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FINN PARTNERS ACQUIRES AHA

[Finn Partners](#) has acquired AHA, a women-owned 52-person purpose-driven shop based in Vancouver, WA.

The deal marks the New York firm's foray into the global internal communications and employee engagement sectors.



Betsy Henning

AHA CEO/founder Betsy Henning will serve as managing partner of the new practice.

Founded in 1994, AHA has robust positions in employee engagement, corporate social responsibility, content marketing and sustainability.

AHA, one of the largest independent agencies in the metro Portland area, has worked for clients such as

Microsoft, Nike, Johnson & Johnson, HP and Comcast.

Peter Finn, CEO of Finn Partners, said his firm and AHA bring together "highly coveted, specialized expertise in internal communications and employee engagement programs as well as communications to support talent recruitment and retention." He noted that businesses put an increased emphasis on these services during the pandemic.

AHA will operate under the Finn Partners brand.

Finn Partners is [O'Dwyer's fourth-largest independent shop](#) with fees of \$108.9M for 2020.

BRUNSWICK GROUP RECRUITS SCHUMER AIDE

Brunswick Group has hired Mark Patterson, general counsel to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, as senior advisor in its Washington office.



Mark Patterson

A former chief of staff at the Treasury Dept. during the Obama administration, Patterson has extensive fiscal, legal, tax and financial services expertise. He was a policy director for former Democratic Majority Leader Tom Daschle and legislative director to New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Patterson has private sector experience gained as partner at Perkins Coie and managing director

at Goldman Sachs.

Neal Wolin, Brunswick CEO, said Patterson has "a deep understanding of critical issues with which organizations increasingly need to engage."

WHO SEEKS PR TO PROBE TOBACCO'S IMPACT

The World Health Organization is looking for a partner to help it raise public awareness about the impact that tobacco farming, production, distribution, use and waste has on the environment.

The health organization's partner will conduct a literature review of tobacco's impact on or due to water depletion, heavy use of fertilizers/pesticides/growth regulators; deforestation; air pollution, and release of greenhouse gas emissions. It will determine the financial/health/social gains from shifting from tobacco growing to alternative livelihoods.



WHO also wants to expose tobacco industry tactics and efforts to "greenwash" its reputation and products by marketing themselves as environmentally friendly.

The selected firm will deliver a "final package of key messages based on calculations of environmental gains from quitting tobacco or effective implementation of tobacco control measures." That package will form the core messaging of WHO's "World No Tobacco Day 2022," slated for May 31.

Interested firms must inform WHO at sts@who.int of their intention to bid on the campaign by Feb. 9.

Proposals are due Feb. 21.

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

MERCURY REPS MOSCOW'S SOVCOMBANK

Mercury Public Relations has signed on Moscow-based Sovcombank for strategic consulting, management services and government relations work, which includes outreach to US officials. The four-month contract, which began Jan. 26, is worth \$90K per month.

Democratic US Senators on Jan. 12 introduced the "Defending Ukraine Sovereignty Act of 2022," which lists Sovcombank as one of the Russian financial services targeted for sanctions in the event that Russia invades Ukraine.



Sovcombank is 89.9 percent owned by a group of Russian businessmen. The remaining 10.1 percent stake is owned by the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia (3.3 percent), Russia-China Investment Fund (2 percent), Russia Direct Investment Fund (1.3 percent), Russia-Japan Investment Fund (1.3 percent), Qatar Investment Holdings (1 percent) and SBI Holdings (0.5 percent).

Mercury's Sovcombank team includes co-chair and former Connecticut Democratic Congressman Toby Moffett and ex-Louisiana Senator David Vitter. Omnicom owns Mercury.

PUBLICIS POSTS 8.8% 2021 GROWTH

Publicis Groupe reported net revenues grew 8.8 percent to \$13.3B in 2021 due to robust growth in its data management, digital media, commerce and business transformation offerings.

CEO Arthur Sadoun noted organic revenues jumped 10 percent for 2021, which topped the three percent increase from pre-pandemic 2019. He said Publicis Groupe “is emerging from the pandemic as a strong company and a better one,” and cited progress across its environmental, social and governance strategy.

