



Alliance
Communication

SOLUTIA INC.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

and

COMMUNITY ADVISORY PANEL PLANNING

J.F. Queeny Site

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Overview

A key element in implementing a strategic approach to communications for Solutia's J.F. Queeny site is accurately assessing the perceptions of key audiences. Understanding how residential neighbors, community leaders, local politicians, educators and others important to the facility's operation feel about the site is the first step to effective communication.

Toward this end, Alliance Communication conducted interviews with representatives of important audiences. The 31 people interviewed live or work in the nearby Soulard neighborhood. In addition, we talked to several Solutia employees about area history, background and interview candidates.

The results of the interviews give Solutia's J.F. Queeny site a picture of how it is perceived in the community. This information will be integrated into messages and communication tactics for all issues including, but not limited to, risk management plan, neighbor and employee newsletters, and CAP agendas.

The interview results also give Solutia the opportunity to correct misperceptions, to better understand the community's priority issues, and to communicate more effectively.

The Community

The Queeny community, for the purposes of this document and for communications planning, is defined to include much of the historic Soulard neighborhood.

The boundaries are roughly Highway 55 to the east and north, about Lynch Street to the west and the Mississippi River to the south.

The area is of mix of long-time residents and recent rehabbers, low-income families and better educated professionals. For example, demographic information on the Soulard neighborhood compiled by the City of St. Louis in August of 1995 indicates the following:

- The residents are young. About 16 percent are under 18 and about 57 percent are under 45; just 18 percent are over 55.
- Households are small. Nearly 52 percent of households include just one person and another 28 percent are made up of two people. Just 10 percent of households are four people or more.
- Non-family households make up nearly 52 percent of the neighborhood, married couples are 23 percent and married couples with children are 11 percent.
- Household income varies widely. Median household income is \$28,000 and median family income is nearly \$42,000. About 17 percent of households earn more than \$50,000 and 43 percent make less than \$25,000.
- The neighborhood is a mix of like-new renovated properties and abandoned buildings. About 23 percent of housing units are vacant (although interviewees believe that number has dropped dramatically since 1995) and 25 percent are owner occupied. The rest are rented.
- Education levels are also varied. Nearly 19 percent attended no high school, while 31 percent have a college or graduate degree.

There is a definite sense of community and loyalty to the neighborhood, which can be harnessed by Solutia. Many residents see themselves as urban pioneers and are fiercely committed to the area.

The Protocol

During several weeks in March of 1998, Alliance Communication contacted ³¹~~XX~~ people representative of the Queeny site's key audiences. The subjects were selected to achieve a representative sampling both geographically and demographically; interviewees were suggested by Solutia contacts or community leaders.

People interviewed were told that Solutia was soliciting information about community perceptions of the site to build on past communications efforts as part of its practice of ongoing improvement in every aspect of its operation. No one declined to respond to questions; most were eager to comply.

Interviews were informal in tone, but structured to elicit opinions about how the Queeny site is viewed by the interview subject and others in the community.

While the survey is not statistically scientific, the responses are valid reflections of community opinions. Patterns in responses quickly emerged, adding further weight to the validity of the answers.

Alliance Communication reviewed all interviews and from them developed a summary of opinions reflecting all the responses. That summary, communications opportunities based on them, key messages, and recommendations for CAP membership follow.

The Responses

The following conclusions were gleaned from community interviews.

- The Queeny site has very little visibility in the Souldard area. While most interviewees had heard of the plant, the majority did not know its location and almost none knew its history.
- Only a handful could respond to questions about products and they cited aspirin.
- Nearly all were confused about the Monsanto-Solutia split. Most had not heard of Solutia and those who had did not realize the Queeny site was part of the new company. Several thought Solutia was a new division of Monsanto.
- Only two participants named specific community involvement projects supported by Queeny and they operate local programs. Others were unaware of the company's sponsorship or support of neighborhood projects.
- Several offered the unprompted opinion that Queeny is not considered part of the neighborhood because it is physically separated from residential areas by 7th Street.
- Longer-time residents said odors have been reduced in recent years and recognize not all smells come from Queeny.
- Several said plant looks "hostile" because of gates and guards and big fences. One said feeling is opposite of Anheuser-Busch campus which visitors can drive through.
- Several said was neighborhood speculation whether site would remain in operation because were for sale signs on main gate.

