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O'Dwyer's Newsletter



The Inside News of
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VISIT FLORIDA FLOATS PR RFP

Visit Florida is floating an RFP for PR services in the US and Canada to keep the Sunshine State top of mind among its target audiences and to increase the length of stay and visitor spending.



Interested firms may submit either a consolidated bid or separate proposals covering PR in the US, Canada and a travel trade sales/marketing push in Canada.

The selected firm/firms will work in tandem with VF in pitching Florida as a premier leisure and meetings destination. The work is expected to run three-to-five years, but the contract will be renewed annually.

The tourism group's RFP says its envisioned partner/partners will oversee its "research-based PR strategy, develop strategic, highly-integrated creative campaigns, lead the charge for media and influencer relations, while keeping a pulse on the ever-changing media landscape."

VF spent \$1,164,224 in fees/expenses during fiscal 2018 (July 1 to June 30) for PR in the US. Canada PR outlays were \$391,189, while the Canadian travel/trade/sales/marketing services tab was \$243,036.

According to the RFP, Florida has been promoted as a travel destination for more than 100 years. The state attracted about 120M visitors who spent \$112B in 2017, which supported 1.4M jobs.

Interested firm/firms must [submit qualifications](#) to VF by Feb. 25. VF will invite firms to pitch the next day. Proposals are due March 18.

The RFP is [here](#).

EDELMAN HIRES JOHN AS FIRST GLOBAL CCO

Judy John, Leo Burnett chief creative officer/Canada CEO, will join Edelman April 29 as its first global chief creative officer to oversee its 600-member strong team.

She's the genius behind the empowering #LikeAGirl messaging campaign of P&G's Always pads. At the Publicis unit, John also handled Amazon's first Super Bowl ad, Samsung's first global Olympics campaign and Blackberry's first worldwide push.



Judy John

"Judy believes in earned creative that is social by design, fast enough to suit the news cycle and helps to spark movements," said Richard Edelman. "Our goal isn't to do traditional advertising because earned creative, which allows consumers to carry the story forward themselves, is the new frontier."

Based in Toronto, John will report to Edelman.

IPG POSTS 13.3% SURGE IN Q4 GROWTH

Interpublic reported a 13.3 percent rise in Q4 net revenues and an 8.5 percent jump in operating income to \$459.1M. Organic growth rose 7.1 percent, with a 6.3 percent rise in the US and 8.0 percent overseas.

IPG in July announced the \$2.3B acquisition of the data management unit of Acxiom, which contributed \$181.7M in revenues during the 4Q and full-year.

CEO Michael Roth called 2018 a "very successful year," attributing IPG's robust organic growth and margin improvement to the ability to attract diverse talent with digital expertise.

IPG's constituency management group, which includes PR units Weber Shandwick, Golin, DeVries Global, Current, Rogers & Cowan, Carmichael Lynch Relate and pmk*bnc, posted a 5.0 percent jump in 4Q revenues to \$337.1M. Full-year revenues advanced 4.7 percent to \$1.3B.



Michael Roth

Andy Polansky, CEO of Weber Shandwick, told *O'Dwyer's* that the firm enjoyed "double-digit" growth during the quarter on a reported and organic basis. It chalked up mid-single digit growth (reported and organic) for all of 2018. He also singled out Golin (corporate), Current (consumer/lifestyle) and R&C (talent representation) as stand-out performers.

Roth is targeting 2019 organic growth of two-to-three percent. IPG will take a pre-tax earnings charge from \$30M to \$40M during the first-quarter "to right-size its cost structure" following accounts lost in late 2018.

OMC Q4 REVENUES SLIDE 2.2%

Omnicom CEO John Wren reported Q4 revenues dropped 2.2 percent to \$4.1B on flat operating profit of \$627M. The ad/PR congom posted a 0.2 percent revenues gain in the US market to \$2.1B, while Europe plummeted 7.4 percent to \$770.3M, Asia-Pacific fell 2.7 percent to \$446.2 and the UK dropped 0.3 percent to \$377.2M.

