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# O'Dwyer's

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## **FINN PARTNERS ACQUIRES IRELAND'S 360**

[Finn Partners](#) has acquired Dublin-based 360, a full-service integrated communications firm with 17 staffers.



**Dan Pender**

Dan Pender, who launched the shop in 2011 after stints in Ireland's government, will become a managing partner of the revamped 360, a Finn Partners Co. He called the deal "a milestone moment for our business" and the best way to advance 360's next phase of growth.

He expects clients to benefit from access to expanded capabilities, including specialties such as global intelligence, integrated marketing, employer brand and ESG.

Peter Finn called Ireland an increasingly important market for global clients seeking to establish or grow a presence in the European Union. He said the addition of 360 is strategically important for Finn Partners' continued growth.

Finn Partners has overseas offices in London, Paris, Munich, Frankfurt, Jerusalem, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore.

It [holds the No. 4 slot in O'Dwyer's rankings of independent firms](#) with fee income of \$109.9M in 2020.

## **BP'S MORRELL STARS IN DISNEY'S PR**

Walt Disney Co. has tapped former BP and Pentagon communications exec Geoff Morell to succeed Zenia Mucha, who is retiring at the end of the year, as its PR chief.

Before joining Disney, Mucha ran comms for former New York Republican Senator Al D'Amato and the Empire State's Governor George Pataki.



**Geoff Morell**

Morrell, who will take the chief corporate affairs officer post, was executive EVP of communications advocacy at the British energy giant.

At Disney, he is responsible for PR, government relations, public policy, charitable giving and environmental issues.

Prior to BP, Morrell was deputy assistant of defense for PR during the Bush II and Obama administrations. Earlier, he was White House

correspondent for Disney's ABC News property, which he left in 2007 for the Pentagon job.

He will join Disney on Jan. 24, reporting to CCO Bob chapek.

## **EDELMAN TO DEVELOP NEOM TECH BRAND**

[Edelman](#) has signed a six-month contract worth \$1.3M to launch, build and maintain the Neom Tech and Digital brand of Saudi Arabia's \$500B city of the future project. The No. 1 independent firm is to promote Neom Tech and Digital in the US, UK, China, Singapore and India under an agreement that runs through March 31.

It is charged with "creating and implementing a full media engagement activation." Edelman also will consult with the client on positioning Neom Tech & Digital vis-a-vis competitors and handle events.

The contract carries an option to extend for another six-month period.

Neom is the linchpin of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's effort to diversify the economy of the country.



## **NEW HAVEN SEEKS PR FOR COVID OUTREACH**

The New Haven Dept. of Health is seeking an outreach partner to address the racial disparities in health and COVID-19 prevention, testing and vaccination.

The firm will develop linguistic and culturally appropriate responsive health-communications information to be distributed to faith communities, businesses, health clinics and housing authority properties, according to the RFP.

The Health Dept.'s partner will develop and participate in community engagement activities, hold virtual or in-person town halls and conduct testing/vaccination pop-up events.

The budget for the two-year push is \$160K.

Interested firms must declare their intent to respond to the RFP by Dec. 17 and submit proposals by Dec. 21.

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

## **H+K TABS TOUPS FOR TECH POST**

Hill+Knowlton Strategies has named Grant Toups as its first global chief technology officer. Toups was most recently managing partner and division president at ICF Next. Prior to ICF Next, he led PulsePoint Group as its managing partner and president, joining the firm at its founding.

In his new role, Toups will advance H+K's end-to-end technology and intelligence strategy, building the firm's ecosystem of technology-based offerings and improving the use of data science and analytics.



**Grant Toups**

## **CHINA TAPS VIPPI MEDIA FOR OLYMPICS PUSH**

The People's Republic of China has hired Vippi Media Inc. to handle a social media campaign to promote the 2022 Olympics and Paralympics slated for Beijing.



The Englewood, NJ-based firm is to oversee strategy, creative, distribution and influencer management, according to its agreement with the PRC's New York Consulate General that went into effect on Nov. 22 and runs through March 13.

