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SALEM WANTS TO MOVE BEYOND WITCHES

Salem is looking for a firm to handle destination marketing efforts to attract more visitors to the working class city of 45K people located 16 miles northwest of Boston.



Known globally as the site of the 1692 witch trials, Salem also features a rich maritime heritage, Peabody Essex Museum, The House of the Seven Gables (setting for Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1851 novel), impressive architecture, thriving downtown shopping district and a growing cultural economy.

The selected firm will establish Salem's overall strategy for tourism, planning and marketing; organize fam trips, establish local partnerships and manage social media activity.

Responses are due December 20. They go to: Office of the Purchasing Agent, 93 Washington Street, 2nd Floor, Salem, MA 01970.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\).](#)

BRUNSWICK'S LAGANA HEADS TO INVARIANT

Brunswick Group's Susan Lagana has joined Invariant's strategic communications and public affairs team.

As a partner at Brunswick, Lagana advised clients on policymaking and handled media relations in political capitals around the globe.



Susan Lagana

Prior to Brunswick, Lagana was managing director and EVP at BCW Global.

She worked in the Obama administration as PA director for the Department of Transportation, where she worked on the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act; and at the Department of Defense as communications director for the Navy.

Invariant CEO Heather Podesta said Lagana has counseled clients on a wide array of politics, litigation and reputation issues.

She expects Lagana's background in emerging technologies, antitrust and infrastructure policy will provide immediate value to Invariant's clients.

FGS GLOBAL HANDLES BIG SAUDI IPO

FGS Global is handling the initial public offering of Luberef, the oil refining unit of the Saudi Arabian Oil Company, that is expected to raise about \$1.3B.

The 50M share offer includes the entire 30 percent stake in Luberef that is owned by Jadwa Investments.

Jadwa acquired those shares in 2007 from ExxonMobil.

The IPO is expected to be priced at the higher end of the offering range due to a strong demand for Gulf listings.

Saudi Aramco, which owns a 70 percent stake in Luberef, is not selling any of its shares in the IPO.

Individual investors will get the opportunity to buy Luberef stock, which will list on the Saudi Exchange, beginning December 14.

FGS Global managing director Sophie McNulty and director Ahmed Jebur in the Dubai office handle Luberef.



لوبريف
luberef

MMGY GLOBAL ACQUIRES ORIGIN

MMGY Global acquires outdoor-focused, digitally driven creative, content and branding agency Origin, which will become known as MMGY Origin.

Danielle Kristmanson and Marie-Josée Legault, who founded the Whistler, Canada-based firm more than 20 years ago, will remain with the brand—Legault serving as partner & managing director, and Kristmanson serving as partner & executive creative director.

With the addition of Origin's Whistler, Montreal and Vermont locations, MMGY Global will now have over 500 employees and operate in 16 markets globally.

"Origin represents a unique addition to our global company that differentiates our product portfolio and positions us in a niche segment that connects travel with active lifestyle," said MMGY Global president and incoming CEO Katie Briscoe.

Origin is the eleventh acquisition by MMGY Global since private equity firm Peninsula Capital Partners made an equity investment in the company in February 2016.



VOTERS REJECT CURBING ESG

With many Republican legislators already threatening to rein in “corporate wokeism” in 2023, a new study from ROKK Solutions and Penn State University’s Center for the Business of Sustainability finds that neither Democratic nor Republican voters are behind efforts to curb ESG initiatives.



“[Navigating ESG in the New Congress](#),” which surveyed 1,261 registered voters across the US this fall, found that more than three-quarters (76 percent) of respondents across the political spectrum agreed that “companies should be held accountable to make a positive impact on communities in which they operate.” That number was considerably higher for Democrats (82 percent) than for Republicans (69 percent).

However, more than half (52 percent) of all respondents said they felt that “corporate wokeness” has gone too far. The general feeling was that they wanted companies “to be more focused on their products and services than on espousing support for ESG-related initiatives.”