The PR group (FleishmanHillard, Ketchum, Cone, Porter Novelli, Mercury, Portland and Marina Maher Communications) showed a 0.7 percent dip in quarterly revenues to \$370M. That slippage contrasted with a 2.3 percent rise in OMC's advertising business to \$2.3B.

On an organic basis, OMC posted a Q4 3.2 percent overall gain. PR was up 1.5 percent vs. a 4.4 percent gain for advertising. For the full year, PR revenues advanced 1.7 percent to \$1.4B, 1.8 percent organically.

OMC posted flat 2018 revenues of \$15.2M, while operating profit jumped 2.4 percent to \$2.1B.

MCCABE READY FOR PR PRIME TIME AT CBS

Rick McCabe, a veteran of Edelman, pmk*bnc and Ketchum, has joined CBS Corp as VP-corporate communications. He assumes media relations duties and will handle initiatives in the government relations, research, affiliate relations and program practices.



Rick McCabe

For the past two years, McCabe worked as an independent consultant in the mobile and sports tech sectors. Earlier he was senior VP in Ketchum's sports & entertainment group, senior VP-brand communications at pmk*bnc and VP in Edelman's sports & entertainment operation.

At CBS, McCabe reports to Kelli Raftery, executive VP-corporate communications.

GM TURNS TO BALLARD PARTNERS

General Motors has hired Ballard Partners, which has close ties with the Trump White House, for federal representation on labor and fuel efficiency matters.

GM is in the midst of a \$2.5B corporate restructuring that will lead to the shutdown of plants in Detroit-Hamtramck, Warren (MI), Lordstown (OH) and Baltimore. President Trump told GM CEO Mary Barra in November that he wasn't happy about the planned job cuts.

Brian Ballard, who chaired the Trump Victory organization in Florida during the 2016 presidential campaign, heads his firm's GM team, which includes Syl Lukis, Ballard's DC managing director; Susan Wiles, senior strategist in the Trump campaign and former campaign manager for Florida governor (now senator) Rick Scott; and Pamela Bondi, ex-attorney general of the Sunshine State and a member of the Trump transition team.

AGRICULTURAL GROUP ISSUES RFP

Agricultural marketing program CA Grown is seeking a marketing partner for the 2019 calendar year that can boost stakeholder outreach and develop promotional and event partnerships with media outlets, retailers and foodservice industry leaders.

The association, founded in 2001, is comprised of farmers, ranchers and agricultural commodity groups and commissions, who work to raise awareness of buying CA-grown products. The program is available through the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

Scope of work includes engaging with specialty crop stakeholders to identify promotional opportunities and execute planned activities; and partnering with CA Grown's management team to develop and execute an outreach strategy.

Budget for the work is approx. \$48,000, and should include all program expenses and retainers.

Term of the contract is for one year.

Proposals, due by Feb. 22, should be emailed to CA Grown executive director Nick Matteis, nick@agamsi.com, who should also receive any questions regarding the RFP.

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



MEDIA MANEUVERS

Job losses at news organizations rose 281 percent in 2018, according to a report in the *New York Post*. The Post cites the latest Job Cut Report from global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, which says that media companies announced plans to chop 15,474 positions over the course of last year, with 11,878 of those cuts affecting news organizations. In 2017, there were 4,062 announced job cuts in the industry. That made 2018 the toughest year for journalists since 2009, when media companies shed 22,346 jobs. And things don't seem to be looking up for 2019. The Job Cut Report notes that 1,279 media sector job cuts were announced in January, up 49.6 percent from the 855 announced in the same month last year.

Digital advertising revenues increased to \$26.2 billion in Q3 2018, according to the Internet Advertising Bureau's Internet Advertising Revenue Report, which was prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers US. The report says that figure represents a 20.6 percent jump from the third quarter of 2017. Through the first three quarters of 2018, marketers spent \$75.8 billion on digital ads, a 22 percent jump from 2017's numbers.

