



Kevin McCauley
Editor-in-Chief

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271 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016
212/679-2471. Fax: 212/683-2750
www.odwyerpr.com; jobs.odwyerpr.com

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WEISS STEPS DOWN AS REAL CHEMISTRY CEO

Jim Weiss, founder of Real Chemistry, is stepping down as CEO at [O'Dwyer's No. 1 healthcare firm](#) on Jan. 3.



Jim Weiss, Shankar Narayanan

Shankar Narayanan, who led McKinsey & Co.'s healthcare and pharma group before exiting the consultancy in 2012 after a nearly 16-year run, will take the helm.

Weiss will join New Mountain Capital, an investor in Real Chemistry, and take the chairman position at the San Francisco-based PR firm.

As chairman, Weiss will serve as mentor and strategic advisor to clients, while exploring growth opportunities through mergers & acquisitions, partnerships and expansion of capabilities.

Besides McKinsey, Narayanan was COO of Equian and global head of life sciences at Cognizant Technology Solutions.

Weiss said Narayanan has the right expertise and leadership track record "to continue building a company based on helping clients transform in the post-pandemic age of digital health."

BRUNSWICK BRINGS ON MACY'S VET

Brunswick Group has hired Cheryl Heinonen, who was Macy's senior VP of corporate communications from 2017 to January 2021, as a partner in its San Francisco outpost.

At Macy's, Heinonen was in charge of PR strategy, CSR, social impact, diversity-related matters and the leader of the retailer's COVID-19 response.



Cheryl Heinonen

Earlier, she was senior VP, corporate relations and chief communications officer at Avon Products and senior VP and head of global stakeholder communications at Visa.

Heinonen also was managing director at Burson-Marsteller and head of its west coast corporate group.

Brunswick CEO Neal Wolin noted that Heinonen has helped leaders at high-profile companies navigate their critical issues.

"She will add even more capability to our strong and growing consumer industries team and enormous value to our global client base," he said.

GEORGIA SEEKS PR TO PROMOTE VACCINES

Georgia is looking for a partner to promote vaccine awareness and help coordinate the annual "Immunize Georgia" conference that runs each September.

The firm will work with public/private healthcare providers and advocacy groups to increase immunization rates for all Georgians and decrease the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Though most infants and toddlers receive all recommended shots by age 2, there are many under-immunized children that create the potential for outbreaks of disease, according to the RFP from the Peach State's public health department.

The firm will create media toolkits tied to annual Centers for Disease Control and Prevention immunization drives and deliver campaign messaging to public information officers.

Proposals are due December 10. Georgia intends to issue a one-year contract with options to renew for four more one-year periods.

Interested firms must register at the [Team Georgia Marketplace](#).

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



KLEIN/JOHNSON GROUP PICKS UP PDVH

Klein/Johnson Group has inked a \$240K three-month pact to represent PDV Holding, the Houston-based unit of state-owned Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A.

PDVH is the indirect sole stockholder of Citgo Petroleum. K/JG is to assist PDVH "in its efforts to engage with and advocate before the federal government on issues related to the challenges brought by creditors of the Maduro regime that threaten PDV's continued ownership of its subsidiaries," according to its contract dated Nov. 22. The US and more than 60 other nations do not recognize the Venezuelan government of Nicolas Maduro.

K/JG's work includes targeted lobbying of key members of the White House and Congress, conducting informational meetings and monitoring legislative and regulatory developments.

The contract, which went into effect Nov. 19, may be extended for an additional month.

Two Podesta alums established K/JG in December 2017.

Izzy Klein was communications director for now Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), while Matt Johnson worked as chief counsel to former Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-TX). Both are handling the PDV push.



CAL COUNTY SEEKS PR FOR TRANSIT SYSTEM

The Tulare County Association of Governments has floated a branding and communications RFP for its new consolidated regional transit operator to serve the California county of about 500K people.

The firm will forge an identity for the Tulare County Regional Transit Agency and position it as a dynamic, adaptable system that is responsive to community needs.

TCRTA wants to be known as a system that “supports the area’s economic vitality, tourism, and travel via public transit” according to the RFP.

