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Editor-in-Chief

O'Dwyer's Newsletter



The Inside News of
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MISSOURI DOT SEEKS MARKETING AOR

The Missouri Division of Tourism is looking for a full-service agency to develop and provide an integrated marketing program promoting Missouri's positive attributes while showcasing the state as a travel destination.

Scope of work includes paid, earned, shared and owned media (including website development and management and email marketing); cooperative marketing; partnerships; and promotions.



Contract is slated from July 1 through June 30, 2020, with three one-year renewals within the Division of Purchasing's discretion.

Bidding agencies must operate an office in Missouri, have operated as a full-service marketing agency for at least five years, and must have had at least one consumer-targeted account with annual media billings of approximately \$4 million using broadcast, digital and print media.

Deadline for responses is 2 p.m. (CT) on Apr 24.

Bids can be submitted via the MissouriBUYS Statewide eProcurement System, <https://missouribuys.mo.gov> (solicitation # is: RFPS30034901902247).

Bidders can mail hard copies to: Purchasing, P.O. Box 809, Room 630, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0809

Solicitation number and end date should be written on the lower left-hand corner of the envelope or package submitted. Questions may be sent to buyer Jacqueline Satterlee, Jacqueline.Satterlee@oa.mo.gov.

A pre-proposal conference on this RFP will be held at 2 p.m. (CT) April 15 in Room 750 of the Harry S Truman Building, 301 West High Street, Jefferson City, MO.

[View the RFP, with additional attachments \(PDF\).](#)

HHS SUSPENDS PN'S GOP-LINKED PACTS

The Health and Human Services Administration slates a review of subcontracting deals flowing from Porter Novelli's \$2.25M contract with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Politico reported March 29 that money from the PR contract went to Republican consultants to burnish the image of CMS administrator Seema Verma.

Pam Stevens, a media adviser, coached Verma; Marcus Barlow wrote speeches and devised strategy; and Nahigan Strategies' staffers traveled with her to help orchestrate announcements, according to Politico.

Four members of the Democratic House and Senate leadership asked for an investigation of the contracts.

HHS notified relevant congressional committees on April 3 that the contracts are suspended pending the review and audit by the inspector general.

NEXT 15'S PR GROUP SLIPS 1.1%

Next Fifteen Communications Group reported a 1.1 percent dip in PR revenues to \$173.22M for the 12-month period ended Jan. 31, a year of restructuring that featured the merger of tech firms Text100 and Bite to form Archetype.

Organic growth at the UK-based firm's PR (brand marketing) group, which includes Archetype, Outcast, M Booth, Blueshirt and Publitek, rose 0.1 percent, while operating profit was up 7.7 percent to \$38.4M.

Next 15's overall US business grew 1.7 percent to \$150.79M and 2.8 percent organically. Operating profit dipped 5.1 percent to \$22M.

Chairman Richard Eyre cited "great progress" over the fiscal year as Next 15 "evolved from a pure PR group into a data and technology-driven marketing group."



Richard Eyre

GODIVA SWEETENS LIPPE TAYLOR'S ROSTER

Lippe Taylor picked up US PR and digital marketing duties for Godiva, the Belgium-based luxury chocolate company, in a competitive pitch. Next Fifteen Communications Group's M Booth had the account.

Maureen Lippe's firm will handle integrated communications work including social media strategy, creative content, influencer marketing and earned media responsibilities. The assignment spans Godiva's Café, retail and e-commerce businesses.

"Our focus remains building immersive experiences for our consumers as we evolve into a lifestyle brand," Caki Zamoiski Haprin, head of Godiva's North America marketing and innovation, said in a statement.

TRAVATELLO WORKS GENYOUTH MARKETING

Lisa Travatello, who has more than 25 years of marketing experience gained from stints at Burson-Marsteller, Weber Shandwick and Edelman, has joined GENYOUth, non-profit dedicated to youth fitness, as chief marketing officer.