But a majority of respondents were against letting the government step in to curb a company’s “corporate wokeism.” More than six in 10 (63 percent) said that the government should not set limits on corporate ESG investments. Republicans (70 percent) were even more adamant than Democrats (57 percent) in this regard.

Respondents were asked what issues were top of mind for them. “Pocketbook issues” (inflation, middle class taxes, health care and housing costs) were a “top area of concern” for 84 percent. Such global issues as immigration, competition with China and the Ukraine-Russia war were cited by 71 percent.

When it comes to the environment and social issues, Democratic and Republican respondents were more strongly divided. For example, while 83 percent of Democrats said they thought climate change was a key issue, only 50 percent of Republicans agreed.

JOELE FRANK WORKS VIVINT DEAL

[Joel Frank](#) handles Vivint Smart Home as it agrees to be acquired by NRG Energy in a deal valued at \$5.2B. Provo-based Vivint provides integrated home security systems and monitoring services to 1.9M customers throughout the US.

Houston-headquartered NRG powers more than 6M homes/businesses in 24 states and eight Canadian provinces.

CEO Mauricio Gutierrez called the acquisition of Vivint “transformational” as an important part of his company’s plan to supply an array of essential home services to customers.



He said people “want simple, connected and customized experiences that provide peace of mind. Vivint’s smart home technology strengthens our retail platform.”

NRG’s \$12 per-share offer represents a 33 percent premium over Vivint’s Dec. 5 closing stock price. The transaction consists of \$2.8B cash and the assumption of \$2.4B in debt.

Joel Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher’s Ed Trissel, Joseph Sala and Kara Sperry represent Vivint.

NEWS OF FIRMS

[The Weber Shandwick Collective](#) launches Business & Society Futures, an offering comprised of its advisory brands (Powell Tate, United Minds, KRC Research) and Weber Shandwick’s corporate affairs, public affairs and social impact & sustainability practices. It will provide clients with differentiated AI and technology-backed insights and advisory expertise across communications, public affairs and management consulting. Business & Society Futures will be led by Chris Deri, Weber Shandwick’s chief corporate affairs officer and president of TWSC’s C-suite Advisory Business. TWSC is also launching The Collective Senior Advisors, a group of outside senior advisors who will counsel clients on leadership positioning, organizational effectiveness, policy and regulatory complexity, positive societal impact and value creation for all stakeholders.



[Matter Communications](#) rebrands its marketing services division as MatterMKTG in a move that the agency says is intended to better represent and communicate its full suite of integrated marketing offerings. MatterMKTG is comprised of more than 75 staffers across such disciplines as brand strategy, paid media, social media, search marketing, content marketing, website design and development, and creative services. Its expanded offerings include strategy & planning, creative & content, performance marketing & demand gen and media & analytics.

[KPS3](#), a Reno, NV firm, launches a company rebrand, “Human. On Purpose,” along with a new web site that features case studies, career opportunities and thought leadership. The rebrand reflects what the agency says is a refocused culture, and is centered on six areas of service: branding, campaigns, public relations, social media, web and digital and “Outta The Box” strategic initiatives.

[AxiCom](#), WPP’s technology specialist communications agency, unveils a new global brand identity, global agency vision and mission, and website reflecting its position as an agency for tech brands and all brands that have a tech story. Along with the new identity, AxiCom is launching proprietary intellectual property designed to overcome the challenges facing modern marketing communications professionals. The new tools include: The Axis, a data-driven campaign process intended to help a brand revolve around its audience, earning attention and action through all relevant media channels; and The AxiCom Culture Engine, which positions a brand at the intersection of media coverage and social conversation.



[Wachsman](#), which works with clients in the financial services, emerging technology and digital assets sectors, opens an office in Geneva, Switzerland. Wachsman Geneva will be led by Alex Sheehan, who joined Wachsman in 2017 in its Dublin office. For the past three years, she has been director at Wachsman Singapore. Earlier this year, Wachsman opened additional American offices in Los Angeles and Washington D.C., as well as an office in London.