The firm has rewarded “everybody who has been with us for the past 24 months” a bonus in recognition for their “outstanding efforts” during the worst of the pandemic.

The 35K staffers salaried staffers will receive an additional week’s pay.

Sadoun forecasted 2022 organic growth will fall in the four percent to five percent range.

AT&T ALUM SHORENSTEIN TAKES SKDK POST

Marissa Shorenstein, who did an eight-year run on AT&T’s PR team, has joined Stagwell’s SKDK unit.

At the phone company, she handled external affairs for its 17-state northern region (Maine to Illinois), along with its DC lobbying/PA outpost.



Marissa Shorenstein

Shorenstein departed the friendly confines of Ma Bell for the global chief communications officer spot at WeWork in 2020, but exited after a four-month stint.

Earlier, she served as senior manager for strategic planning and corporate communications for the New York Jets.

Most recently, Shorenstein, a one-time director of communications & press secretary for New York’s resigned governor Andrew Cuomo, directed the executive transition of current Empire State Gov. Kathy Hochul.

At SKDK, she will take on strategic planning and business initiative duties.

SF INT’L AIRPORT FLIES OUT PR RFP

San Francisco International Airport wants proposals to guide the implementation of its marketing communications plan. The effort should integrate traditional, digital and social media components, as well as providing content in multiple languages.



**San Francisco
International
Airport**

The firm will help SFO identify new partner opportunities with airlines and leverage existing ties to gain greater visibility in the Bay Area and elsewhere in the US. It will promote new airline routes, capacity increases, operational

changes and new service offerings.

SFO also wants its partner to support positioning, brand management, internal communications, merchandising, events, contests, videos and messaging.

The Airport will award a three-year contract. It retains two options to extend for two additional years each.

Proposals are due Feb. 17.

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

MEDIA MANEUVERS

Jeff Zucker, CNN **Worldwide** president, resigned Feb. 2, due to a “consensual relationship with a colleague,” according to his memo. That colleague is Allison Gollust, CMO for CNN. “Jeff and I have been close friends and professional partners for over 20 years,” she said in a memo. “Recently, our relationship changed during COVID. I regret that we didn’t disclose it at the right time.” Gollust is “incredibly proud of my time at CNN.” Zucker says he was asked about the relationship during the investigation into Chris Cuomo’s tenure at CNN. Though he was required to report the relationship, he failed to do so. Jason Kilar, the CEO of CNN parent WarnerMedia, accepted Zucker’s resignation and said a search for his replacement will soon begin. WarnerMedia is merging with Discovery.



Jeff Zucker

A hack that affected **News Corp**, as well as several of its publications, has been linked to China. The cyberattack, which was discovered on Jan. 20, was disclosed in a Feb. 4 securities filing, according to the *New York Times*. Targets of the hack included the *Wall Street Journal*, News UK (publisher of the *Times* and the *Sun*) and the *New York Post*. The company said it does not believe that any financial or user data had been affected, and that the threat has been contained. After the hack was uncovered, News Corp enlisted digital security firm Mandiant to investigate it. In an email to staff, News Corp chief technology officer David Kline said “Mandiant assesses that those behind this activity have a China nexus and believes they are likely involved in espionage activities to collect intelligence to benefit China’s interest.”

The New York Times, aided in large part by its recent acquisition of sports news website The Athletic, has crossed the 10-million subscriber line—well ahead of their original target date of 2025. The Athletic adds 1.2 million subscribers to the 8.8 million that the Times’ other platforms registered by the end of December. Of those subscriptions, about 5.9 million were for digital news; more than two million were for other digital products (including Games, Cooking, product-recommendation site Wirecutter and audio-news platform Audm) and 800,000 were for the print newspaper. The Times has also purchased the popular online word game Wordle, which will be part of the Games platform. And it has given itself another goal—15 million subscribers by 2025.