Most recently PR officer for Glen Cove, Travatello has served as global brand marketing chair at BM, executive VP-consumer marketing & chief creative officer at Weber and senior VP at Edelman. At GENYOUth, she works to line up companies, brands and associations for partnerships to advance health and wellness at schools.

GENYOUth's Fuel Up to Play 60 and Adventure Capital programs have been used in more than 70K schools reaching 38M students during the past decade.

QORVIS REPS SAUDI ARABIA AID GROUP

Qorvis has a draft agreement to provide PR support for the King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Center, which is based in Riyadh.

The mission of KSrelief is “to manage and coordinate relief activities to ensure the provision of external aid is in line with the national interests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” according to the federal filing of the MSLGroup unit.

Qorvis will handle PR training, media relations, events, op-ed pieces and conduct seminars for journalists or think tanks.

Founded in 2015, KSrelief has provided aid to 37 countries.

Qorvis has been Saudi Arabia's go-to PR firm since the aftermath of 9/11. In March, it disclosed an \$810K one-year contract with the Saudi-based Muslim World League to clarify the true message of Islam.

France's Publicis Groupe owns MSLGroup.

KHASHOGGI'S FIANCEE GETS DC SUPPORT

Kilpatrick Townsend Stockton has signed on with Democracy in the Arab World Now (DAWN) to promote human rights and justice for all, according to the DC-based firm's federal filing.

The effort is on behalf of Hatice Cengiz, the 39-year-old fiancée of 59-year-old Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi dissident and *Washington Post* contributor who was murdered Oct 2 by Saudi Arabia's agents in the Kingdom's consulate in Istanbul. Robert Harmala handles the DAWN lobbying campaign.

In the aftermath of Khashoggi's torture, murder and dismemberment, Cengiz has actively campaigned to bring his murderers to justice.

She wrote an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* on Nov. 2 that called for the US to lead the way, vowing to continue pushing the Trump administration to find justice for Khashoggi.

“There will be no coverup,” she wrote.

GPG CO-FOUNDER FORMS BREAKWATER

Arik Ben-Zvi, a founder of Glover Park Group, has launched Breakwater Strategy, which will be part of WPP. From offices in New York and DC, Breakwater will offer crisis management, positioning, thought leadership and public advocacy services.

Ben-Zvi, who served on the advance team of Al Gore's 2000 campaign before helping to launch GPG in 2001, formed Breakwater with the goal of “once again experimenting with new ways to be a trusted strategic advisor to companies navigating today's ever more chaotic and complex operating environment.”



Arik Ben-Zvi

GPG alum Max Gleichman will head the NYC outpost. He served as communications director to Samantha Power during her tenure as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

TURNER has been named agency of record for **Discover South Carolina**, **The Westin Nashville**, **The Notary** and **The Ritz Carlton St. Thomas**. The agency will open a South Carolina office when its contract with Discover South Carolina goes live on July 1. For the Westin Nashville, the agency is providing media relations, digital content, and social media services. **TURNER** is creating a long term media relations strategy for The Notary, a new hotel in Philadelphia. The Ritz Carlton St. Thomas, which is reopening this fall after last year's hurricanes, has engaged the agency to manage media relations.

Zehnder Communications is working with the **Brookhaven Convention and**

Visitors Bureau, which was established in 2018 to promote and build awareness of Brookhaven, a city in the northeastern Atlanta

metro area. The CVB has engaged Zehnder to handle logo creation, digital ads, website development and optimization, paid media, public relations and social media. The partnership will incorporate experiential marketing, digital media strategies and social media activations.

D&D PR has added **MINT Hotels & Residences**, a group of five boutique hotels in the Dominican Republic, to its roster of hospitality clients. D&D PR is launching the brand in the US market, with an emphasis on lifestyle consumer media as well as on the travel trade community, with coverage in industry-specific outlets. A focus for the campaign is to change consumer perceptions of the Dominican Republic.