Focused on Instagram, Twitch and TikTok, 70 percent of VMI's deliverable content is to be about "interesting and meaningful things before/during/after" the Games.

Twenty percent of the effort is to be about "cooperation and any good things in China-US relations" in areas such as high-level exchanges, climate change, biodiversity, new energy, etc. The balance will focus on Consulate General news and trends.

VMI's fee is \$300K. It has received a \$210K advance for the work.

## **BOJO REP QUILTS IN XMAS PARTY UPROAR**

Allegra Stratton, a spokesperson for UK prime minister Boris Johnson, has resigned her post after a video leaked to ITV showed her joking about an alleged Christmas party that took place in Downing Street in violation of the government's COVID-19 lockdown rules.



**Allegra Stratton**

A tearful Stratton said her remarks seem to make fun of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Stratton apologized to people "who lost loved ones, who endured intolerable loneliness and who struggled with their businesses."

The Christmas party debacle could undermine efforts by Johnson's government to control the pandemic as the Omicron variant threatens to trigger another wave of sickness and death in the country.

The Christmas party report represents a "betrayal of trust," said Heidi Larson, director of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's Vaccine Confidence Project.

Johnson said he is "furious" about the video and has launched a probe into whether COVID-19 rules were broken.

## **SARD VERBINNEN BOOSTS LEE ENTERPRISES**

[Sard Verbinnen & Co.](#) handles Lee Enterprises as it rejects a \$141M takeover bid from Alden Global Capital, which has earned a reputation for squeezing its newspaper holdings.

Lee's board has determined that Alden's \$24-per-share cash offering "grossly undervalues" the company.

Shares of the Davenport, IA-based owner of The Buffalo News, St. Louis Post-Dispatch and Omaha World-Herald have traded in a \$36.51-\$10.20 range during the past 52 weeks.

CEO Mary Junck said Alden's proposal "fails to recognize the strength of our business today."

Lee's revenues grew 28.6 percent to \$794.6M in fiscal 2021 ended Sept. 26. It earned \$24.3M vs. a \$1.3M year ago loss.

Sard Verbinnen & Co.'s Jamie Tully and Jenny Gore represent Lee Enterprises.

## **ON THE MOVE**

**Cornerstone Government Affairs** adds **Karyn Richman** and **Matt Schnappauf** to its federal government relations team. Richman joins the firm from the House Committee on Appropriations, where for the last four years, she served as a professional staff member.

Schnappauf most recently served as the director, US Navy Liaison Office to the US House of Representatives and Department of the Navy's deputy chief of legislative affairs. "Both have significant capabilities, excellent bipartisan reputations and broad and diverse networks of relationships," said Cornerstone president and managing director Geoff Gonella.



**Karyn Richman, Matt Schnappauf**

**Beehive Strategic Communication** promotes **Nicki Gibbs** to chief strategy officer. Gibbs has been with the agency since 2005, most recently as executive vice president strategy. In her new role, she will lead strategy across Beehive's client portfolio, in addition to leading brand for the agency and serving as a member of the executive leadership team.

Enterprise software company **MadHive** brings on **Jeff Fagel** as chief marketing officer. Fagel was most recently chief marketing officer at Epsilon. He previously held the CMO spot at Eyeview. At MadHive, Fagel will lead the company's marketing strategy with a focus on growing the marketing team, deepening customer relationships and continuing to strengthen its leadership position in the digital TV advertising space.

**Business Roundtable** promotes **Kristen Silverberg** to president and chief operating officer, effective Jan. 1. Current COO Marcus Peacock is retiring. Silverberg was previously executive vice president for policy. Before joining Business Roundtable in 2019, she was managing director at the Institute of International Finance. Silverberg has also served as US ambassador to the European Union and special assistant to President George W. Bush.

**Broadridge Financial Solutions**, a global Fintech company with \$5 billion in revenues, names **Dipti Kachru** global chief marketing officer, effective Jan. 18. Kachru joins Broadridge from J.P. Morgan, where she was most recently CMO of its wealth management division and launched J.P. Morgan Wealth Management brand. At Broadridge, Kachru will lead all aspects of the company's global marketing organization.