NBC says that it has sold out all advertising inventory during Super Bowl LVI across NBC, Telemundo and digital platforms including Peacock. The broadcast’s 30-second commercial spots are going for as much as \$7.1 million—a record price. According to the Hollywood Reporter, only “a handful of ad spots in the pregame programming” are still available. NBC says that 40 percent of the companies running ads during the game are new, with the biggest growth coming in the automotive, technology, entertainment, travel and health & wellness sectors.



SHIFTING RULES FOR OFFICE RELATIONSHIPS

On the surface, at least as the [Wall Street Journal](#) reports, there was no ambiguity about CNN president Jeff Zucker's resignation. Warner Media, the parent company of CNN, has a clear policy: To prevent relationships between supervisors and employees, before a relationship becomes personal the parties involved have to provide information if it will impact the advancement of either party.



Jane Genova

More questions than answers

However, the whole matter of romance in the workplace is filled with more questions than answers. And because of the still-present stigma about office romances,

Insider documents that 76 percent are conducted in secret. Therefore, organizations can struggle with this issue.

Justifications for formal policies

The rationales for creating formal policies include:

- Sending a message of concern about sexual harassment.
- Reducing risk of litigation, claims of sexual harassment, conflicts of interest, decreased productivity, and perception of favoritism.
- Preventing personal decisions rooted in power imbalances.
- Informing employees of the consequences of not following the "rules."

Push-back against formal policies

Some vilify the [executive firings](#) at corporations for undisclosed consensual relationships, saying such job-enders would not have occurred if there had been no policies against romance at the office. Arguments against any policies include:

- Accusing the organization of being paternalistic. This is analogous to students' objecting to colleges' taking on the role of "loco parentis." That policy ended in the 1970s.
- Pointing to realities. A [survey](#) found that 35 to 40 percent had engaged in romantic relationships and 72 percent indicated they would do it again. And 22 percent confided that they had dated their supervisors.
- Invading privacy. Policies generate sticky questions.
- Policing conduct of the lovers can be impossible.

Office as relationship central

There are myriad reasons why working together is a breeding ground for romance. The dynamics are all too human.

As [Insider](#) documents, on the average, employees spend 1,680 hours annually together. There are plenty of common interests. And in careerist America, work is the primary interest. Plus, given the long hours which are the new norm, there is little time available to find love outside the office.

#MeToo makes organizations unforgiving

The ethos of the #MeToo movement has intensified the controversy over office romances of all kinds. The fear is palpable about any perception of sexual harassment.

Currently, organizations tend to err on the side of being too rigid. That is especially expected in the media industry.

In the CNN case, Warner Media likely determined it had to observe the letter of its own "law."

Jane Genova provides marketing communications strategy and content. There is special expertise for Web3. Complimentary consultations, fees custom-made for clients' unique budgets. (janegenova374@gmail.com).

FAIRFAX, VA FLOATS HIGHWAY MARKETING RFP

Fairfax, VA, a suburb of Washington, D.C., is requesting proposals from marketing and communications firms.

The city has released an RFP for a marketing agency as part of an effort to upgrade its Old Lee Highway, a historic corridor that's also one of the main arteries within the city.

Fairfax wants an agency that can develop a "context-sensitive, relevant story" for the highway as well as deliver a plan, including specific materials (such as signage efforts and other specifications), regarding how to tell that story.

Terms of the contract call for the work to be completed by June 30, 2022.

Proposals are due by 4:00 p.m. (EST) on February 18. All bids must be submitted electronically using the Commonwealth's online, electronic procurement system, www.eVA.virginia.gov (RFP# 22063 VBO 105).

Questions should be directed to procurement@fairfaxva.gov by 5 p.m. on February 10.

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

BALLARD PARTNERS ADDS STATE DEPT. VET

Ballard Partners has recruited State Department veteran Matt Bryza as a senior policy advisor.

Bryza has a 23-year career as a US diplomat, including a stint as ambassador to Azerbaijan. He was deputy assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia and director on the White House's National Security Council staff.

Currently, Bryza, who lives in Istanbul, sits on the board of Turcas, publicly traded fuel/power generation company, and is CEO of a Turkish-Finnish environmental clean-up firm.