Champion Management Group is now PR agency of record for **Dog Haus**, a restaurant chain specializing in gourmet hot dogs, sausages, burgers and chicken sandwiches. Dallas-based Champion began working with Dog Haus in 2017, assisting at the local market level with multiple new restaurant openings across the country. The agency's scope of work will now expand to cover the entire company's public relations support, franchise development and local restaurant marketing.

Zapwater Communications is now public relations agency of record in the US for **Travel Manitoba**, the province's tourism marketing agency. Zapwater's scope of work will include media relations, influencer engagement, partnerships and events. The agency will build on Manitoba's “Canada's Heart Beats” brand to increase awareness of the province's geographic landscapes, cities, wildlife, history and more.

Affect has been named U.S. public relations agency of record for real estate investment management firm **iintoo**. The agency will launch a strategic media relations program to generate market awareness and interest in iintoo's social investment network. With a focus on accredited investors, Affect's PR program for iintoo will work to build critical business momentum through executive visibility and thought leadership, competitive positioning and an aggressive media relations strategy.



ACCENTURE ACQUIRES DROGA5

Consulting giant Accenture is buying creative advertising powerhouse Droga5 in a deal that will reshape the marketing communications landscape.

Droga will become part of Accenture Interactive, which aims to help clients develop, create and run customer experiences to grow brands and businesses.

Brian Whipple, CEO of AI, views the Droga5 acquisition a “game-changing milestone for us and the industry.” He said Droga5 will help Accenture “improve full human experience with brands.”



Dave Droga

Dave Droga will remain creative chairman of Droga5 and Sarah Thompson will continue as CEO.

Droga views the Accenture connection as an opportunity to “add more dimension to our best ideas and push us beyond our existing ambitions.” Droga5 has more than 500 staffers in New York and London.

Accenture generated \$21B revenues and \$2.4B profit for the six-month period ended Feb. 28. It employs 477K people in more than 120 countries.

INTERPUBLIC MERGES CURRENT & CREATION

Interpublic Group has merged two of its PR brands: US-based consumer marketing agency Current Marketing and global communications agency Creation. The combined agency will be known as Current Global.

Co-led by CEOs Virginia Devlin (Chicago) and George Coleman (London), it launches with 30 offices and more than 200 employees.

The firm offers a comprehensive portfolio of PR and integrated communications services, with expertise in earned, social, digital and paid media, as well as strategic planning, analytics and content production.

“Current Global is a powerful new mid-sized agency offer with considerable creative firepower, further strengthening our roster of public relations firms that includes Weber Shandwick, Golin, DeVries Global, Rogers & Cowan, Carmichael Lynch Relate and PMK/BNC,” said Interpublic chairman and chief executive officer Michael Roth.

ICR HANDLES RETURN OF CHUCK E. CHEESE

ICR is handling the return of Chuck E. Cheese, pizza joint/playroom, to the public market via a reverse merger of its parent, CEC Entertainment, with Leo Holdings, a blank check company.

Chuck E. Cheese Brands Inc, which also owns Peter Piper Pizza, will trade on the Big Board with an initial valuation of \$1.4B. CEO Tom Leverton plans to pursue acquisition opportunities, grow/upgrade existing venues and enhance the total guest experience.

Apollo Global Management, which took CEC private in 2014, will own a 51 percent stake in the publicly listed company.

CEC franchisees operate 606 Chuck E. and 144 Peter Piper units in 47 states and 14 foreign countries.

ICR’s Raphael Gross and Liz Ditrapano are working the CEC deal.

MARKETERS TO HIKE INFLUENCER BUDGETS

Most marketers working in digital spaces now believe that influencer content outperforms brand-created content, according to a new report released by San Francisco-based content marketing technology company Linqia.

According to the report, which surveyed digital marketers on how agencies are planning to leverage influencer marketing in 2019, more than half (57 percent) of those surveyed reported that the content created by influencers outperforms brand-created content when repurposed in other marketing channels. Nearly one in five (18 percent) believes that it “greatly outperforms” brand-created content.