**New York Gov. Kathy Hochul** hires **Jerrel Harvey** as communications director for her 2022 campaign. Harvey previously served as senior press advisor for New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy's 2021 re-election campaign, and before that he was deputy press secretary in Murphy's office. "Jerrel served on my communications team for nearly two years and quickly earned the respect of everyone with his skill and professionalism," said Murphy.



**Jerrel Harvey**

## **THOUGHTFUL WORKING 2.0: THE NEW DEAL**

Among the many consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, there's been a notable change in professionals' attitudes as they pertain to work.

People have reassessed what matters to them and increasingly are acting to turn their aspirations into reality, whether that's a determination to stick with remote working to reduce their everyday commute and allow for more family time or to leave their current job and pursue a passion project, as witnessed by the rise of the "Great Resignation."



**Heather Kernahan**

The ramifications of these actions are simple; HR and management experts have been warning companies of the Great Resignation and it's here, whether we like it or not.

At the same time across the country, news reports blare out that there are more jobs now than workers as the economy comes roaring back.

This is a complex situation, and from the hundreds of tech leaders we've been talking with, no one seems to have the right answer. With no proven solution having surfaced just yet, we should take the time now to pause and decide if we're asking the right questions about this problem.

Given the last 18 months—the worries, frustrations and constant changes—we need to focus on giving people greater freedom to accommodate what's right for them: a "New Deal" and a sweeping away of needless restrictions.

A key part of this is Thoughtful Working, a philosophy which has been around since before the pandemic. This results-oriented approach to work prioritizes autonomy and accountability, and sees work as what you do, not a place you go.

Thoughtful Working aims to expand the possibilities of how people work and how businesses can grow toward the future. For instance, by opening up roles to people who don't live in or close to big cities like London, New York and San Francisco, companies have access to a broader talent pool.

Now, after the challenges and opportunities of the last year and a half, businesses must move further toward Thoughtful Working 2.0. At my company, we've questioned everything and are working on questioning the assumptions we've had about what it means to be a high-performance organization.

Here are some ways we can all start rethinking our work and approach to Thoughtful Working 2.0.

### **Reach beyond the current industry talent pool**

Open doors to diverse individuals who think differently. At Hotwire, for example, we're looking for great people in sectors like travel, tourism and manufacturing who are interested in transitioning into a career in the tech industry.

### **Spread a wider net**

Companies are recognizing the advantages that stem from many having a workforce with diverse viewpoints and backgrounds. Still, we need to do better. Silicon Valley, where I'm based, may be a hothouse for technological change, but this tech hub still struggles from a continuing diversity problem.

### **Champion different ways of working**

Aim to create an environment where employees have the confidence they need to come forward and articulate what they want. Businesses like yours and mine can likely help them achieve what they've wanted for so long as we're will-

ing to listen and champion different ways of working.

If that passion project is calling, rather than simply resign, my hope is people will discuss it so we don't lose them entirely. We'll work to make it work somehow.

### **Make mental health a priority**

Research shows coronavirus response measures have taken a heavy toll on mental health and this is one of the long-term concerns of business leaders.

If someone wants to cut their workload for a period of time, possibly for health and wellbeing issues, that shouldn't be an awkward conversation. Remain supportive, even after COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

All of the above is possible when organizations give their people autonomy and accountability. In other words, trust them. It's with this high degree of trust that businesses can feel comfortable reshaping agreements with employees concerning how they work.

The next few years will see continuous change but, as leaders, we don't need to be at the tail end of the impact. We can be proactive in creating a New Deal, and, for our people, Thoughtful Working 2.0 will be even better than version 1.0. When our team is looking after themselves and their loved ones, it will ultimately create a stronger business for everyone.

*Heather Kernahan is Global CEO of Hotwire.*

## **MICHIGAN CO. WANTS PR TO COMBAT DUI**

The Kent County Health Dept. wants a firm to develop and implement a public awareness campaign to educate people about the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol, marijuana and prescription opioids.