Interview Quotes

To add to understanding of community perceptions, the following quotes were culled from interviews. They are representative of the overall responses.

"There's not much awareness of the Solutia name. People have wondered for years if the plant would continue to operate."

"Plant not much top of mind. People just don't think about it. Not much is known about the history or what is made there."

"When you mention Solutia to me I remember hearing it. But Monsanto is the name we grew up with."

"It's obviously not friendly to people. There are big fences and guards to make sure you don't trespass. It absolutely gives the perception that they don't want us in. We don't have a clue what's going on down there."

"I know (the plant's) there. I don't know much about it. I never heard of Solutia."

"They're real community oriented. They're a good community neighbor. I've noticed in my position (Soulard market master) that Monsanto is always willing to help. I knew Solutia happened, but didn't know where Queeny plant fit in."

"I don't have any idea what you do down there. I've heard the Solutia name and knew there had been some change. A lot of residents don't realize what's past 7th Street."

"I've been here 20 years and have seen a lot of (Queeny) buildings knocked down. It's very benign down there now. No smell any more."

"The average person doesn't even know you're there. We're trying to figure out how to do some of this stuff with RMP. How to communicate with folks without causing undue concern." (Frank Schaper, Deputy Chief, St. Louis Fire Department)

"People's perception (of Queeny) used to be that it was chemicals. I know for years all they made was aspirin. Queeny plant air quality better than it's ever been. Twenty years ago you couldn't hardly breathe."

"There's always a threat of pollution and for a long time we had bad smells in the neighborhood and a lot of people wondered about the industrial activity at that end of the neighborhood. We've had people who worked for Monsanto as neighbors and they talked about the different plants. When people are diagnosed with cancer the thing that's always on your mind is where did it come from. It really concerns me—the impact of all kinds of manufacturing on communities. Generally (industry's) attitude is what the public doesn't know can't hurt us. That means you imagine all sorts of things that aren't true. I resent having to think that way, having to worry that way. There's a lot of good that comes from being honest with your neighbors."

"Don't hear much about the plant. In general, public doesn't have the slightest idea what's made there. The shift to Solutia would scare them more than anything because they're afraid it was sold to a less reputable company. Monsanto has a good name. Solutia's going to have to build one."

"I was not aware of (the plant) when I moved here two years ago and I've heard little discussion about it."

"I really don't pay any attention to it. I know I've seen it a thousand times, but it's not even on the radar screen."

"I heard about Solutia, but didn't understand it. I'm surprised Queeny isn't still part of Monsanto. Some people were upset that the Monsanto credit union moved out."

"I had no idea the plant has been there since 1901 and I've lived here 12 years. I receive information about the site from a pretty sophisticated network of sources. I don't get any information as a neighbor. The best way to be part of the neighborhood is to be a corporate citizen. Right now you're not viewed as a corporate citizen. I can look out my backyard and see the top of your smokestacks. You should decorate the tower at Christmas or something. The problem is you don't have any goodwill built up and if something bad happened..."

"I doubt most people even know Solutia exists. And I don't know if Soulard considers Queeny part of their community."

Neighborhood Issues

Understanding what's important and of concern to neighbors is important, even if the subjects are unrelated to Solutia or the Queeny site.

Interviewed yielded a clear consensus on neighborhood issues that are priorities for people living and working in Souldard. They are:

- Schools

The quality and safety of public schools is of great concern. Some parents send children to Lafayette Elementary, but don't plan to have them attend public middle or high school. Others hope they'll get lucky and win the magnet school lottery or send children to Trinity or private schools outside the community. Several mentioned charter schools and plan to start them if the legislature allows.