2023: WHAT ARE YOU CHASING?

It's planning time and with it, the opportunity to assess the business landscape, your organization's strategic intent, and your workforce's capability to perform against unwavering pressure, ambiguity, and uncertainty.



Gary Grates

The real value in annual planning lies in identifying the one true north star – What Are You Chasing?

Sizing Up 2022

Each year provides a pathway to the future. It begins with understanding the competitive relevance of the company or brand amid its segment and customer ecosystem. Further, employees want to know how their work connects to the company mission and future success

and what's in it for them while assessing the performance from the past year. The process provides a reality check on what is most important for the business to achieve.

So, let's take a look at 2022. An incredibly tumultuous year. For organizations the challenges and choices were varied. Coming out of COVID, some leaders chose to reintroduce their companies and brands after a two-year absence dealing with the pandemic. Many rethought the employee experience instituting new rules of working.

Virtually every organization reassessed its purpose and commitments to stakeholders.

The important take-away from 2022 is what will guide your direction and intent going forward.

What is your headline in 2022?

Visualizing 2023

In previewing 2023 from a corporate communications perspective, there are two areas to be focused on: the business situation; and the social reality.

Let's begin with the social imperative. CEOs, leaders, and communicators must factor these topics in their positions:

- **Health Equity**—Leaders must consider the linkage between health equity with employee well-being, patient expectations, community engagement and social determinants.
- **ESG**—Is the company performing as an ESG entity? If so, how are the principles incorporated into its leadership architecture?
- **AI**—CEOs must have a POV on the topic including how AI is impacting health, customer and patient experience, and the company. If not, it's best to stay away.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**—There needs to be a transparent and open discussion on diversity, equity and inclusion as it relates to culture, health/well-being and the employee brand in general, beginning with an honest appraisal of the company.
- **Organizational Confidence**—Projecting the organization's ability to scale and maintain a strong culture adhering to its principles and strategy is a terrific story and one that CEOs are relating as part of their talk track externally.
- **Social Tension**—Leaders need to work on balancing the organization's purpose and efficacy with employee, stakeholder concerns and interests that align with the business' purpose, mission, and efficacy.
- **Mental Health**—Being open, flexible, and active in addressing mental health for society and your workforce through empathy, programming, and benefits as part of your management model.

• **Talent and the Future of Work**—Retaining talent in the post-COVID environment is a critical business priority. Leaders need to convey how business and the company itself are handling work-life balance, office-home hybrid, the sense of belonging, collaboration, and meaningful work.

What is the business chasing in 2023?

Let's explore the major areas for consideration in calibrating the communications strategy and plan for 2023 starting with the macro environment:

- What does the global competitive marketplace look like
- Where is the game being played?
- How relevant are we?
- Where are we strongest? Weakest?
- How far can our current talent take us?
- Where is the motivation for our business/brands?

From there, we need to dig deeper into our organization and identify the key direction for the enterprise. Once the business decides on its direction and core, corporate communications can then determine where to place its bets:

• **Relevance**—In a social/digital world, relevance is the new reputation. If you're not relevant today, you don't exist. From a communications standpoint, relevance is about the following: being searched; being talked about; being engaged with; being sought after; being trusted.

• **Relationships**—How would you rate the quality of your relationships with key stakeholders? What needs to be improved if the organization is to succeed? How have influencers infiltrated the opinion formation process?

• **Culture**—Is your corporate culture able to withstand the vagaries of the business?

• **Narrative/Story**—Do you have a narrative that reflects the current state and future aspiration of the business? How is it being conveyed? Is your story consistent with your brand?

• **Visibility**—Are your leaders and your POV known in the industry?

• **Efficiencies**—From cost reduction, restructuring, quality and process improvement, what levers need to be pulled for the organization to achieve its goals?