KCHD identifies priority target audiences for its public awareness campaign as 1) young adults aged between 18 and 24; 2) individuals with less than a high school education; 3) people earning between \$20K and \$35K, and 4) all men who report the highest use of marijuana in the County.

The campaign will respect the fact that marijuana, alcohol and prescription opioids are legal in The Wolverine State.

Budget is set at \$40K.

The Health Dept notes that "experience in the topic of substance use disorder is preferred but not required."

Proposals are due Dec. 22. They go to the [Kent County Purchasing Division](#).

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

## **KETCHUM'S ZUCKER TO HOLLAND AMERICA**

Ketchum's Bill Zucker has exited to Holland America Line for the VP-PR and communications job.

After 11 years at the Omnicom agency, Zucker left as managing director and executive advisory & media services lead. Earlier, he spent a decade at Burson-Marsteller as midwest market leader. Zucker began his career as a producer at ABC and CBS-owned stations.

At HAL, he will lead media relations, special events, issues management, corporate giving and internal communications and report to President Gus Antorcha.

HAL, which targets the premium cruising market and has 11 ships, is part of Carnival Corp.



**Bill Zucker**

## **HUMAN CONTACT DRIVES CONSUMER BUYS**

While digital channels may be in the driver's seat in today's marketplace, the need for human contact is still a key factor in determining consumer purchase decisions, according to [a new study from customer engagement platform Khoros](#).



The survey of more than 1,300 consumers and marketing leaders found that two-thirds (67 percent) of respondents thought the best shopping experience is one that combines digital channels with human interaction. In addition, more than half (57 percent) said that they want the option of talking to someone before buying a product or service.

The study measured consumer preferences across five categories (apparel, tech, health, food and travel), finding that travel consumers were the most likely to want a fully digital shopping experience. Shoppers for food and health-related products and services were the most likely to want their purchase journey to be fully in-person.

It stresses the importance of making sure that digital and in-person channels are combined in the kind of "fluid" manner that is being utilized by tech companies including Google, Apple and Meta.

One big way to tap into the human element, the report says, is through purpose-driven marketing. "Brands' products and advertising communicate their values and mission; but, if they don't align with their consumers' values, they can risk customer attrition."

Khoros's report was conducted by independent market research consultancy Illuminas between August and September of this year.

## **ILRC NEEDS HELP IN LAND OWNERSHIP FIGHT**

The Indian Law Resource Center seeks a US-based strategic communications/public affairs firm to create and implement a communications strategy to support the legal efforts surrounding a Guatemalan community's 45-year struggle to secure legal ownership of their lands.

ILRC says *Maya Q'eqchi' Agua Caliente Indigenous Community v. Guatemala* has the potential to set major precedent to strengthen Indigenous land ownership rights for Guatemala's Indigenous majority.

The non-profit law and advocacy organization is looking to raise awareness and profile of the case through earned media opportunities and public affairs tactics in the US, European Union and global Indigenous-led organizations.

The selected firm's remit will include in-depth messaging research and predictive message modeling, media relations, media training, paid social media and detailed reporting. The work is expected to run through March 2022.

Candidates must be experienced in strategic communications and/or public affairs working in international issues and/or multicultural and multilingual (English and Spanish) capabilities. Expertise in working with Indigenous communities and colloquial knowledge of Guatemalan Spanish is preferred.

Proposals must be submitted via email in PDF form by 5 p.m. on Dec. 22, to Lisa Myaya at [lmyaya@indianlaw.org](mailto:lmyaya@indianlaw.org).

Title of the email submissions should have the following subject line: "Maya Q'eqchi' Agua Caliente Indigenous Community RFP Response"

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



## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

[Coyne Public Relations](#) signs on with [CloserStill Media](#) to provide public relations support for the organization's four major veterinary shows (Wild West Vet, New York Vet, Austin Vet and Chicago Vet) in the U.S. Coyne is working with the company to drive attendance at the shows as well as promoting the opportunity they represent for veterinary professionals to come together to collaborate, hear from industry experts and access the latest information and best practices to bring back to their patients. After the pandemic pre-empted the company's US Vet Shows in 2020, they are back in-person for 2021 and 2022.