It also is looking for a community engagement and outreach strategy that “enhances interactive community engagement with a county-wide audience.”

Interested firms may bid on either the branding or community engagement work, or both projects. They are worth \$75K and \$100K, respectively.

Responses are due Dec. 15. They go to Richard Tree at RTree@tularecag.ca.gov.

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

SPOKESPERSON FOR VP HARRIS DEPARTS

Symone Sanders, chief spokesperson for vice president Kamala Harris, is leaving the White House. Sanders is the second high-profile exit from Harris’s staff in the past month.



Symone Sanders

The vice president’s communications director, Ashley Etienne, announced her departure on Nov. 18.

Sanders joined the White House staff as deputy assistant to the president before moving over to the vice president’s staff. During the 2016 campaign, she was national press secretary for Bernie Sanders.

Her exit follows reports of conflict among Harris’s staff members. The *Washington Post* reports that Peter Velz, director of press

operations, and Vince Evans, deputy director of the Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs in the vice president’s office, are also planning to leave.

KANTAR’S BLOOMFIELD TO LANDOR & FITCH

Jane Bloomfield has left the chief growth officer slot at data analytics and brand consulting company Kantar to become chief marketing officer at WPP brand transformation unit Landor & Fitch.

Before coming on board at Kantar, she served as global head of innovation at market research firm Hall & Partners.

In her new position, Bloomfield is responsible for developing business, marketing and communication strategies across the Landor & Fitch group. She will oversee the global marcoms team and PR agency relationship, as well as foster collaboration across Landor & Fitch’s 1,200 people in 19 studios worldwide.

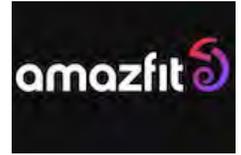


Jane Bloomfield

Landor & Fitch clients include LEGO, Microsoft, Nike, Apple, Bang & Olufsen, Procter & Gamble, Singtel and T-Mobile.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

FINN Partners lands **Zepp Health** to lead marketing communications for its wearable brand Amazfit. The agency is tasked with amplifying Amazfit’s brand voice, driving visibility for its product collection, and reinforcing its position as a pioneering wearable technology brand. It will work on media and influencer relations, creative campaign ideation and management, content development, insight and trend monitoring, and crisis communications. The account is led out of FINN Partners’ Shanghai office, in conjunction with talent from the agency’s technology, consumer and global intelligence teams based in London, San Francisco and Los Angeles.



Rubenstein Public Relations picks up **Bite Investments**, which works to expand access to alternative investments. The agency is tasked with crafting corporate messaging and developing brand positioning to expand Bite’s presence and brand awareness in the United States. Bite has offices and customers in Asia and Europe, and is expanding into North America. “We are confident Rubenstein Public Relations’ proficiency and strategic positioning will help Bite Investments build brand equity, enhance our reputation as an industry leader, and drive new business opportunities,” said Bite Investments president - Americas Sean Clifford.

AMW Public Relations is engaged by **KWESST Micro Systems**, which provides next-generation tactical systems for security forces and personal defense, to lead the company’s public relations, brand strategy, and media communications initiatives. AMW will work to bring greater market awareness to KWESST’s mission of advancing the modern networked capabilities of battlefield soldiers and responder personnel, as well as boosting media coverage of its proprietary tactical system offerings.

Champion is selected as public relations agency of record for **Newk’s Eatery**, a Jackson, MS-based fast-casual chain that operates in 16 states. Champion will spearhead proactive outreach to local, national and trade media, as well as leveraging partnerships with bloggers and athletes in target markets. “We’re proud to partner with a strategic, supportive agency that listens to our needs,” said Newk’s senior vice president of guest experience Denise Pedini. Champion’s roster of food-service clients also includes Raising Cane’s and Chicken Fingers.



London-headquartered **Wilful** signs on to provide media relations and content services for **Earthly**, a platform designed to help businesses remove carbon, restore natural environments and reverse climate change. The ongoing appointment kicked off with support for a collaboration with immersive storytelling production studio Alchemy that created an immersive 3D “island” at the recent COP26, visualizing carbon removal as a series of living ecosystems.