• **M&A Assimilation/Integration**—How is the workforce prepared to accept a merger or acquisition? What will such a move do throw the business' balance off?

• **Confidence**—Are we communicating in such a manner that people inside and outside the organization are smarter and more engaged?

A Fresh Start

Annual business planning provides a clear set of goals, objectives and strategies aimed at improving an organization's viability. It is a crucial element of any prudent leadership responsibility and must be met with similar rigor from all areas of the business including corporate communications. Done right, it achieves staff alignment against the business needs.

The process should be a time of reflection, exploration, analysis, education, and experimentation to arrive at the right formula for success.

"Business planning is a mechanism to coalesce thinking of the entire company around one thing: Winning!"

—Anonymous

Gary F. Grates is President and CEO, at GConsulting Group (GCG) a communications consultancy and advisory firm specializing in business transformation, corporate relevance, employee engagement, and organizational communications excellence.

PHOENIX SEEKS MARKETING FOR POLICE

The city of Phoenix is requesting proposals from firms that can provide marketing services for the Phoenix Police Department. There are currently about 1,000 vacancies in the department.



The city seeks a full-service marketing firm that can promote its police department, attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates and generate a continuous pipeline of applicants through traditional and digital media.

Scope of the work includes creating and executing marketing strategies that raise brand awareness among targeted audiences; devising a recommended media plan; and working with city staff to develop web content that utilizes SEO to increase the visibility of city websites.

Terms of the contract call for a five-year commitment, beginning in April 2023.

Proposals are due by 2:00 p.m. (MST) on December 21 and should be submitted via email to Maria Peck, procurement officer, maria.peck@phoenix.gov.

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

KRAL LEAVES BRUNSWICK FOR LSP

Brunswick Group veteran Rebecca Kral has joined Longacre Square Partners as partner and head of the financial communications shop's Dallas office.



Rebecca Kral

She did a seven-year stint in Brunswick's New York and Dallas offices, leading its activism defense practice, along with crisis and M&A work.

Kral has handled high-profile assignments such as Canadian National's \$34B unsolicited bid for Kansas City Southern, Spotify's \$30B first-ever direct listing IPO and [Harley-Davidson's PA response to President Trump](#) in the battle over EU tariffs.

At Longacre Square, which has offices in New York and Miami, she will help build out the Dallas office and bolster its corporate governance advisory and special situations practices.

ICR, TANCREDI WORK MNG AIRLINES DEAL

ICR Inc. and Tancredi Intelligent Communication are working the \$676M deal that will take Turkey's MNG Airlines, a cargo carrier and logistics provider, public via a merger with Golden Falcon Acquisition Corp. SPAC.

**MNG
AIRLINES**



MNGA serves 15K corporate customers across the US, Asia and Europe with 3,500 flights per year. It is an approved supplier to the US military, NATO and the UN.

The company reported a 39 percent rise in revenue to \$353M during the 12-month period ended September and net income of \$61M.

Scott Freidheim, chairman of Golden Falcon, said the SPAC's goal was to acquire "an established company in the Europe, Middle East and Israel region with a compelling track record, cash flow-generation, a clear transatlantic expansion nexus, a strong growth profile, and benefitting from secular market tailwinds."

ICR Inc.'s Michael Bowen represents MNGA, while TIC's Salamander Davoudi handles Golden Falcon.

CONSUMERS CATCH LIES OF MARKETERS

"Marketers are lying and customers can tell." So says a new study from PAN Communications about the gap between the strategies marketers use to tell brand stories and the ways in which customers understand and relate to those stories.

"[Missed Connections](#)," which surveyed 100 senior marketers and 1,000 consumers, found that a big part of the problem lies with marketers trying to tell consumers what they want to hear rather than what the reality of the brand story dictates.



Almost a third (32 percent) of the marketers surveyed said they sometimes tell inauthentic stories "because they feel they have to meet customer expectations or match industry needs."