Brian Ballard said Bryza brings "a new dimension of international expertise" to his firm.



Matt Bryza

BOJO'S COMMUNICATIONS CHIEF QUILTS

Jack Doyle, communications director for British prime minister Boris Johnson, has resigned amid the partygate scandal. He told staff that the recent turmoil has taken a terrible toll on his family life and that he always intended to leave Johnson's team after two years, according to the BBC.

Doyle had offered to resign in December after reports surfaced that he attended a Christmas party at 10 Downing Street in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown.

A former journalist for the Press Association and *Daily Mail*, Doyle became Johnson's press secretary in 2020. He was upped to communications director in April 2021.

Guto Harri, an ex-journalist who served as Johnson's communications director when he was mayor of London, succeeded Doyle.

In commenting Feb. 4 about the wave of staff resignations on his staff, Johnson quoted Rafiki of the Lion King, saying "change is good."



Jack Doyle

EX-NFL CCO MOORE PICKS PRETIUM

Former NFL chief communications officer Jocelyn Moore has joined investment firm Pretium, which specializes in residential real estate, residential credit and corporate credit, as senior managing director in charge of corporate affairs.



Jocelyn Moore

At the NFL, Moore oversaw corporate affairs, as well as leading football communications, strategic communications, corporate communications, public policy and government affairs, and corporate social responsibility.

She was previously a managing director at The Glover Park Group (now Finsbury Glover Hering) and spent 15 years working in senior leadership roles in the US Senate, including positions on the staffs of Sens. Ron Wyden, John D. Rockefeller IV, Bob Graham and Zell Miller.

Most recently, Moore was a senior advisor to the New Markets Support Company and a venture partner at OzoneX, an early-stage venture capital firm that funds mission-driven startups led by women and underrepresented founders.

“Throughout her career, Jocelyn has been a force for positive change, partnering with stakeholders on both sides of issues to solve the biggest challenges facing our society,” said Pretium founder and CEO Don Mullen.

REAL CHEMISTRY RECRUITS WUNDERMAN CIO

[Real Chemistry](#) has hired Wunderman Thompson’s Andy Johnson as chief information officer.

He will drive the San Francisco-based healthcare giant’s information strategy, and strengthen its systems and processes to better support clients and staff.



Andy Johnson

Johnson was CIO at WPP’s Wunderman Thompson and earlier served as operations director worldwide IT at JWT.

He also was digital technology director at Mirum Agency and VP solution architecture at Interlink Software.

Johnson will be “instrumental in scaling, simplifying and further digitizing the way we work,” according to

Real Chemistry CEO Shankar Narayanan

[Real Chemistry is O’Dwyer’s top ranked healthcare firm](#) with 2020 fees of \$349.2M.

JOELE FRANK, SVC ON FRONTIER, SPIRIT DEAL

[Joele Frank](#) represents Frontier Airlines and Sard Verbinen & Co. handles Spirit Airlines as the “ultra-low” cost carriers combine to create the nation’s fifth largest airline with \$6.6B revenues.

Frontier shareholders will own 51.5 percent of the merged airline and its chairman William Franke will lead a committee to select the management team, branding and headquarters city of the combined carrier. Frontier/Spirit promise to expand service to underserved small- and mid-sized cities across the US and add 10K new employees by 2026.

Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher’s Ed Trissel and Joseph Sala work the Frontier business, while Sard Verbinen’s Andrew Cole, Robin Weinberg and Columbia Clancy handle Spirit.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Allison+Partners lands **Thrive Scholars**, a nonprofit organization that provides opportunities for high-achieving students of color from economically disadvantaged communities. The agency is tasked with increasing Thrive Scholars’ visibility as they work to expand their program across the US. Thrive’s six-year program supports students starting their junior year of high school and throughout college by providing expert college advising, academic preparation, social-emotional support, financial help, and career development services.



5W Public Relations wins **Dragon Hemp**, a line of wellness products composed of hybrid formulations infused with CBD, additional clean-sourced Chinese Herbs and other botanicals. 5W will work with the client to generate media aimed at achieving mass consumer engagement and industry awareness, introducing Dragon Hemp’s custom formulas and showcasing their benefits.