Abel Communications is selected to lead a video content campaign for **OneDigital**, a health, wealth management and HR advisory firm. The campaign will focus on showcasing the knowledge and insights of key executives to target audiences. Abel will also provide **Baltimore School for the Arts**, a performing arts high school, with a communications program focused on media relations and arts education leadership.

BEYOND DISRUPTION TO BUILDER BRANDS

Since before the peak of the dotcom era, technology companies' value has been primarily in the camp of revolution, as opposed to evolution. To make your mark as the next big thing, you had to position yourself as a "disruptor," breaking down the gates of the establishment, shifting paradigms, making the



Tom Faust

tried-and-true obsolete and otherwise upending the way business is done. First articulated in a 1995 *Harvard Business Review* paper, the disruptor identity has served and continues to serve the industry very well, being central to many companies' fundraising efforts.

But today influential technology voices are asking whether being a disruptor has the same currency as it once did. As businesses continue to deal with global shipping delays, inventory shortages and workforce constraints, they're looking for a sense of stability and certainty more than anything. This is why more tech brands are looking to adopt a "builder" brand profile and communicate it effectively to the market.

Facebook may not be the poster child for public reputation, but even they went from "move fast and break things" in their early years to "move fast with stable infrastructure."

While this doesn't change the job of tech marketers and communicators, it does require a change in tone and emphasis. Below are a few hallmarks of such an approach.

Be a team player

Tech brands have traditionally relied on aggressive language that draws attention to their outsider status or ability to change or even upend an industry. By contrast, builder brands demand softer language and concepts. The challenge is not to destroy the current system, but to work together to make improvements while minimizing disruption to clients and the industry.

Co-authoring bylined articles with clients, analysts or other third parties should be one element of this strategy. Tech brands should also look to facilitate roundtables and research.

Knowledge over solutions

Builder brands likewise tend to rely on domain expertise rather than "hero tech" or radical approaches. Demonstrating the deep understanding you have of your clients' businesses and end markets, and the real business challenges they are asking you to help them solve, is a more welcome approach than leading with advanced features or the latest software-engineering buzzwords.

Practically, this means thoughtful case studies are far more important than press releases, and technical improvements should be communicated in the context of the user experience of your platform or product and the benefits derived.

Commitment counts

For many businesses, choosing to work with a disruptor brand carries an implied risk. Many startups have followed the path of "we came, we broke the mold, we conquered, we moved on" as they strived to be recognized as the next tech unicorn. While some have succeeded, many others have crashed and burned.

Tech firms can position themselves as durable, reliable partners by outlining a commitment that goes beyond a product roadmap. Having a real dialogue and seeking input from key clients to inform a real vision for how you will work with

them over the long term is a cornerstone of a builder brand.

People focus

With billionaire owners focused on flying to outer space while their companies manage discrimination suits and allegations of—inhumane—working conditions, it's no wonder that staff turnover is one of the historical weaknesses of disruptor brands. A builder brand corporate culture needs to put workers' concerns at the center, ensure transparency and understand the difference between truly valuing staff and mistaking Taco Tuesday for a strong corporate culture.

Before tech brands change their communications strategies wholesale and adopt a builder brand mindset, it's important to think about how long this trend will last. Disruption may quickly come back into vogue once the turbulence stabilizes. But for many, the brand pendulum had swung so far in the disruptor direction that moving it back toward a builder positioning brings some much-needed balance.

Tom Faust is Managing Director at [Stanton](#), a strategic communications firm that works with a wide variety of technology companies to build their brands.

APPLETON AIRPORT FLIES OUT MARCOM RFP

Appleton Airport wants to hire a firm(s) to handle PR, advertising and digital services to help make its brand "top of mind" to people living in Wisconsin's Fox Valley.

The region runs from Oshkosh north to Appleton and includes cities such as Kaukauna, Neenah and Menasha.