As a result, most marketing pros now say that average influencer marketing budgets are on the rise at their agency, with 54 percent reporting plans to spend more than \$250,000 this year on influencer marketing, and 17 percent reporting plans to spend upwards of \$1 million. More than a third (39 percent) of respondents stationed at agencies with digital marketing budget above \$500,000 plan to increase their influencer marketing budget in 2019.

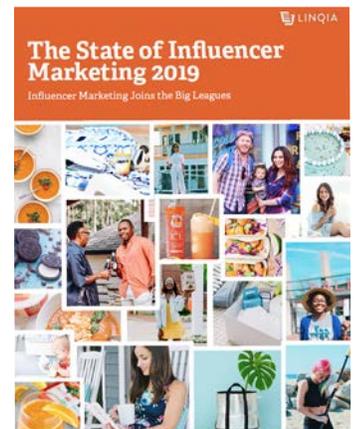
On average, more than a quarter (27 percent) of digital marketers said they ran five or more influencer marketing campaigns last year. Two-thirds (66 percent) said they ran three or more campaigns in 2018.

A majority of respondents (34 percent) said their agency now manages all influencer marketing programs in-house, while about a quarter (26 percent) hire a specialty agency and 20 percent rely on a platform of some sort. 58 percent apply a one-off tactical campaign strategy to influencer marketing, while 42 percent now leverage influencer marketing across a multitude of initiatives across the year.

More than half (52 percent) said that measuring ROI continues to be marketers’ greatest challenge when working with influencer marketing programs. Engagement (89 percent) impressions (67 percent), brand awareness (65 percent) and clicks (63 percent) were reported as the top means of measuring the success of influencer marketing programs.

Not surprisingly, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of marketers cited Instagram as their preferred network for influencer marketing, followed by Facebook (51 percent). YouTube and blogs trailed next, followed by Pinterest and Twitter. Snapchat, meanwhile, bottomed out the list as the least important social network for influencer marketing in 2019.

Linqia’s third annual influencer marketing survey polled nearly 200 marketing pros stationed in the consumer packaged goods, food and beverage, media and retail industries. The survey was conducted in February.



SKI UTAH ISSUES MEDIA RELATIONS RFI

Ski Utah has issued an RFI to gather input from agencies with strong media relations capabilities and an emphasis on snow sports/tourism.

Interested agencies are asked to provide credentials pertaining to agency history, staff, media relations capabilities and current client list.

Ski Utah, owned and operated by the Utah Ski and Snowboard Association, currently retains an agency for this service at \$6,660 per month (including expenses) and notes that responses should indicate an ability to perform the work required within the same budget parameters.

Ski Utah anticipates a two-year contract, with services to begin July 1 and run through June 2021.

Interested firms should contact Ski Utah director of communications Caitlin Furin, caitlin@sk Utah.com, no later than April 15.

Firms may also respond to the Request for Information via mail:

Ski Utah, Attn: Caitlin Furin, 2749 E Parleys Way, Suite 310, Salt Lake City, UT 84109

[Download the RFI \(PDF\).](#)

STANTON JOINS CONSTELLATION BRANDS

Matt Stanton has joined Constellation Brands as senior VP-public affairs, based in the Washington office of the \$8.2B wine/spirits/beer giant.

He joins from Under Armour, where he was VP-global public policy. Prior to UA, he VP-PA/CSR for Beam Suntory and VP-PA at Fortune Brands.

At Constellation, Stanton will oversee government relations and relations with policy influencers involved with alcohol laws/regulations, trade policy and cannabis.

He also will spearhead community affairs, charitable giving and corporate social responsibility.

Stanton will report to Jim Bourdeau, executive VP and general counsel.

Based in Victor (NY), Constellation Brands line-up includes wines, spirits and beer brands.



Matt Stanton

JOELE FRANK PLAYS DEFENSE AT GAMESTOP

Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher is working with GameStop as the video game/consumer electronics retailer irons out a deal to ward off a proxy fight with Hestia Capital Partners and Permit Enterprise Capital Partners.