In addition, seven in 10 (70 percent) say they face pressure to tell inauthentic stories, with half (50 percent) saying they face "some pressure," 15 percent facing "frequent pressure" and five percent facing "constant pressure" to do so.

But the study maintains that authenticity is key to successful communications—and it can't be faked or replaced.

One of the essential components of authenticity, consumers say, is a sense of shared values with a brand. Almost three quarters (71 percent) of consumers said that the values of individual executives have a direct impact on a brand's reputation. Over half (55 percent) said they are more likely to recommend a brand to others if it reflects their values.

Even when marketers have an authentic, interesting story to tell, the study results indicated that they have a tough time figuring out how to go about that. More than a quarter of respondents (28 percent) said their storytelling is kept from succeeding by "inefficient methods of distribution."

The study says marketers need to learn more about their audience, and one way to do that is to "start thinking about who tells their brand story and how it is communicated."

PAN's study was conducted between September 29 and October 27 of this year.

CAL STATE SEEKS REBRANDING HELP

California State University, East Bay wants to hire a firm to develop a new brand platform and identity to bolster its awareness and enhance its reputation so it will stand out in the crowded Bay Area higher education market.

The selected partner will shape Cal State East Bay's positioning, messaging and develop a framework for the brand launch and implementation plan, according to the RFP.



Founded 60 years ago as State College for Alameda County, the university has had five different names and grown from a "commuter school" into a regional university with three campuses and one of the most diverse student bodies in the US.

The positioning will help Cal State, East Bay earn greater respect and recognition via innovative digital efforts, an engaging social media strategy and an increase in earned media."

Proposals are due Jan. 4. They go to [Cal State East Bay's portal](#).

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

NIST NEEDS HELP TO PUSH US MANUFACTURING

The National Institute of Standards and Technology, which is charged with promoting US innovation and manufacturing competitiveness, is gathering qualifications of firms interested in providing marketing support.



NIST, a unit of the Commerce Department, is looking for shops to further its mission to assist manufacturers in embracing productivity-enhancing technologies, recruiting/retraining skilled employees and highlighting the importance of an industrial base.

NIST needs work in the areas of public awareness and social media outreach, branding, marketing and event support.

Interested parties have until Dec. 19 to submit qualifications to: Department of Commerce; National Institute of Standards and Technology; Acquisition Management Division; 100 Bureau Drive; Building 301, Room B1254, Mail Stop 1640; Gaithersburg, MD 20899-1640.

[Read the Sources Sought Notice \(PDF\).](#)

SONORAN REPS ANGOLA'S DOS SANTOS

Sonoran Policy Group is representing Isabel dos Santos, the eldest daughter of Angola's former president, who has been charged with running a massive embezzlement and corruption scheme while she headed Sonangol, the state-owned oil company. *Forbes* once called her Africa's richest woman, estimating her wealth at \$3.5B.



Isabel dos Santos

The US State Department slapped travel restrictions on dos Santos last year." Interpol issued an arrest warrant for her in November.

Dos Santos hired SPG on December 1, to "engage with the US Government to expose the human rights crimes and abuses of current Angolan president Joao Lournco" and to perform other duties upon request.

SPG's agreement called for a \$125K payment upon signing the pact. The work will continue until terminated by either party via thirty days written notice.

DENTONS GLOBAL ADV. NAMES FEILDING CFO

Dentons Global Advisors has hired Susan Feilding as chief financial officer, based in its London office.

She joins DGA from L.E.K. Consulting, where she rose to the regional CFO for Europe and the Asia Pacific region position during a seven-year run.

Earlier, Feilding did a 10-year stint at Allens, the Australia-based international law firm, serving as national commercial manager and acting CFO.



Susan Feilding

Ed Reilly, CEO of DGA, said "bringing Susan on board as our CFO is a critical milestone," he said. Reilly had headed FTI Consulting's strategic communications arm.