Served by Delta, United Allegiant and American, AA registered more than 750K passengers in 2019. It offers 18-24 flights daily to 14 domestic hubs and destinations.

The Airport is looking for PR support "to create clear, expert and effective communications that are in sync with our brand," according to the RFP. It does not require brand positioning work.

AA's partner may also be required to provide information about current service, expansion of routes and the recruitment of new airlines.

The Airport has spent around \$300K for media in 2021. Public relations outlays topped the \$25K mark.

Responses to the RFP are due Dec. 14. They go to [Nicole Schultz@outagamie.org](mailto:Nicole.Schultz@outagamie.org).

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

USN&WR HIRES O'DONNELL AS VP-COMMS.

U.S. News & World Report has named Kate O'Donnell as VP of communications, a newly created role. O'Donnell was most recently SVP of marcom and brand strategy at MCI.

Prior to MCI, she served in multiple roles at Disney-ABC Television Group and held PR positions at healthcare and education organizations.

In her new position, she will be responsible for leading the company's integrated communications functions – including PR, social media and internal communications. "Kate will play a pivotal role in expanding U.S. News' internal and external communications and brand strategy," said U.S. News editor and chief content officer Kim Castro.



Kate O'Donnell

HOUSING AUTHORITY SEEKS DEI GUIDANCE

The Bremerton Housing Authority, which owns or manages about 575 housing units and provides rental subsidies to nearly 1,600 households in the Washington city, wants to hire a firm to develop a diversity, equity and inclusion program.



The BHA team seeks help to “ensure DE&I efforts have a strong external impact by revisiting policies that impact clients and our services, reviewing staff recruitment processes, increasing BHA’s presence at community events and organizations, and improving client/resident outreach,” according to the RFP.

The selected firm will 1) assess the current level of awareness of bias and sensitivity in communication among staff, stakeholders, and customers; 2) examine hiring/retention practices and leadership’s ability to provide an inclusive and equitable place to 3) provide insight and knowledge on DE&I best practices in the affordable housing industry; 4) engage with the local community, and 5) recommend DEI strategies for fiscal years ’22, ’23 and ’24.

Proposals are due Dec. 10. They go to areed@bremerton-housing.org with “RFP: P21005” in the subject line.

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

BGR RECRUITS GREENWOOD

Dan Greenwood, a retired Marine Corps colonel, has joined BGR Group as senior VP in its defense and commerce practices.



Dan Greenwood

The 29-year Marine Corps veteran served in Japan, Europe, Africa and the Middle East and commanded troops in Afghanistan and Iraq during his multiple deployments.

Greenwood saw duty in the White House as deputy assistant to the president for legislative affairs and at the National Security Council as senior director for legislative affairs.

He handled Congressional Affairs for the Corps and led the Joint Staff Middle East Directorate Iraq and Syria teams for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Most recently, Greenwood was posture director for the Corps’ Indo-Pacific strategy.

At BGR, Greenwood will deal with national security, cybersecurity, foreign military sales, artificial intelligence and unmanned systems matters.

WPP KEEPS HEAD IN CLOUD

WPP has acquired Cloud Commerce Group, a UK-based outfit that helps brands market, sell and deliver their products across e-commerce platforms. CCG, which employs more than 100 people, helps brands move their goods across marketplaces such as eBay, Amazon, Esty and Wayfair.

Its multi-channel e-commerce software supports hundreds of retailers and wholesalers across Europe and drives about \$1.5B in merchandise through various channels.

WPP Mark Read said CCG has “demonstrable scale and success in managing the complex omnichannel commerce needs of global brands.” The acquisition fits his M&A approach to build on existing WPP capabilities in the e-commerce, experience and technology sectors.

CCG will join WPP’s Wunderman Thompson network.

ON THE MOVE

Taco Bell names **Sean Tresvant** global chief brand officer, effective Jan. 10. Tresvant comes to Taco Bell from Nike, where he was most recently chief marketing officer of the Jordan Brand, with responsibility for brand campaigns, product marketing, creative collaborations, athlete sponsorships and social platforms. At Taco Bell, he will be charged with spearheading efforts to elevate and differentiate the Taco Bell fan experience, from strategic omnichannel initiatives to digital customer touchpoints.