While **CBS** posted a three percent jump in year-over-year revenues for Q4 2018, the increase was not enough to meet Wall Street's expectations. The \$4 billion that the company brought in fell short of the \$4.2 billion that had been projected, leading to a three percent drop in its share price following the close of the market on Feb. 14. Ad revenue was up by seven percent, largely due to the \$100 million in political advertising that CBS says it brought in during the quarter. Affiliate and subscription fee revenues were also up by 11 percent. However, content licensing and distribution revenues were down 14 percent.

Civilized, a lifestyle brand aimed at the "bright, creative, hardworking people" who "enjoy cannabis responsibly," is teaming up with **Cannabis Club TV** to distribute its original content via CCTV's on-demand streaming service at 175 point-of-sale locations in 11 states. Cannabis Club currently features a lineup of over 13,000 unique videos that include talk shows, sports, comedy and reality TV. Civilized TV is launching a slate of programming with such entries as "Ask a Budtender" and "First High."

Civilized.



Club TV to distribute its original content via CCTV's on-demand streaming service at 175 point-of-sale locations in 11 states. Cannabis Club currently features a lineup of over 13,000 unique videos that include talk shows, sports, comedy and reality TV. Civilized TV is launching a slate of programming with such entries as "Ask a Budtender" and "First High."

NewsMatch, a national matching-gift campaign to grow fundraising capacity in nonprofit newsrooms and promote giving to journalism among U.S. donors, says it helped to raise \$7.6 million in 2018 for 154 nonprofit news organizations, representing 42 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. The organization says it has raised more than \$14 million for newsrooms since it was launched in 2016 by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. A grassroots-funding drive that ran from Nov. 1 to Dec. 31 resulted in donations from 240,000 people, with more than 50,000 of them being new donors.



GAP BETWEEN MARKETERS, INFLUENCERS

Influencer marketing is expected to account for a \$10 billion industry by next year, but despite becoming an integral ingredient in today's marketing mix, a gap exists between marketing and influencer camps that often makes collaboration difficult and could be holding back this booming practice's potential, according to an annual



study of marketers and influencers conducted by global communications firm Allison+Partners.

The MDC Partners unit's report, which surveyed marketers and influencers across five sectors,

found that marketers are often unable to successfully identify and choose which influencers to work with. Meanwhile, influencers reported being unable to adequately show the impact their efforts have on campaigns, while finding themselves under more pressure to do so.

Moreover, the study found that not all marketers conduct testing with influencers to see what kinds of content and strategy work best to carry their message. And a majority of influencers reported that marketers generally request only reach, unique page views or monthly blog view data, even though many see the true value of their work in authentic post comments and interactions.

Finally, most influencers reported having a purely transactional relationship with marketers, virtually devoid of collaboration.

The study also identified increased marketing budget scrutiny, arbitrary pricing standards, potential commoditization among a growing influencer pool that could devalue price and perceived value, privacy issues and tightened government regulations and reliance on third-party social platforms with varying algorithms and rules as other challenges facing influencer marketing programs.

The report outlined three areas both marketers and influencers should address in bridging the divide between these two groups. These include a "maturity" effort in the influencer marketing world that employs a set of industry standards to better identify campaign influencers and their authenticity, and optimize overall influencer engagement; improved collaboration, testing and planning that provides solutions and best practices for influencer strategies and partnerships; and formulating an improved measurement structure, where the gathering and storing of data on both sides provides better metrics to report on benchmarks and value.

Allison+Partners' fifth annual Influence Impact Report, titled "Unleashing Influencer Marketing and Realizing Its Full Potential," interviewed more than 30 influencers that have engaged in a paid influencer program with a brand in the travel, consumer electronics, lifestyle, food or fashion/beauty sectors. It also interviewed 20 U.S. internal marketers with a manager title or above stationed at companies in one of these sectors, with company revenue of at least \$50 million. The influencer panel was sourced by Allison+Partners and the marketer panel was provided by research company Qualtrics. Interviews were conducted in October.

FINN PARTNERS ACQUIRES MOORGATE

Finn Partners has acquired Moorgate Communications, London-based financial PR firm which represents clients such as Deutsche Bank, S&P Global and International Chamber of Commerce.

