



A DDB Needham Company

MEMORANDUM

TO: Tom Aldrich, Linda Larson, Mike Thorp
FROM: Lori Jarman
RE: MEDIA COVERAGE TO DATE
DATE: December 10, 1990

In response to the concerns you've expressed about the nature of Asarco's media coverage, our team reviewed news clips from the past year. In particular, we were looking for evidence of any bias against Asarco on the part of The Morning News Tribune.

Obviously, most of the clips were from the MNT. Stories which appeared in other newspapers were usually taken from the wire services and based on the MNT's article. This memo summarizes our observations and recommendations for future media relations activities.

Observations

Generally, we believe the MNT is treating Asarco fairly. The coverage may not always be positive, but it's fair. For the most part, stories have been balanced, even though Asarco's position is usually reported in the bottom paragraphs. Although the MNT may have some bias against Asarco, we are not concerned about it influencing the outcome of the site cleanup plans. In fact, the coverage has definitely improved during the past nine months. The November 11 editorial, "Making the best of the Asarco site," is evidence of that improvement and of Asarco's recent efforts to be more proactive with the media and in the community.

We understand that Asarco, and particularly, Tom, is sensitive to the MNT's often-sensationalist choice of words like "arsenic-laden," "toxic metals," and "hazardous waste dump." Unfortunately, that's the nature of investigative journalism, especially when there's an environmental reporter covering the beat. Also, it's good to remember that headline writers and copy editors -- who may not know as much about the situation -- often add those kinds of words. Sometimes, the reporter has very little control about the story that actually gets printed.

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Recommendations

At this point, our overall recommendation is to stay the course. Asarco is making positive headway with the local media, and there continue to be more opportunities in the future where Asarco can take the lead. In terms of altering MNT's bias, if it's possible, our challenge is to find solid data and facts on the more controversial cleanup issues such as the OCF or the wood-burning.

Since 1991 is just around the corner, here are some specific suggestions to keep in mind as we continue refining our media relations strategies.

1. As mentioned above, we need to develop factual and substantial information about the technology used in Asarco's proposed demolition and cleanup plans. As we're all too aware, in terms of health risks, that's just the sort of information we've been trying to communicate all year.
2. Asarco needs to continue to have an open-door policy with the MNT. That's not to say that Asarco has to agree with how the paper covers a particular issue; there are several routes to take when the company has a complaint. However, if we shut down to the MNT, Sandi will get the story somewhere else. If that happens, the paper's bias will become stronger and the coverage will become even more negative.
3. To combat the MNT's tendency to use sensationalist words, Asarco's media spokespeople (primarily Tom) must continually use the right words in describing cleanup plans and procedures. And, it's perfectly acceptable to correct a reporter or editor when appropriate.
4. Elgin Syferd will continue to provide media training in 1991. Tom Aldrich could participate in "refresher" courses on a quarterly basis or to help prepare for a major announcement.
5. To ensure that the MNT understands Asarco's position, Elgin Syferd will attempt to develop a better working relationship with Sandi Doughton. At this point, Sandi will continue to call Tom first, and she should. During the past several months, we've stayed out of the way, so Tom and Sandi could develop their own relationship. Even though Sandi appears to be a reporter who doesn't believe in public relations people, we will work with her so she understands that we can help with her job.