Sean Tresvant

Banner Public Affairs names **Mark Stultz** VP of public relations. Prior to joining Banner, Stultz was managing partner at EVC Insights, which he launched in 2018 to facilitate advocacy, stakeholder relationships, and policy planning and messaging for clients all along the energy value chain. He has also worked with companies such as BP America, the Natural Gas Supply Association and the Electric Power Supply Association. In his new post, Stultz will help lead clients from Banner’s Washington, D.C. headquarters.

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices hires **Laura Stace** as vice president of luxury marketing. Stace joins Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices from luxury brokerage firm The Agency, where she was chief communications officer. She has also served as a director at Murphy O’Brien and a vice president at Kreps DeMaria. In her new position, Stace will launch strategic alliances and marketing plans for the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices global network and its 55,000 members. She is also charged with leading initiatives including Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Global Open House, Prestige magazine, public relations and social media strategy.

Subject Matter adds Capitol Hill veteran **Sandra Alcalá** to its government relations team. Alcalá most recently served as chief of staff to Congressman Filemon Vela (D-TX). She was previously director of member services for the House Democratic Caucus and its chairman, Hakeem Jeffries. Before that, Alcalá served as policy director for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. “Sandra’s rich policy credentials and expertise in consensus building make her an invaluable hire,” said Subject Matter partner Steve Elmendorf.



Sandra Alcalá

Onfido, an identity verification and authentication provider, appoints Nate Skinner chief marketing officer. Skinner joins Onfido from Oracle, where he was senior vice president of global marketing for its advertising and customer experience business. He also held senior roles at Amazon Web Services, Salesforce and Borland.

Bill.com, which produces cloud-based software that automates back-office financial processes for businesses, names **Sarah Acton** chief marketing officer. Acton joins Bill.com from wearables company Athos, where she was vice president of sales and marketing. Her previous positions include senior director, brand marketing at LinkedIn and senior director, consumer marketing at Yahoo!. Reporting to Bill.com CEO and founder René Lacerte, Acton will be a member of the company’s executive leadership team.

SAVING SHARI

In July of 2005, Shari Kurzrok was leading the happiest of lives. The 31-year-old New Yorker, a native of Great Neck, was planning her marriage to the love of her life. Everyone who knew her liked her for her kindness and compassion.



Bob Brody

She had recently spearheaded publicity for the nation's largest-ever blood drive, an American Red Cross initiative called the Save-A-Life Tour.

But it turned out that Shari's own life would need to be saved, too. One day, for no apparent reason at the time, the otherwise healthy public relations executive collapsed at home. An ambulance rushed her to a hospital. Doctors determined that her liver was failing.

Her wedding might have to be postponed. She was designated Status 1, the highest risk category: she would have to get a liver transplant or she could die within a week.

Shari was admitted into an Intensive Care Unit to wait for a miracle.

Luckily, her colleagues at Ogilvy Public Relations—chiefly Kym White, Kate Cronin and Jane Mazur—quickly banded together to try to help her. Family and friends joined the push to promote her plight, too. “I urge the public to help Shari the way she helped so many people,” an American Red Cross spokesperson said.

I knew Shari as a colleague. Her reputation as a dear soul and model citizen was well deserved. And I got the opportunity to play a cameo role in this PR blitz. I emailed my media contacts with the subject line “Please help my colleague Shari: she needs a liver transplant.” I also acted as her media spokesperson.

In early August, a liver became available. And on a Saturday night, a dozen specialists at NYU Medical Center replaced her diseased liver with the donor organ. The lead physician, Dr. Lewis Tepperman, said Shari had received the transplant “in the nick of time.”

As she recovered in the hospital, she resolved to turn her personal crisis into a public crusade. She established a foundation to educate the public about the importance of organ donation.