Peter Finn told *O'Dwyer's* that financial services communications and marketing offers "tremendous opportunities" for his independent firm in the US, Europe and Asia.

The deal bolsters FP's presence in London to about 70 staffers and 90 professionals across the EMEA. Robert Kelsey, founder of 18-year-old Moorgate, serves as managing partner-financial services for FP EMEA. His shop is recast as Moorgate Communications, a Finn Partners Company.



POLAND PICKS BGR FOR US TROOP PUSH

Poland, which wants a bigger deployment of US troops, has hired BGR Government Affairs for strategic counsel and tactical planning advice and services on military and defense-related issues before the US Government.

The nation has offered to pay up to \$2B to build a permanent US base (Fort Trump). The US already has about 4,000 troops in Poland. Georgette Mosbacher, America's ambassador to Poland and former CEO of Borghese cosmetics group, told the Feb. 12 *Financial Times* the increase in US troops stationed in Poland will be significant, passing the "hundreds mark."

BGR's \$70K per-month consulting agreement kicked off Feb. 1 and runs for a year. In addition to lobbying US officials, the shop will provide PR support and digital comms savvy to Poland's defense ministry. Crisis comms services are available upon request.

BGR is the firm of Haley Barbour, long-time Republican operative and former Mississippi governor.

EJ MEDIA WORKS TOYS 'R' US REBIRTH

New York's EJ Media Group is handling the rebirth of Toys "R" Us, which has been recast as Tru Kids Brands. CEO Richard Barry, who was global chief merchandising officer at Toys, sees a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to write the next chapter of Toys "R" Us."

Tru Kids Inc owns the Toys, Babies "R" Us, Geoffrey the Giraffe and more than 20 consumer and baby brands.

The Toys and Babies brands chalked up more than \$3B in sales in Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe in 2018.

Barry said efforts by competitors to fill the void left by the Chapter XI filing of Toys during the holiday season fell far short. There's a "huge consumer demand for the trusted experience" that Toys and Babies once delivered, he added.

Elizabeth Traub and Jaime Cassavechia founded EJ Media Group, which has represented Foxwoods, Original Grain, Rainbow Room, Sequential Brands and The Kimberly, in 2010. Both worked at Susan Blond Inc and Rubenstein PR.



NEW TAX BENEFIT FOR PR AGENCIES?

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act made many changes to both individual and corporate taxes. One of these new changes is the IRC Section 199A deduction. This is a new section of the Internal Revenue Code that allows a 20 percent deduction for “qualified business income (QBI) for owners of pass through entities, which include S corporations, limited liability entities, partnerships and sole proprietorships. Missing from this list is the “C” corporation.



Richard Goldstein

This new deduction can be complicated even with recent IRS guidance. My purpose in authoring this column is not to provide guidance on how to calculate the deduction, but to make you, the reader, aware of the benefit that Congress has given to the business owner and the possibility of a PR agency to claim this deduction.

Who gets the deduction?

The deduction is for individuals, not business entities. All entities mentioned above are “flow-through” entities. That is, income and deductions pass through to the individual owners of the business.

The deduction applies to individuals with QBI from flow through entities as previously stated. That means the deduction is for individuals not business entities (thus, C corporations don’t get the deduction). In general, a taxpayer can deduct 20 percent of the amount of QBI allocated to them from the entity, subject to certain limitations.

QBI is the net business income from a “qualified trade or business” (more on this to come) conducted in the United States. To qualify, the business must be other than a “specified service trade or business.” (SSTB.) In general, a SSTB includes all service business other than architecture and engineering. The tax law defines a SSTB as any trade or business involving the performance of services in the fields of health, law, accounting, actuarial science, performing arts, consulting, athletics, financial services, brokerage services or any trade or business where the principal asset of such trade or business is the reputation or skill of one or more of its employees or which involves the performance of services that consist of investing and investment management trading, or dealing in securities, partnership interests or commodities. A mouthful to say the least!

So, does a PR agency lose out based on the above definition? Is a PR agency a consulting firm or does it fall under the “reputation or skill” as defined above? At first blush, one might conclude that a PR agency is out of the box on this deduction unless a threshold amount is met.