[CIIC PR](#) is selected to lead public relations efforts for [RDB Hospitality](#), a hospitality management and specialized travel agency. CIIC's work will focus on highlighting RDB founder Rob DelliBovi's professional experience with more than 140 hospitality properties and brands worldwide. RDB Hospitality's services include executive recruiting, training and consulting for leading hotels and hospitality brands, concierge services for high net-worth clients and event planning. "CIIC shares our passion for the hospitality industry and offers a deep understanding of how to best promote our unique offerings through a multi-layered PR campaign," said DelliBovi.

[Purple Orange Digital Communications](#) signs on to oversee all PR and affiliate media efforts for [Tifosi Optics](#), the top-selling brand of eyewear in specialty cycling stores as well as a leading brand in the running, golf, hiking and lifestyle markets. Purple Orange will support Tifosi's growth goals through product story-telling, affiliate media management, search engine visibility, and top-of-mind brand awareness across the outdoor and active lifestyle market.

[Champion](#) picks up [Rustika Café and Bakery](#). Champion's scope of work is focused on building brand awareness and driving qualified franchisee leads throughout Arizona, Florida, Texas and other target markets. Rustika Café and Bakery is a family-owned and operated establishment with five locations in the Houston area. It also ships its [ cakes and empanadas nationwide through delivery platform Goldbelly.

[Adam Ritchie Brand Direction](#) is engaged by the Water Environment Federation, a trade organization for water quality professionals around the world, to provide idea creation services for a public engagement campaign around the role the users play in a circular resource society. WEF's mission is to connect water professionals, enrich the expertise of water professionals, increase the awareness of the impact and value of water and provide a platform for water sector innovation.

[Altus Marketing](#) scoops up US fundraising marketing agency of record for [Hope for Justice](#), an international nonprofit whose mission is to bring an end to modern slavery by preventing exploitation, rescuing victims, restoring lives and reforming society. Altus Marketing will work with the organization to launch a US-based direct response fundraising program to maximize donor growth. "With the support of Altus Marketing, we will be able to locate and build relationships with like-minded donors in the U.S. to fund our efforts," said Hope for Justice chief executive officer Tim Nelson.



## **PR NEEDED FOR ALABAMA SEAFOOD**

The Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission, the state agency that represents and increases business for The Yellowhammer State's seafood industry, is seeking a firm that can provide marketing and public relations services.



Work includes developing a comprehensive definition of the Alabama seafood brand and assess how to best use this brand in a marketing plan; establishing a public relations plan with specific messaging points; and leading and coordinating media relations efforts.

ASMC wants to retrain a firm for a period of two years, with a possibility to extend the contract.

Proposals, due by 12:00 p.m. (CST) on Dec. 22, should be mailed or delivered to: Chris Blankenship, ASMC Program Administrator, 64 North Union Street, Suite 468, Montgomery, AL 36130

All bidding agencies must submit three printed paper copies of their proposals as well as one electronic version, in PDF format, saved to a USB storage device. All envelopes must be labeled "RFP for SEAFOOD MARKETING".

All questions should be submitted via email to [dcnr.com-missioner@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:missioner@dcnr.alabama.gov) with the subject line "Question – RFP for Seafood Marketing."

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

## **BROWNSTEIN REPS ARCHDIOCESE'S BBB PUSH**

The Archdiocese of Boston has retained Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck to push for changes in the childcare provisions of president Biden's "Build Back Better" program, which includes about \$400B in funding for childcare and pre-k.

Thomas Carroll, superintendent of schools, said Biden's program as written would drive Boston's Catholic schools out of the early childhood education business.

That's because it would require the schools to comply with discrimination laws regarding sex, sexual orientation and gender identity policies that conflict with the Church's belief.

BHFS has Alfred Mottur, a top Democratic fundraiser & co-chair of the technology & telecom practice; Brian McGuire (chief of staff to Sen. Mitch McConnell), Carmencita Whonder (aide to Sen. Chuck Schumer) and Radha Mohan (executive director of the Early Childhood Education & Care Consortium) repping the Archdiocese.