Shari is still at the agency after 18 years, still going full-tilt. She still serves as an advocate for the cause of organ donation, volunteering for LiveOnNY, a local organ procurement organization. In 2017, about 8,000 liver transplants were performed in the U.S. among both adults and children, with 450 in New York, according to the Mayo Clinic. An estimated 1,100 patients across New York State are currently awaiting a liver transplant. Every day 17 people nationwide in need of an organ transplant die waiting for one.

Last month, Shari and her husband Robby celebrated 16 years of marriage. Her daughter, Alexis, just entered the fifth grade. “I’m grateful every day to everyone who helped me,” she recently told me.

The Save-A-Life Tour she promoted dispatched convoys on a public health mission to 345 cities around the U.S. The



Shari, Alexis, Robby and dog Teddy

campaign ultimately attracted more than 38,000 new potential donors and collected 3.2 million pints of blood.

I’m now old enough to recognize how privileged I was to participate in that workplace drama back then, with the spirit of camaraderie so amply demonstrated in the service of a cause. I see, too, how Shari embodies the concept that what goes around comes around, that if you do good for others, good will come to you, too.

Bob Brody, a public relations consultant and essayist, is a veteran of Weber Shandwick, Ogilvy and Rubenstein Associates. He is author of the memoir “Playing Catch with Strangers: A Family Guy (Reluctantly) Comes of Age.”

BEECH TO LEAD MARKETING AT SCHOLASTIC

Scholastic, the children’s publishing, education and media company, has appointed Mary Beech to the newly created role of chief marketing & transformation officer, effective Jan. 1.

Beech has most recently served as CEO of Sarah Flint, a direct-to-consumer luxury footwear brand for women. She was previously principal at MRB Brand Consulting, and she has served as executive vice president and CMO of Kate Spade New York as well as senior vice president, global licensing and marketing for Disney/Pixar Animation. She has also been an independent director on Scholastic’s board since 2018 and will resign from that position in advance of her new position.

Beech will be charged with creating greater customer-centricity, data-driven activations with a focus on digital, and connectivity throughout Scholastic.



Mary Beech

NEWS OF FIRMS

J/PR launches **20Two Studio**, a creative storytelling affiliate focused on public relations and social media strategy for established and emerging hospitality, real estate, lifestyle, wellness and travel-related tech brands. J/PR senior vice president Lauren Knudsen, a 15-year veteran of the agency, will lead 20TwoStudio as president. “With 20Two Studio, we’re able to offer the authentic spirit of an entrepreneurial start-up, powered by C-level experience and a stronghold of back-office operations,” said J/PR partner Sarah Evans.

Prosek Partners partner Russell Sherman launches [the “Press Profiles” podcast](#), which features prominent business journalists sharing their backstories, memorable moments and perspectives on the news. In the podcast’s first episode, Russell interviews *Financial Times* US financial editor Gary Silverman, who talks about his early days as a reporter, the changing face of journalism and his career at the FT. Upcoming guests are scheduled to include the *Wall Street Journal* special writer Greg Zuckerman, *Pensions & Investments* senior reporter Christine Williamson, CNBC reporter Leslie Picker and Bloomberg chief correspondent Jason Kelly.

Rosica Communications has been recognized for its work on behalf of The Salvation Army Greater New York Division. Rosica was cited by MerComm Inc. (Galaxy Award) and PRSA (Big Apple and Pyramid Awards) for its success in elevating awareness and donations for the nonprofit’s “Giant Red Kettle” campaign. Rosica’s campaign placed a larger-than-life-sized Giant Red Kettle in the middle of Times Square.

COMMENTARY



Stéphane Bancel

It's unfair to expect every CEO serving on the front lines of the global COVID-19 pandemic to be downright Churchillian.

Moderna chief Stéphane Bancel, though, is the anti-Churchill, a person who fails to instill much confidence in the future.

Bancel peered into his crystal ball on Nov. 30 and predicted that Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine may not be up to snuff when it comes to fending off the Omicron variant.

On the effectiveness of Moderna's vaccine against Omicron: Bancel told the *Financial Times*: "I think it's going to be a material drop. I just don't know how much because we need to wait for the data. But all the scientists that I've talked to... are like, 'This is not going to be good.'"