The threshold amount

Business owners whose taxable income for 2019 is less than a threshold amount of \$321,400 for those filing married filing jointly, \$160,725 for married filing separately, and \$160,700 for single and head of household will not be subject to the SSTB rules. There is a phase in rule for those taxpayers whose taxable income exceed the

above amounts. (The deduction is also available for 2018.)

Where do we stand?

So, is a PR agency a SSTB? It may be easy to conclude that a PR agency is a SSTB under the “consulting” or “skill” definition. According to a definition I found on the Internet, “a PR firm is a professional service organization, generally hired to conceive, produce and manage un-paid messages to the public through media on behalf of a client, with the intention of changing the public’s actions by influencing their opinion.”

Under proposed regulations involving the reputation or skill as discussed above, the following is added . . . “in which the person receives fees, compensation or other income for endorsing products or services, licenses or receives fees for the use of an individual’s image, likeness, name, signature, voice, trademark or any other symbols associated with the individual’s identity or for appearing at an event or on radio television or other media.” Well, this does not seem to fit the definition provided above and PR seems to pass this test. (See caveat below.)

The next problem area is “consulting.” Consulting is defined in the proposed regulations as “provision of professional advice and counsel to clients to assist the clients in achieving goals and solving problems. The proposed regulations also indicate that consulting “includes providing advice and counsel regarding advocacy with the intention of influencing decisions made by a government or governmental agency and all attempts to influencing legislator and other similar professionals performing services in their capacity as such.” So, it seems to me that a PR agency could have a hard time arguing that it doesn’t provide consulting services.

The De Minimis exception

This exception provides that a trade or business is not an SSTB if the business has gross receipts in any tax year of \$25 million or less and less than 10 percent of the gross receipts of the business is attributable to the performance of services. This will be a difficult argument in my view for a PR agency to overcome.

If you read the definition of a public relations firm in the “Agency Namefinder,” (not provided here due to space limitations), you may be able to make an argument that PR is not a SSTB. (Please let me know your thoughts on this.)

This column isn’t intended to provide legal, accounting or tax advice. You need to seek the advice of your own CPA and/or attorney on the best course of action to take. Nevertheless, even if your agency would be considered an SSTB, you should be able to claim the deduction based on the taxable income thresholds as discussed above. If not and the deduction is claimed, a disclosure statement attached to the tax return could avoid certain penalties. This may consist of a disclosure statement, Form 8275, attached to your tax return to avoid penalties if audited by the IRS or even seeking a revenue ruling from the IRS. I will keep you informed on this issue as I see it developing.

Richard Goldstein is a partner at Buchbinder Tunick & Company LLP, New York, Certified Public Accountants.

FOX NEWS ALUM PULLS UN AMBASSADOR BID

Heather Nauert, State Dept. spokesperson and former anchor of president Trump's favorite TV program, "Fox & Friends," has withdrawn her name to succeed Nikki Haley as UN ambassador



Heather Nauert

Thanking Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for the December nomination, Nauert said in a statement that she's withdrawing "because the past two months have been grueling for my family."

The *New York Times* reported that Nauert might have opted out because she used a nanny who is legally in the US but does not have the proper work visa.

Nauert joined the Trump team in 2017 after ten years at Fox News and two at ABC. The one-time health-care insurance consultant entered journalism in 1996.

Pompeo praised Nauert for performing the spokesperson duties with "unequaled excellence."

UNM SEEKS MULTIMEDIA RIGHTS MARKETER

The University of New Mexico has issued an RFP for agencies to market its multimedia rights for intercollegiate athletics programs as well as athletic and special events. The envisioned plan will include multimedia rights deals for radio broadcasts, TV shows, corporate sponsorships of athletic and entertainment facilities, as well as on-premise marketing such as signage, video features, promotions and web advertising, athletic event promotions, game programs and sponsorships.

Deadline for proposals is 2:00 P.M. (MT) on March 7.

Proposals must be submitted via the [UNM Supplier Portal](#) sourcing system. Those interested in submitting can register as a vendor in UNM's Supplier Portal [here](#).