The Austin-based company has agreed to nominate two independent directors. One will be put forward by Hestia and Permit, and the other will be selected by GameStop with input from the two investors.

With the deal, Hestia and Permit will withdraw their proposed director-nominees.

GameStop, which lost \$455M on \$5.7B revenues during the nine-month period ended Nov. 3, named a new CEO on March 21.

George Sherman assumes the helm on April 15 to become the company's fifth chief since Nov. 2017.

JFWBK's Matthew Sherman and Aura Reinhard rep GameStop.

BAYER TO LOBBY OVER DRUG PRICING

The U.S. operations of Germany-based pharmaceutical giant Bayer has engaged government relation firm Forbes-Tate Partners to communicate health issues on Capitol Hill.

Bayer's U.S. unit has specifically retained FTP to discuss issues related to 340B, the federal drug pricing program that requires drug manufacturers to provide outpatient drugs at discounted rates to eligible healthcare organizations and various "covered entities" serving the country's most vulnerable patient populations.

A five-person team handles the Bayer account, including founding partner Jeff Forbes, who formerly served as chief of staff to former Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), staff director to the Senate Finance Committee and deputy political director to President Clinton's 1996 re-election campaign. He'll be joined by Libby Greer, former chief of staff to Rep. Allen Boyd (D-FL); Derrick White, former deputy communications director to former U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT); Francesca McCrary, former legislative assistant to Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD); and Zach Williams, who worked as a top advisor in then-Lt. Governor Lucy Baxley's 2006 campaign for Alabama Governor.

Forbes-Tate is the bipartisan public affairs consultancy previously known as Cauthen, Forbes & Williams.



NEWS OF FIRMS

Hotwire has formed an exclusive partnership with **The Hoffman Agency** to collaborate in Asia. The agreement will see Hotwire work with The Hoffman Agency's wholly owned offices in Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Indonesia as part of its global network of offices and exclusive partners. Hotwire operates through 11 wholly owned offices across North America, Europe and Australia and supports this with a network of exclusive partners and affiliates in another 21 cities worldwide, including the locations represented by The Hoffman Agency.

Montreal-based holding and management company **Avenir Global** has acquired **Hanover**, an independent U.K. public relations consultancy with offices in London, Brussels, Dublin, Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The agency's leadership team will remain in place following the transaction. Together with the November 2018 acquisition of London-based healthcare creative agency, Cherry, the deal bolsters AVENIR GLOBAL's EMEA offering.

PR360, a Dublin-based communications agency, is the newest addition to global partnership **PROI Worldwide**. Founded in 2011 by managing director Dan Pender, PR360 has corporate, public affairs and brand practices as well as an in-house digital content studio. The agency works with clients in the healthcare, aviation, finance, professional services, and technology sectors in Ireland and internationally.



Dan Pender

IS KEEPING QUIET ON SOCIAL ISSUES BEST?

Companies in recent years have internalized the notion that taking a stance on some of the pressing social, environmental and political challenges facing the world today is a great way to build awareness and engender a favorable public perception.

As it turns out, however, data now suggests that staying mum on these issues also has its own value, and might be the safe bet for businesses looking to avoid a PR backlash, according to a recent survey conducted by D.C.-based research and consulting firm Clutch.

According to the survey, nearly two-thirds of consumers (63 percent) claim they're likely to continue shopping at businesses that stay silent on issues they care about. A smaller percentage of consumers, however (58 percent), said they'd continue shopping at a business that takes a stance on an issue with which they disagree.



The Clutch survey found that 15 percent of consumers are likely to stop shopping with a company that speaks out on political issues in a manner with which they disagree, and 10 percent said the same about companies that address issues related to gender. Only five percent said their buying decisions would be deterred by companies' stances on human rights issues, and only two percent cited environmental stances as a deal-breaker.

Most of respondents (71 percent) remain adamant that they want businesses to speak out on social issues, and more than half (52 percent) think businesses should air their sociopolitical stances publicly via social media. Consumers particularly want businesses to tackle issues related to the environment (89 percent), human rights (80 percent), gender (74 percent) and politics (56 percent).