## **WEBER SHANDWICK HIRES AD VET WILLIAMS**

Weber Shandwick has hired advertising veteran Lewis Williams as executive VP and head of brand impact.



**Lewis Williams**

The 30-year ad veteran joins the Interpublic unit from Burrell Communications, where he did a 15-year stint as chief creative officer. He handled blue-chip clients such as McDonald's, Procter & Gamble and Toyota.

In his Weber Shandwick post, Williams is to guide brands as they navigate changing consumer expectations and behaviors.

Sung Chang, chief impact officer, said Williams has a "keen understanding of the shifting cultural, societal and media landscape" and "understands how to build purpose into brands."

## **MZ GROUP WORKS TRUMP'S MEDIA DEAL**

Global IR firm MZ Group is handling news that Trump Media & Technology Group and Digital World Acquisition Corp. have lined up \$1B in PIPE (public investing in public equity) financial commitments from unidentified investors upon consummation of their SPAC deal.

DWAC on Dec. 6 disclosed in a Securities and Exchange Commission that US regulators are investigating the SPAC deal with Trump.

FINRA, the broker deal watchdog, has requested information about trading that was made ahead of the Oct. 20 SPAC announcement.

The SEC in early November asked DWAC for "documents relating to meetings of DWAC's board of directors, policies and procedures relating to trading, the identification of banking, telephone, and email addresses, the identities of certain investors, and certain documents and communications between DWAC and TMTG."

That investigation "does not mean that the SEC has concluded that anyone violated the law or that the SEC has a negative opinion of DWAC or any person, event, or security," explained DWAC.

TMTG announced Dec. 6 that Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA), an ardent support of the former president when he chaired the House Intelligence Committee, will become CEO in January.

Sao Paulo-based MZ has more than 200 staffers in Chicago, New York, San Diego, and Taiwan.

## **PROJECT VERITAS TAPS EX-PENCE AIDE**

Project Veritas is using Mark Paoletta, ex-counsel to vice president Mike Pence, to inform members of Congress of the FBI Nov. 6 raid of the Mamaroneck home of its founder & conservative activist James O'Keefe.



**Mark Paoletts**

The FBI launched the effort to seek information about the alleged theft of a diary belonging to President Biden's daughter, Ashley.

Project Veritas has said it received a copy of the diary last year but has not published any of its contents.

A Manhattan federal judge on Dec. 7 rejected a bid by The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press to force the FBI to divulge the legal reasoning behind the raid.

Paoletta, who also was chief counsel for oversight & investigations for the House Energy & Commerce Committee, is with the firm of Schaerr Jaffe.

## **FTI COUNTERS FCA EMPLOYEE REVOLT**

London's Financial Conduct Authority has called in FTI Consulting for internal communications work related to a staff uprising over pay cuts.

The Telegraph reported that FTI has received more than \$625K for PR at a time when FCA bosses are overhauling compensation structures that could lead to three-quarters of its 4,000 employees facing pay cuts.

A spokesperson told the Telegraph that FTI is "providing communications support as part of our ambitious transformation program to becoming a more proactive, data-led regulator."

FCA employees in October launched a drive to join Unite, the UK's largest union.

# COMMENTARY



**Devin Nunes**

**Guess the Presidential Medal of Freedom** wasn't enough for Congressman Devin Nunes, who plans to become CEO of Trump Media & Technology Group in January.

Donald Trump said Nunes, who has a degree in agricultural business and began his career as a farmer, will make an excellent leader of his media empire.

As chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Nunes served as Trump's chief lackey to the point where he made a secret trip to the White House to brief the then-president on the House probe into the Russian intervention in the US elections.

Trump rewarded his guy with the Medal for helping to "unearth the crime of the century" and "thwart a plot to take down a sitting United States president." Fake news.

The former president said Nunes "understands that we must stop the liberal media and Big Tech from destroying the freedoms that make America great. America is ready for TRUTH Social and the end to censorship and political discrimination."