Contact are senior contracts specialist Ryan Dean Mortensen, rmortensen@unm.edu; contracts specialist Albert Valdez, aivaldez65@unm.edu; and purchasing team lead Brett Hoyt Sletten sletten@unm.edu.

[Download the RFP.](#)

PURDUE CHARGED OF MISINFORMATION PUSH

Purdue Pharma, marketer of OxyContin, allegedly was involved in a 2017 covert misinformation campaign created by Washington's The Herald Group to attack attorneys generals who either filed or planned to file suits against opioid manufacturers, according to a Feb. 14 online report by Oklahoma's News 4.



Mike Hunter

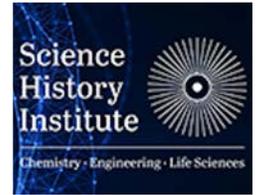
Oklahoma's AG Mike Hunter released previously confidential documents in his state's case against opioid manufacturers spelling out the misinformation campaign and its attempt to shift blame for the crisis on victims of addiction.

He claims the "documents are damning evidence showing Purdue executives were more interested in spreading propaganda than stopping the death toll from rising and fixing the problem they created."

The documents are exhibits in Oklahoma's suit.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Diffusion picked up the Philadelphia-based **Science History Institute**, an organization which preserves and celebrates scientific and technological culture. Diffusion has been enlisted to raise the Institute's profile on the West Coast in preparation for an event on rare earth elements it is putting on in Los Angeles in September. Diffusion's campaign will make use of research and thought leadership to draw interest in the event from the general public, scientists, and policymakers. The agency will also provide direct logistics support in the planning and executional stages.



Maui, Hawaii-headquartered **Jenerate PR** has been named PR and social media agency of record for **Kōloa Rum Company**, Hawaii's largest premium rum brand. Jenerate is currently leading publicity and communication strategies for the brand and will take over the management of the brand's social media presence beginning April 1. Jenerate specializes in specializes in hospitality, travel/tourism, culinary, luxury retail and lifestyle brands.

William Mills Agency has been selected as agency of record for public relations services by **U.S. Data-works**, an integrated receivables technology provider in the banking industry. WMA will work to build awareness of the company's Clearingworks system, which automates accounts receivable processes and simplifies both posting and reconciliation of payment channels including ACH, wires, online and check. The platform uses machine learning for exception processing, email matching and payment application.

KWT Global has been selected as agency of record for online home improvement retailer **Build.com**. The agency will work to amplify the company's presence across the U.S., employing brand strategy, content marketing, influencer integrations, brand activations, thought leadership and media relations. Build.com is preparing to celebrate its 20th anniversary and will launch new products and integral brand partnerships this year.



DRS and Associates has been named agency of record across multiple marketing services disciplines for **Walker Zanger**, which produces natural stone, tile and other materials and surfaces. The agency's services will include public relations, digital media, events, content marketing, influencer marketing and media planning. DRS and Associates will also help promote Walker Zanger's national showrooms, including its newest location in Charlotte, NC.

JoTo PR is collaborating with digital health company **InfoBionic** on the launch of its MoMe® Kardia monitoring system. The system features algorithms that give doctors the opportunity to quickly sort through essential patient data to address important cardiac events and diagnose long-term heart conditions faster and more accurately. JoTo PR specializes in the healthcare, finance and technology sectors.

COMMENTARY

C'mon, Amazon. Give NYC a break. You weren't serious about setting up your much ballyhooed second headquarters in Long Island City in the first place.



Where was the due diligence during the nearly two-year hunt for a place deemed suitable for the honor of hosting you?

You really didn't have a clue that New Yorkers are a cantankerous bunch, which is part of the lure of the Big Apple, who would object to dishing out \$3B in incentives to a corporate monster with a current market cap of

\$800B, down from the all-time high of \$1T first hit in September, in exchange for the promise of 25K jobs. That's pie in the sky thinking.

And what about the demand for a private helipad on the East River for CEO Jeff Bezos, "the richest man in the world." That was a little rich, don't you think?