Dentons, the world's largest law firm, unveiled DGA to provide strategic counsel to clients dealing with challenges and opportunities in the commercial, reputation, financial, regulatory and governance areas. It retains a minority stake in DGA.

ON THE MOVE

GCI Health hires **Jess Vanner** as group senior vice president, paid media and **Joe Malunda** as group SVP, US digital team and operations lead. Vanner joins GCI Health after more than 11 years at Real Chemistry, where she established the social media team and led paid media. In her new post, she is responsible for expanding the agency's paid media offering, growing its team, accelerating platform partnerships and increasing integrated media activations. Malunda was most recently at Edelman, where he led its digital health practice in the West and was global digital lead for several *Fortune* 150 companies.

Hertz Global Holdings names **Wayne Davis** EVP, CMO, effective January 3. Davis comes to the company from GE Appliances, a Haier company, where he was most recently led its mass premium Café brand. He was previously senior brand director for GE Appliances' Haier & Hotpoint brands. In his new role, Davis will be responsible for leading the Hertz, Dollar and Thrifty brands and shaping the company's marketing strategy to drive effective brand reach and customer engagement. Laura C. Smith, who has led marketing for the last two years, will continue in her role as EVP, global sales and customer experience.



Wayne Davis

Peppercomm brings on Marissa Dunn as a senior media strategist. Dunn was most recently a team leader and senior producer at Bloomberg News, working on its afternoon program, "Bloomberg Markets: The Close." She was previously a producer at Fox News Channel and has also served as a script/production coordinator at "Good Morning America." At Peppercomm, Dunn, provides consultative insights, media strategy and storytelling based on best practices gleaned during her time working in broadcast and news production.

The Duke University School of Medicine appoints Mason Essif as vice dean for communications and advancement and CCO, effective late January. Essif was previously assistant vice provost for communications and public affairs at Weill Cornell Medicine. Before that, he was SVP at Ogilvy Washington Public Relations, and he has served as a reporter and producer at ABC News, CNN, and the *Washington Post*.

Resolute Public Affairs hires Neil Simon as an EVP. Simon was most recently director of communications for Metro, the Portland, OR regional government. He previously served as global communications director at Tektronix. Prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic, Simon guided the European Union through its public engagement in the US. Based in Portland, he now advises Resolute clients across the country.

FINN Partners promotes **Jessica Lise** to partner, New York health. Lise has been with the agency since 2019, most recently serving as vice president, New York health. Before coming to Finn, she was a senior account supervisor at RXMOSAIC. In her new role, she reports to Tom Jones, managing partner, head, New York health and pharma sector, and will serve on the Global Health Practice Leadership Team.



Jessica Lise

COMMENTARY

Big Oil's bridge too far... Giant energy companies claim there's a need to maintain the burning of fossil fuels because they provide a "bridge" to a brighter, healthier future world of renewables.

That's bunk, according to House Democrats.

They released [a trove of documents on Dec. 9](#) that show how the major oil companies misled the public on climate change as they barreled ahead with plans to pump more dirty fuels for decades to come, according to Carolyn Maloney, chair of the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

The documents include a Brunswick Group campaign for BP to "position the positive role of gas—in the context of advancing the transition to a low carbon future."

The PR firm admitted three challenges that needed to be addressed.

1) Though gas has lower carbon than coal, it is still a fossil fuel.

2) Renewables dominate the debate in the future of energy.

3) Methane, a potent greenhouse gas, is leaked during the natural gas extraction process and pipeline transportation.

Congressman Ro Khanna, chair of the subcommittee on the environment, said America cannot tackle the climate crisis until we tackle the disinformation crisis.

He vowed to keep up the effort to hold Big Oil accountable for its failure to curb greenhouse gas emission.

NPR, VOA to tread lightly in the UK... The National Security Bill that is working its way through the British parliament criminalizes journalists who handle, obtain, retain or provide access to "protected information" as part of their work, if they work for organizations that receive funding from outside the UK.