Good government groups didn't exactly applaud Trump bestowing the Medal on Nunes.

Irvin McCullough of the The Government Accountability Project criticized Nunes for abandoning the bipartisan tradition of whistleblower protection and said it was dangerous to reward misconduct.

Nunes, who faced long odds for re-election in his re-vamped Congressional district, claims to be "humbled and honored" that Trump picked him to head his company.

The press release issued by Trump Media and Technology Group cited Nunes' Presidential Medal of Freedom award among his achievements.

That's pretty rich.

**Global income inequalities are about as great today** as they were at the peak of Western imperialism of the early 20th century, according to the [2022 World Inequality Report](#).

The share of income captured by half of the world's people is about half of what it was in 1820, according to the Report.

Nations have become richer over the past 40 years but their governments have been poorer. COVID-19 escalated the trend as governments had to borrow from the private sector to fight the pandemic.

The Report predicts the low levels of government wealth will make it harder for them to tackle inequality and challenges presented by climate change.

The average adult earned \$23,380, while people in the Top Ten income group earned \$122,110. A person in the poorest half of income distribution made \$3,920 in 2021.

**What a difference a pandemic makes...** Moderna, a little-known biotech startup prior to the COVID-19 outbreak that hit it big time by developing a vaccine, ranked as one of [Morning Consult's fast growing brands](#) for 2021 among Baby Boomers and Gen Xers.

Factoring in Gen Z adults and Millennials, Moderna

took the No. 2 slot, while better known vaccine rival Pfizer weighed in at No. 17.

Baby Boomers also were bullish on Smirnoff Vodka, Crown Royal, Vizzy Hard Seltzer and Tylenol, while Gen Z loaded up on Wendy's, Chipotle Mexican Grill, Snickers and Ruffles.

**PR firms that stress the importance of speaking out on social issues** may be selling their clients a bill of goods, according to [a survey by Brunswick Group](#).

Conducted by the self-described "critical issues firm," the report found a huge disconnect between corporate executives and voters when it comes to engagement on social issues.

Less than four in ten (36 percent) of voters "agree unequivocally" that companies should speak out on social matters.

That stands in sharp contrast to the 63 percent of execs who believe the public is anxiously waiting for their words of wisdom. It might be a case of super-inflated egos.

Brunswick notes "the organizational impulse to weigh in on any and every social issue is disregarded by audiences, disconnected from what people want and even diminishing to corporate reputation."

It warns executives about falling into "The Talking Trap."

There's a similar disconnect when it comes to whether a company effectively communicates about social issues.

Nearly three quarters (74 percent) of executives believe their companies effectively speak out on issues.

Only 39 percent of voters agree. Half of Biden voters say companies are effective, while only 26 percent of Trump supporters agree.

The poll's upshot: executives should think twice or maybe three times before going public on social issues.

Your words may turn off more people than they turn on.

**'The War on Christmas' comes home to roost.** A 50-foot artificial Christmas tree that stands outside News Corp's Rockefeller Center headquarters that houses Fox News, *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Post*, was set afire in the early morning hours of Dec. 8.

A 49-year-old man climbed up the tree's metal superstructure, shoved papers into the tree's branches, lit them and then climbed down to watch it burn. Police arrested the suspect but have not yet determined if he is a fan of Fox News, which launched the modern-day War on Christmas.

Former Fox News entertainer Bill O'Reilly kicked off the farcical onslaught on Dec. 7, 2004 when "The O'Reilly Factor" aired a segment called "Christmas Under Siege."

He told viewers: "All over the country, Christmas is taking flak. In Denver this past weekend, no religious floats were permitted in the holiday parade there. In New York City, Mayor Bloomberg unveiled the 'holiday tree,' and no Christian Christmas symbols are allowed in the public schools. Federated Department Stores—that's Macy's—have done away with the Christmas greeting 'Merry Christmas.'"

News Corp has vowed to rebuild the tree, which stars in its holiday promotions, in time for Dec. 25.

It's Rupert Murdoch's way of saying, "Merry Christmas."

—Kevin McCauley