



XA04C1444

Building Trust

by Meriel Lewis, AEA Technology, England

A Case Study of *activate*, the energy magazine for schools.

activate is the energy magazine for secondary schools and is part of the Education Programme which is managed on behalf of the British Nuclear Industry Forum by AEA Technology.

What was done and why?

activate is the flagship communication device between the British Nuclear Industry Forum's Education Programme and secondary schools in the UK. It was developed from a previous publication, Nuclear Bulletin, which was produced directly by BNIF as part of a public information programme. When the contract for the education part of the programme was taken over by AEA Technology in 1992, a new format magazine was researched and devised and *activate* was born.

There is a need for the nuclear industry to build trust with teachers and students in the UK, where for a long time, everything that the industry has said, written or printed has been disregarded by school teachers as propaganda. Over the last few years the industry has put in a great deal of effort to position itself as a provider of educationally sound and socially acceptable information. *activate* was an evolution of this idea and there was a hole in the market for a lively, activity and article based magazine that could be used in the classroom.

How was it done?

The audience was identified and questioned in groups and individually about their experience with other publications (including Nuclear Bulletin) and newsletters. The main industry messages eg the need for a balanced energy policy, the environmental advantages of nuclear power etc, were also identified and combined to form the topic themes for each issue. The format was to be A3 with lots of large illustrations and a specifically designed poster spread at the centre of each issue.

Contributors were sought who could provide information that teachers would find hard to search out on their own eg the latest cancer fighting techniques or the ozone hole. One of the main ideas was that *activate* can be very up-to-date with new figures on energy use and production, environmental initiatives etc that could take years to get into text books and so children and teachers could have access to the latest facts.

Who is the target public?

The target audience is principally teachers of science, mathematics and geography, but also includes teachers of art, English and history with students of between 11 and 18. The text is written at a level that can be understood by their students. It can be used by teachers in the classroom and for extension project work by students working on their own. The initial mailing was of 9,000 which increased to 26,000 for a special art and science issue in January 1994 and currently stands at 12,000 with 4,000 of those who have requested their own copy.

How was the product tested?

A set of dummy spreads was produced for the initial research to gauge opinions on layout, style content etc. Two teachers who worked on Nuclear Bulletin were retained to provide activities (role plays or learning 'games' that could be used in class) and their views elicited as to content and approach. The first set of authors was chosen for their knowledge of teaching as well as their subject field so that content would be applicable for use in schools. Readers were encouraged to comment using a form to register themselves for their own copy. A questionnaire was sent with the fifth issue in January 1994 and over 3,000 were returned (approx 9%), giving details of usability of layout, content, curriculum requirements etc.

What were the results?

The results were very positive in that teachers appreciated the colourful and lively nature of *activate* and they felt that it provided information and opinions in an un-

biased and non-propagandist way. Their comments about layout, number of activities, style of presentation were taken into account and during the summer of 1994 *activate* was remodelled ready for relaunch in September.

The feedback so far is good with more teachers signing up every week to receive their own free copy.