That puts targets on the backs of journalists from National Public Radio and the Voice of America, if they report leaked official information. "This worrisome legislative proposal is the latest in a long line of moves by the UK government to restrict independent reporting," said Azzurra Moores of the Reporters Without Borders group.

The bill had its second reading in the House of Lords on Dec. 6 and is now headed to the committee stage.

Lost in SPACS. FTI Consulting's Activism Vulnerability Report for the third quarter charts the collapse of the IPO and SPAC activity that powered financial firms in 2021.

While SPAC activity was in the doldrums during the first half, that "subdued enthusiasm carried over through 3Q22, as the volume of U.S. SPAC IPOs fell to just eight listings in 3Q22, relative to 89 SPAC listings in 3Q21," reported FTI.

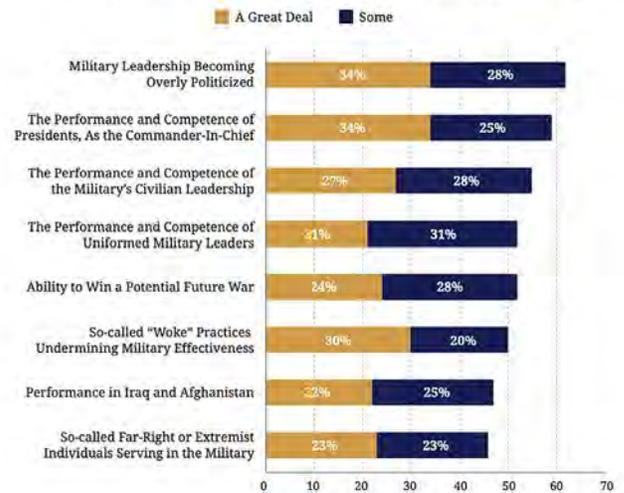
Only 25 IPOs occurred in the U.S. in 3Q22, relative to 94 in 3Q21, at a total value of just \$2.4 billion compared to an aggregate amount of \$27.6 billion in 3Q21.

SPACs will be yesterday's news in 2023.

Less than half (48 percent) of Americans have a great deal of confidence in the US military, according to a poll released Dec. 1 by the [Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation](#).

That's down from 70 percent in 2018 but up from the 45 per-

Reason for Decreased Confidence in U.S. Military



cent recorded in last year's Reagan National Defense Survey.

A perceived politicization of the military, cited by 62 percent of respondents, is the top reason for the loss of confidence in the military.

The Foundation found that 57 percent of Americans want to continue supplying military assistance to Ukraine.

Russia is viewed as an enemy by 82 percent of respondents, which is up from 65 percent a year ago.

China poses the greatest threat to the US, according to a 43 percent plurality. Three-quarters of respondents said they see China as an enemy. That's up from 65 percent and 55 percent in the 2021 and 2018 polls.

Seventy percent believe China is going to invade Taiwan during the next five years.

If so, 43 percent would support committing US ground troops to the defense of Taiwan and 36 percent would oppose.

Kudos for Elon. Zanny Minton Beddoes, editor-in-chief of *The Economist*, and Ed Carr, deputy editor, heaped praise on Elon Musk despite his "bonkers" acquisition of Twitter, during a Dec. 9 webinar in which they commented on the big stories of 2022.

Though a big fan of Elon, whom Minton Beddoes noted doesn't even have to use his last name because he has such a high profile, acquiring Twitter "was a crazy thing for him to do."

Carr said Musk will go down in history as a "transformational figure" for his role in electrifying the auto market, launching of SpaceX and establishing the Starlink satellite communications network that has been used with great success by the Ukrainian military.

The war in Ukraine and China (election of Xi Jinping to an unprecedented third term and the country's zero COVID policy) dominated the Economist's coverage in 2022.

The US midterms and Britain's broken politics (three prime ministers in a single year) were next in line.

Hardly discussed was Europe, which Minton Beddoes lamented was "telling enough."

—Kevin McCauley