- Crime

All agree the crime rate has dropped in recent years, in part because of extra security hired by neighborhood businesses. Several parents said they will not allow their young teenagers to play outside unsupervised, ride bikes alone or go to Pioneer Park. Police admit some gang activity in park. One or two interviewees mentioned homeless people attracted to area shelter.

- Mardi Gras

Our interviews took place near the time of the annual event, so it was fresh in peoples' minds. Most say they are willing to put up with the inconvenience for a few days a year to promote Souldard; many want the attractions moved from residential to commercial streets; some want the event discontinued. This year's festivities drew estimates as high as 500,000 to 700,000 and the parade attracted 150,000.

- **Soulard Market**

Nearly everyone agrees the market is badly in need of improvement, but there is disagreement about what shape changes should take. The current market master is somewhat controversial and a number of interviewees think she is taking the market in the wrong direction.

- **General Beautification**

Aesthetics and history are important to the Queeny site's neighbors. Soulard is a designated historic district, most buildings have been rehabbed. How things look is very important to the area.

What Responses Tell Us

The interview responses provide insight into the community's perceptions and misperceptions of the Queeny plant; the community's level of knowledge about the site, its environmental performance, emergency response capabilities, and products; and issues of concern to neighbors.

This information will help determine how to effectively correct misinformation, will suggest communication tactics, will provide agenda recommendations for CAP meetings, and will be woven into RMP-related communications.

What we learn from the responses also enables Solutia to focus priority messages at specific audiences. For example, long-time residents fear the future of the site might still be in jeopardy; newer neighbors are barely aware of the operation; those active in politics and civic groups want to see the company more involved in the community; and virtually no one has knowledge of products.

Building messages about these issues and targeting priority messages to each audience subgroup enhances the communications effort.

Messages

We recommend the following key messages be integrated into all communications, including Community Advisory Panel agendas, Risk Management Plan information, and other site-related issues.

The messages are based on what was learned from the community interviews plus images of Solutia as a safe, environmentally responsible company.

- Solutia's Queeny site is safe
- Solutia's Queeny site is environmentally responsible
- Solutia's Queeny site is a committed corporate neighbor
- Solutia's Queeny site makes products that benefit society
- Solutia's Queeny site is a historically significant member of the Soulard community
- Solutia's Queeny site is a responsible employer and contributes to the area economy
- Solutia's Queeny site is involved in the local neighborhood and supports education, the environmental and local beautification
- The Queeny site is part of Solutia Inc., a newly formed company with a long history in the chemical industry, in St. Louis and in the Soulard neighborhood

Action Plan

To raise the Queeny site's visibility among key audiences and to deliver core messages to those audiences, we recommend the following:

- Create a Community Advisory Panel
- Develop a newsletter to be sent to neighbors several times a year; it will include information about the site's products, history, community involvement, and environmental commitment
- Target community involvement and charitable contributions to science education and neighborhood beautification
- Host a Family Fun Day at the site to introduce Queeny and Solutia to the neighborhood; co-sponsor with local schools, fire and police departments, etc.
- Develop a Speaker's Bureau targeted at PTOs, business owners and residents

General Conclusions

The community interviews reveal that Solutia's Queeny site is virtually invisible to its neighborhood. There is almost no knowledge of the site's operation, products, environmental improvements, or emergency response readiness.

The site's goodwill is built on its long-time standing in the community, its economic contributions, and its community involvement. However, too few neighbors know even small parts of the Queeny story. The site will need stronger support as increasing amounts of information about the plant, its emissions, chemical raw materials, and accident history are revealed through Risk Management Plan and other regulations. This support will be built on a grass-roots level with key audiences, including a Community Advisory Panel.

There are few negative opinions about the plant. What confusion does exist about the site's emissions, products, owner, and long-term future can be cleared up through targeted communications to specific audiences and through the CAP.

The Queeny site has the opportunity to build on its history to educate and expand support through effective, strategic communications.