That indecisiveness triggered a global market sell-off.

The point is that nobody, at this juncture, really knows much about Omicron. Reports say that it will take weeks of scientific study and testing to figure that out.

That's why Bancel should not have speculated about the effectiveness of vaccines vis-a-vis Omicron.

The media already are in full fear-mongering mode about the new variant. He just added more fuel to that fire.

The Moderna chief should look for inspiration in America's WWII propaganda.

The United States Office of War Information used the "Loose Lips Sink Ships" slogan on posters to warn the military and civilians to watch what they say because German spies circulated in the US and Nazi submarines patrolled the east coast.

Patriotic companies like Canada's Seagram Distillers printed up a variant of the slogan (e.g., "Loose Lips Might Sink Ships") signs and distributed them to bars.

Moderna's crackerjack team should follow suit with its own updated propaganda variant. It should print a "Loose Lips Sink Markets" poster and hang it in Bancel's office.

Churchill reincarnated. Following Bancel's torpedoing of global stock markets, the co-founder of BioNTech, Ugur Sahin, nailed Omicron PR.

"Our message is: Don't freak out, the plan remains the same; Speed up the administration of a third booster shot," Sahin told the *Wall Street Journal*. That's a perfect response.

BioNTech, which co-developed a COVID vaccine with Pfizer, has already started testing to see whether Omicron can infect people who have been vaccinated. The testing will continue for at least two more weeks.

You can bet Sahin will deliver the results in a cool and dispassionate fashion—exactly what the worried world needs.

Hats off to Steve Bannon for copping the McCauley's PR Genius of the Month Award for November.

The Justice Dept. is a tad upset with the Trump advisor's effort to argue his criminal case in the media rather than in the court. That's just what a PR mensch would do.

Bannon wants to share documents that he receives from

the Justice Dept with the media circus, where he is the ringmaster, before the trial begins.

A coalition of media groups, including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, CBS, Dow Jones and CNN, filed a legal brief on Nov. 30 in support of Bannon.

They claimed people have an overwhelming interest in the Jan. 6 riot and that Bannon has the right "to communicate with the press and public about the government's case against him."

Steve is just following that "court of public opinion" chestnut that has been around since the glory days of Ed Bernays.

Our PR genius is charged with two counts of contempt of Congress for failing to testify and hand over documents to the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 uprising.

He will be back in court Dec. 7, which will make him eligible for December's award.

Big Business isn't buying Bannon's and Team Trump's argument that the Jan. 6 mob that stormed the Capitol was nothing more than patriotic Americans exercising their First Amendment rights.

The Center for Political Accountability reports that a record 370 companies, up from 332 last year, have either banned political spending or have publicly disclosed the amount of spending.

The organization, which conducts its annual survey with the Lawrence Zicklin Center for Business Ethics Research at the Wharton School, credits corporate boards for paying attention to political spending like never before.

The Center puts disclosing or banning political spending on the top of its list of good corporate governance.

It may have to tip its cap to Trump for his indirect role in getting Big Business to stop political contributions.

We are shocked that Big Oil resorted to Big PR to improve its environmental image.

A somewhat naive peer-reviewed paper by Brown University researchers found that Big Oil has relied on PR firms for more than three decades. Duh?

Published in *Climate Change*, the Brown paper cites Ogilvy's work in BP's classic "Beyond Petroleum" campaign, which sought to "divert attention from the fossil fuel industry to reframe climate change as an issue of individual responsibility."

The researchers castigated Edelman, which also has come under recent fire for its work for super bad boy ExxonMobil, for representing the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers and American Petroleum Institute.

Those diligent investigators even found that Greenpeace and the Environmental Defense Fund rely on PR. The environmental groups used DC-area Caplan Communications, winner of a 2006 O'Dwyer Award for PA/Environmental PR.

Of course, the Brown probers fell into the old false equivalency trap. Big Oil paid Ogilvy, Edelman and the bunch millions over the years. Big Green paid Caplan peanuts.

Big Oil has much to contribute to the public conversation about climate change. PR firms can help make that happen.

—Kevin McCauley