Golin is appointed as PR agency for **NAPA Auto Parts**. Golin’s work will include strategy, creative, earned media, digital and corporate communications. The agency will also partner with Genuine Parts Company, the parent company of NAPA, to drive the corporate brand’s communication strategy forward. NAPA has also brought on Winston-Salem, N.C.-based The Variable as agency of record for brand strategy, creative, content and social; and Merkle as its CRM agency, to lead customer marketing and enhance the existing loyalty work for the company’s NAPA Rewards program.

CLOUT is named public relations and diversity outreach agency of record for the **IRONMAN Foundation**. In addition to overseeing PR and community outreach efforts for the foundation, CLOUT will serve as its press liaison. The agency will also lead engagements for the IRONMAN Foundation’s diversity initiative, Race For Change, at the grassroots level.

Wagstaff Media and Marketing checks in at **Noble House Hotels & Resorts**, a family-owned, boutique hotel brand. The Noble House account will be managed by a cross-continent team at Wagstaff, with representatives in Los Angeles, Vancouver and Miami. The firm will work to help the brand grow its business through such efforts as Exceptional Escapes, a campaign aimed at encouraging adventurous travelers to embrace their inner explorer.



Red Lorry Yellow Lorry picks up **Valora**, a mobile crypto wallet that enables global payments and easy access to decentralized finance apps. The PR program will focus on generating brand awareness and engagement through media campaigns, thought leadership and educational content, as well as identifying ad hoc commentary and news-sharing opportunities. The program will also build industry recognition for Valora CEO Jackie Bona.

Trust Relations signs up **Squeeze**. It is tasked with helping the company grow a national presence, as well as securing press coverage and thought leadership opportunities. Squeeze is an autonomous platform for recurring household bills that helps users lower monthly recurring bills by shopping around for the best rates. The beta version of the platform was officially launched in Q4 2020.

SOCIAL INNOVATION SUMMIT LOOKS FOR PR

Landmark Ventures needs a firm to handle PR and social media for its Social Innovation Summit, set for Washington on June 7-8. The invitation-only forum explores “What’s Next” and features top thinkers from the corporate, philanthropic, entertainment, activism, nonprofit and venture capital sectors.

Past participants at the 19 social innovation summits have included Mark Cuban, Ted Danson and Alicia Keys.

Landmark Ventures wants PR to increase brand awareness of the summit via press coverage, influencer relations, social media management and paid promotion.

It is targeting a broad range of media outlets including the *New York Times*, *The Economist* and NPR.

Landmark, which envisions a four-month PR push for the Summit beginning in March, wants proposals by Feb. 11.

Responses go to Kayla Schoerie, Landmark’s senior marketing coordinator, at kschoerie@landmarkventures.com.

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

STAGWELL LIFTS OFF TO MARKETING CLOUD

Stagwell Chief Mark Penn says his network’s marketing cloud group is in “liftoff mode” as it adds a trio of executives to develop and grow products to support business transformation.



Mark Penn

Abe Geiger, a veteran of Hudson MX ad tech business Legal Shield and founder of Shake mobile-first legal offerings, joins as chief product officer.

Elsbeth Paige Rollert, who was global head of partnership marketing for Uber and an alum of Microsoft and Penn Schoen Berland, takes on the CMO post.

Matt Lochner, who was VP/M&A at Stagwell Group, is returning from Harvard University for the managing director position.

The new executive firepower will accelerate Stagwell’s focus on product innovation to meet CMOs’ need for in-house marketing stack solutions, according to Penn.

Stagwell is the parent company of SKDK, KWT Global, Hunter, Allison+Partners and Sloane & Co.

ICR WALKS WAG! THROUGH SPAC DEAL

[ICR Inc.](#) is guiding Wag!, dog-walking app, as it plans to go public via a \$350M SPAC deal with CHW Acquisition



Corp.

Founded in 2015 to relieve the guilt and stress of leaving a pet unattended, Wag! has more than 350K pet caregivers in 4,600 cities in the US, handling dog walking, pet sitting, training, advice and drop-in visits.