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who kiddingly offered to rename himself "Amazon" Cuomo, did his best to explain to New Yorkers that the \$3B jackpot was contingent upon Amazon passing certain financial benchmarks.

He may be right, but he missed the point. NYC is the financial, media and cultural center of the US. It has a rapidly growing tech center and a talented workforce that is well qualified to work for Amazon.

Hard-core New Yorkers were offended that NYC entered the HQ2 beauty contest in the first place. They feel the City should stand on its own merits.

More than 235 cities groveled before Amazon, some of which were willing cough up much more than NYC promised to land HQ2. Newark dangled \$7B in incentives before Bezos and his gang. Yet Amazon chose NYC.

But did Amazon expect New Yorkers to roll out the red carpet? Fuhgeddaboudit!

New York is a rough and tumble place. If Amazon is too thin-skinned to take heat for its opposition to unions and accusations that its proposed HQ2 would destroy the fabric of neighborhoods in Queens, it doesn't belong here.

Amazon may have hired SKDKnickerbocker, a plugged-in NYC firm to make its case, but it never fully engaged in the PR battle.

A somewhat frustrated Cuomo admitted as much, telling WNYC's Brian Lehrer on Feb. 5, "Look I think Amazon has not done a great job communicating. There is a symbolism to Amazon and Bezos you just were talking about it on the last session, you know, everybody loves to hate Jeff Bezos."

Understandably, Bezos is very busy these days with his divorce and the battle with the *National Enquirer* over publication of sexts that he sent to his girlfriend.

But at the very least, couldn't Jeff have swung by to make a pitch about Amazon's plan to grow in and with NYC? That would have been a nice touch, especially if Bezos didn't arrive on his own personal helicopter.

NYC will thrive without Amazon.

After all, Google announced plans to invest \$1B in NYC to more than double its current 7,000 headcount in the city over the next decade.

Google didn't feel the need to shake down the City for the investment. How about that, Jeff?

McKinsey & Co.'s reputation as the most prestigious management consulting firm is dealt a major blow from a tough commentary, "McKinsey & Co: Capital's Willing Executioners," written by one of its former consultants and posted Feb. 5 on Current Affairs.org.

As champion of unbridled capitalism, according to "Anonymous," McKinsey has done more direct harm to the world in ways that are hard to measure and hard to know, thanks to its intense secrecy.

The firm's "willingness to work with despotic governments and corrupt business empires is the logical conclusion of seeking profit at all costs. Its advocacy of the primacy of the market has made governments more like businesses and businesses more like vampires," according to the ex-consultant.

The consultancy's "we only do execution, not policy" mantra provides a certain amount of cover.

"This categorical claim was meant to assuage our fears. We weren't the one steering the ship towards the cliff, we were merely tasked with keeping the ship afloat until it reached its destination," he or she wrote.

The former consultant believes McKinsey's "no policy" line of reasoning "would not have prohibited them from helping Bayer optimize its production of Zyklon B, adding a grim double meaning to the partner's promise to only focus on execution."

The Current Affairs author wrote about McKinsey's extensive work for Saudi Arabia, which may be its biggest client, running about 600 engagements from 2011 to 2016.

After the torture, murder and dismemberment of Saudi dissident and *Washington Post* contributor Jamal Khashoggi, McKinsey (along with other management consultants) remained a "knowledge partner" to the Saudi Arabia Future Investment Initiative (e.g., "Davos in the Desert).

"It will take more than the assassination of a journalist (to say nothing of the brutal year in Yemen) to undermine that thought partnership," wrote Anonymous.

McKinsey's work for Saudi Arabia has received some pushback from consultants at the firm. However, "In the repressive regimes the firm serves, client norms tend to dominate whatever liberal values McKinsey might initially attempt to smuggle in."

The author believes the consulting firm legitimizes its unsavory clients by lending them its sterling reputation. "Even if McKinsey's advice improves practices that help ordinary people, they sustain despotic regimes," wrote Anonymous. "A competent authoritarian is more dangerous than an inept one."

—Kevin McCauley