Clutch's "2019 PR and Corporate Social Responsibility Survey" polled 420 U.S. consumers who reported making a purchase within the last six months. Research was conducted at the end of December using brand intelligence research company Survata.

ON THE MOVE

CashmanKatz has made **Eric Cavoli** and **Amanda Mueller** partners in the firm. Cavoli has been SVP, group creative director at the agency since 2010. Mueller, who has been with CashmanKatz since 2003, has served as senior VP. The agency has also unveiled a simplified name and visual identity. Formerly Cashman + Katz Integrated Communications, it will now be known as CashmanKatz. According to agency co-founder Tony Cashman, the name change lets CK be more intuitive and consistent in URLs, hashtags and social media handles.

Hill+Knowlton Strategies has appointed **Gonzalo Lamas** as head of financial communications in Spain. Lamas comes to H+K from Madrid-based Evercom, where he worked as a consultant. He was previously with Porter Novelli. Lamas has worked with such clients as J.P. Morgan, Ibercaja, CNMV, INVERCO, EFPA, Aegon and Bestinver. In his role at H+K he will oversee the financial communication department's activity and advise clients at a strategic and tactical level.

SMOTKIN SIGNS KAZAK PACT

Richard Smotkin, the lobbyist whose work for former Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt made headlines last year, has signed a pact with the Republic of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Culture and Sports, the executive body that oversees culture, inter-ethnic stability, language development, religious activities, physical culture and sports, as well as gambling within the central Asian country.



Richard Smotkin

Working through his lobbying outfit ThirdCircle, Inc., Smotkin will facilitate meetings between Kazakhstan's Ministry of Culture and Sports and representatives within the U.S. film and media industry, according to Foreign Agents Registration Act documents filed in April.

The meetings are intended to improve bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the U.S. as well as advance cultural exchange opportunities between the two nations.

Smotkin, who was formerly senior vice president of government affairs at Comcast, was the center of controversy last year when it was discovered he'd received a \$40,000-a-month contract to lobby on behalf of the Moroccan government, mere months after he'd organized a \$100,000 trip for longtime friend—and then EPA head—Scott Pruitt to visit Morocco, ostensibly for the purpose of promoting U.S. liquefied natural gas exports.

That December 2017 trip prompted an investigation from the EPA inspector general. Pruitt resigned from the EPA administrator post in July.

TC takes a fixed monthly fee of \$30,000 for the Kazakhstan pact, with all travel and accommodations to be reimbursed.

TIAA'S PALMER SHIFTS TO AIG

Betsy Palmer has joined American International Group, Inc. as senior vice president and chief marketing strategy, communications and industry leadership officer, AIG Life & Retirement.

Palmer comes to AIG from TIAA, where she had been senior vice president and chief communications officer since 2010. She played a major role in TIAA's 2016 rebranding by developing an integrated public relations, advertising and social media program.

She previously served as marketing and communications director at EY and executive vice president, marketing and communications at management consulting firm BearingPoint.



Betsy Palmer

At AIG, Palmer will be responsible for marketing, communications, stakeholder management, industry thought leadership, sponsorship and brand positioning activities across Life & Retirement. She will also serve as the primary external spokesperson for the Life & Retirement organization.

AIG Life & Retirement CEO Kevin Hogan cited Palmer's "deep experience in brand building, public relations and industry thought leadership, which will make her a strong leader."

COMMENTARY

You've got to hand it to Uber: the ridesharing giant sure has got a lot of PR chutzpah.

Thanks to Uber, Lyft, Juno and Via, the streets of Manhattan are traffic and environmental nightmares. The number of cars affiliated to the Big 4 soared from 12,500 in 2015 to 78,000 in 2018.

Those additional vehicles help explain why New York City buses crawl along at an average 6.4 miles-per-hour, making it faster for a person to hoof it down east-west corridors such as 42nd Street than to hop on a bus.