It has generated 11M reviews with 96 percent of them earning five-star ratings. Rebooking rate clocks in at 90 percent. The pet wellness/services market was valued at \$44B in 2020.

Wag! CEO Garrett Smallwood said his company is “transforming the fragmented and largely offline pet wellness and services industry through our vertically integrated mobile-first technology platform.”

The company anticipates revenues of \$42M for 2022, which would be a 120 percent boost over last year’s performance.

NEWS OF FIRMS

Dolphin Entertainment creates a new marketing, consulting and communications agency focused on developing and marketing blockchain, metaverse and Web3 projects and initiatives. The new agency will absorb Dophin’s NFT division (announced in March 2021) and provide expanded service offerings to the more than two dozen active Web3 projects and partners on Dolphin companies’ rosters. Those services include NFT/crypto influencer relations, Web3 development, NFT minting protocols, partnership acquisition, paid amplification and non-traditional media relations.



ASTRSK PR has launched the search for its fifth annual pro bono public relations client. The winner of the contest will receive one year of free public relations services from the agency, valued at over \$200,000. To qualify for consideration, applicants must be early-stage consumer-facing startups with less than \$1.5 million in funding that are BIPOC, APPI, LGBTQIA+ and/or female-founded. Winners are selected by a panel of journalists, industry experts and the ASTRSK team. [Applications are open through Feb. 18 at 11:59PM EST.](#)

Caryl Communications transfers its ownership to long-time team member Sandy Crisafulli, who most recently served as the firm’s chief operating officer. Caryl Bixon-Gordon, who founded the agency in 1984, is retiring. The company, which recently established a new headquarters address in Hoboken, NJ, provides services including communication strategy, public relations services, media relations, digital marketing support and crisis communications.

360PR+ forms **Three Cheers PR**, a

wholly owned, independently operated agency serving the adult beverage industry. Three Cheers PR will be led by 360PR+ EVP Rob Bratskeir. Three Cheers PR will offer clients integrated campaign development, media relations,

influencer marketing, digital content production, social media activations, live and virtual events, C-suite profile development and other thought leadership activities.

RENEWPR is marking its seventh anniversary with the launch of an endowed scholarship at the Texas Tech Alumni Association to support LGBTQIA students at the university. The scholarship is open to LGBTQIA students at Texas Tech’s School of Arts and Sciences or LGBTQIA students enrolled in any college at Texas Tech who plan to study abroad. RENEWPR president Ben Finzel, a 1989 graduate of the university’s School of Arts and Science, was the first Texas Tech student to receive a study abroad scholarship, which he used to pursue a semester program in Salzburg, Austria.

Susan Davis International publishes a comprehensive, interactive calendar of military events and observances for 2022. The calendar is targeted at professional communicators, event organizers, media and advocates who support service members and veterans, as well as their families and caregivers. SDI’s military calendar highlights observances, special events and historic moments in military history. Each event included is linked to additional information. Organizations may request that additional observances be included in regular updates of the calendar.



COMMENTARY



Eric Adams

Only six top PR executives were among the more than 200 business, labor and civic leaders to sign an open letter in support of New York mayor Eric Adams' efforts to "make New York a safer and more just city."

They are Donna Imperato, BCW CEO; Peter Finn, Finn Partners CEO; Philippe Krakowsky, CEO of Interpublic; Kathy Bloomgarden, Ruder Finn; Matthew Hiltzik, CEO of Hiltzik

Strategies, and Steven Rubenstein, CEO of Rubenstein Communications.

Released Jan. 31, the letter follows a spate of high-profile violent crime cases. But the perception that crime is out of control does not face the reality of life in New York.

There were 28 killings in January, which is one less than the January of a decade ago when Mayor Mike Bloomberg declared the Big Apple "the safest big city in America."

The COVID-19 lockdown, transit woes, upswing in graffiti and the general shabbiness of the city adds to the image that the place is on the brink.

A good PR campaign could go a long way in righting the current negative image of New York. Perhaps one of the half dozen letter signers should take up that task.

