14. Appeal to emotions… you can quickly gain from making the discussion overly emotional
15. Perfect solution fallacy… meaning that there is no perfect solution to a situation so we might as well leave it alone
16. Ad populi which means towards the people, or similar to the band wagon idea that an argument should be acceptable since everyone else is doing it
17. Questionable Authority Fallacy means we might have a spokesperson like Michael Jordan who we ask to support a family values issue (his family values have been questioned)
18. Questionable statistics or lying with statistics or the presentation of statistics which is very easy to do
19. Omission of important information when it is known to you and is material to the discussion
20. Do the reasons support the conclusion
21. Citing false data or making false claims

If you had been in my Critical /thinking class you would have spent weeks talking about all these issues. It was my desire in teaching the class to make you all better thinkers.

As I was considering the kickoff of our PR class, it occurred to me that many times in both commerce and politics, these DO NOTS are often used to gain a position of acceptance and persuasion.

Whether in PR, advertising, or other forms of marketing communications, these techniques are sometimes employed … so as you study the ethical side of PR in our first week, consider trying not to force the argument by employing any of these techniques.

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