Mary Buchanan, researcher at TransitCenter advocacy group, noted that bus speeds “are considerably slower than another New York City transit fixture: the rats running through our subway system, who can sprint faster than 8 miles per hour.” Ouch.

Gotham’s clogged streets are the reason why New York State approved a congestion pricing scheme for drivers crazy enough to try their luck and test their sanity by navigating below 60th Street. The pricing plan, which is supposed to go into effect in 2021, is designed to remove cars from the streets, reduce pollution and generate funds for NYC’s subway and commuter rail lines.

And who is the biggest champion of congestion pricing? Surprise, surprise, Uber tops the list, shelling out \$2M in favor of a congestion pricing plan that could very well serve as a model for other cities across the US.

The *Financial Times* reports that Uber and Lyft have been blamed for putting more cars on the street and undermining public transit systems. For instance, San Francisco’s county transportation board fingers car-booking services for 50 percent of the city’s congestion.

Uber is sly as a fox when it comes to congestion pricing. It views the plan as the lesser of regulatory evils, such as efforts to tax ridesharing or limiting the number of cars on the road.

While NYC taxi drivers adamantly oppose congestion pricing, Uber says “bring it on.” Ridesharing has decimated the city’s taxi business as the price of a medallion plunged from \$1.3M in 2013 to \$160K today. Yellow cabs are an endangered species in the Big Apple. They soon will only be memories, like the legendary Checker Cabs.

The FT believes Uber’s support of congestion pricing is part of CEO Dara Khosrowshahi’s plan to improve the company’s reputation, which was stained under former CEO Travis Kalanick. That’s a good strategy, especially for a company with an impending IPO.

But my hunch: it's all about business. Uber figures that a \$12 congestion price to enter NYC’s business district will discourage tens of thousands of people from driving into Manhattan—creating more customers for Uber, less crowded streets and cleaner air for its drivers.

Congestion pricing is a win, win, win situation for Uber.

Talk about burying the lede. The Rockefeller Foundation announced April 1 that it was donating \$30M to the Atlantic Council to support its work in helping cities meet the environmental and climate change threats facing cities, which will account for 75 percent of humanity by 2050.

The press release’s headline played it up straight: The Rockefeller Foundation Announces a \$30M Grant to the Adrienne Arsht Center for Resilience at the Atlantic Council.”

Hat’s off!

The Rockefeller Foundation has been in the forefront on climate and resilience over the past decade. It has invested about \$500M to help urban areas address the physical, social and economic challenges facing global communities.

The release headline read like the Foundation was bolstering an ally.

Under its 100 Resilient Cities initiative, the Foundation provided funds for more than 80 cities to hire chief resilience officers, according to its April 1 release.

The 100RC has forged a network of city leaders/partners and guided areas in post-disaster phases to rebuild with resilience in mind. More than 2,600 projects and initiatives have been proposed with more than \$3B leveraged to implement them.

Now the kicker. In paragraph seven of the release, the Foundation informs readers that it has a “long history of incubating projects and entities that have matured to become independent organizations in their own right.”

In order to sustain and institutionalize 100RC, the Foundation is kicking in \$12M “to allow continued support and transition time to the 100RC network through much of 2019.”

Hammer time arrived in paragraph eight: “With a new grant in place to the Atlantic Council and new structures within the Rockefeller Foundation to carry forward its resilience work, the grant that funds 100RC will conclude in 2019.”

See ya, 100RC.

The result: New York, Boston, Miami, Los Angeles and overseas cities threatened by climate change are left high and dry (pun intended) by the Rockefeller Foundation’s decision to pull the plug on the 100RC.

“This morning our staff of 86 was informed that their last day would be July 31, 2019—myself included—with severance following,” 100RC spokesperson Andrew Brenner told Bloomberg via email.

The Rockefeller exit from 100RC comes as the Trump administration, which doubts global warming, has reversed Obama policies designed to prepare communities for global warming.

The April 1 release could have been a not-so-funny April Fools’ Day prank.

If only that was true.

—Kevin McCauley