Just two guys from Queens: Adams and Trump. Adams, who promised to restore "swagger" to the city certainly had his hands full during his first month in office.

Things are so bad for Mayor Eric, he's resorted to channeling Donald Trump. Asked Jan. 31 about his lack of emphasis on the COVID-19 pandemic, he said:

"What we're not going to do is to stay in this state of terror terror terror terror all the time. We're doing the right things, moving in the right direction... This is a real W for us. You know, you can be so used to getting the Ls that you must wake up every day and hope that you get the L. No, New York—Eric is your mayor! We get Ws now. We're gonna win."

Trump also boasted about winning. In 2016, he said:—

"We're going to win so much that you're going to be sick and tired. You're going to say, 'Please, please, Mr. President, we're sick and tired of winning. Please let us have at least one loss. It's no longer exciting to win.' And I'm going to say, 'No way, we're going to keep winning, and I don't care if you like it or not.'"

Trump lost his 2020 race. Good luck to Adams.

The Commanders? After an 18-month search for a new name, the best The Washington Football Club could do is to rename the team after Joe Biden's new dog.

Biden introduced "Commander," a four-month old German Shepherd, to the DC press corps on Dec. 20.

He must have made a big impression on Washington Football Club co-owners Dan and Tanya Snyder, who unveiled their new team name Feb. 2 on NBC's Today show.

They could have done much better.

The new moniker pays tribute to the heavy military pres-

ence around the nation's capital.

But football is already awash with military connections. One of comedian George Carlin's most famous skits of the 1970s compared the pastoral nature of baseball with the militaristic field of combat gridiron, where quarterbacks heave bombs and march into enemy territory.

The Snyders could have energized their sorry franchise, which has not won a Super Bowl since 1991, by recasting it as the "Champs" in honor of Biden's 13-year-old German Shepherd who passed away last June. Or even better, they could have named their team after a symbol of DC.

Commanders is a way too generic name. The Washington Cherry Blossoms name has a nice ring to it. And just think of the marketing tie-ins. It's not too late, Dan and Tanya.

Famous last words? "We don't change our policies based on one creator, nor do we change based on any media cycle or calls from anyone else," Spotify CEO Daniel Ek told analysts during a Feb. 2 earnings call.

He might be singing a different song real soon

Ek was referring to demands by a handful of artists to kick Spotify's No. 1 podcaster Joe Rogan off the platform for spreading misinformation about COVID-19.

Neil Young launched the crusade and has been joined by former bandmates David Crosby, Graham Nash and Stephen Stills, as well as Joni Mitchell.

India.Arie is pulling her songs to protest Rogan's language about race. Psychologist Mary Trump also wants her podcast off Spotify because she views Rogan as a racist.

Young and the rest have just set the stage for a high-stakes showdown with Ek over the Joe Rogan Experience podcast.

He will be changing his tune in the event that Spotify's top artists join the anti-Rogan bandwagon.

Spotify's Top Ten artists in 2021 by monthly listeners, according to Chart Data, are Justin Bieber, Ed Sheeran, The Weeknd, Ariana Grande, Dua Lipa, Adele, Coldplay, Taylor Swift, Elton John and Dojo Cat.

Who will get the ball rolling? Why don't you join your contemporaries, Sir Elton, and put some heat on Spotify.

Lighten up, Democrats. A poll conducted by *The Economist* and YouGov found that Democrats are downright gloomy about America's state in the world when it comes to income inequality, immigration, gay rights and religious tolerance vis-a-vis Republicans.

E.g., forty percent of Biden voters say America ranks among the worst nations in the world on minority rights, compared to 11 percent of Republicans.

What about China, Russia, India and Iran?

The magazine noted that "though Republican voters are sometimes caricatured as provincial, many Democratic voters seem unaware of their comparative good fortune."

The bad news for Democrats is that the poll found that Independent voters tracked more closely to Republicans.

A reason Dems may be down in the dumps: the progressive wing of the party uses "doom and gloom" to attract funds and allies.

—Kevin McCauley