



Kevin McCauley
Editor-in-Chief



**The Inside News of
PR and Marketing
Communications**

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

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WPP SELLS 60% KANTAR STAKE TO BAIN

WPP Group has sold a 60 percent stake in its Kantar research unit to Bain Capital for \$4B as part of CEO Mark Read's plan to simplify the structure of the ad/PR giant.



Mark Read

The deal, which is expected to close in early 2020, will result in a \$3.2B after-tax gain for WPP.

Read has earmarked 60 percent of that windfall for debt reduction with about a third going to shareholders.

WPP will retain a 40 percent Kantar stake and looks forward to working with Bain to "unlock its full potential," said Read.

Luca Bassi, managing director at Bain, called Kantar a "market leader" and a "remarkable platform for growth." He said Bain sees many expansion opportunities and is ready to invest in Kantar to "expand the company's capabilities and reinforce its global leading position."

Eric Salama, Kantar CEO, said Bain "is a partner who shares our ambition, brings relevant expertise and – with WPP – can help us accelerate our growth and impact for clients."

TENEO TO REP SAUDI MEGA-CITY

Teneo Strategies has inked a \$2.1M six-month pact to promote the construction of Neom, the \$500B megacity, a pet project of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to diversify the Kingdom's economic base.

Steve Lipin's Gladstone Place Partners dropped Neom in October 2018 after the murder and dismemberment of Saudi dissident and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi by a Saudi hit squad.



Jamal Khashoggi

Doug Band, Teneo president & co-founder, and Richard Powell, vice chairman, handle the account.

Band was a counselor to president Bill Clinton and creator of the Clinton Global Initiative, while Powell was chief communications officer at Bloomberg LP and COO of Burson-Marsteller.

For Neom, they will create "customized value propositions for investors and partners," work with its marketing team to "develop materials and engagement opportunities for effective communications that will build awareness and confidence" in the project and deliver a "crisis management playbook with detailed protocols," according to Teneo's agreement.

Teneo's contract runs through October.

ULSTER ISSUES TOURISM, DEVELOPMENT RFP

Ulster County, New York, about 100 miles north of NYC, has issued a request for proposal for agencies to produce advertising campaigns and marketing strategies to promote the county to tourists as well as those who would consider relocating their business to the area.

Scope of the work includes developing a media and advertising placement plan; writing press releases; pitching and developing relations with travel writers and tourism industry professionals; website building, development and maintenance; creation and distribution of a bi-monthly e-newsletter and biweekly e-blast; maintenance of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram accounts; reviewing current practices and making brand recommendations.

Proposals are due by 4 p.m. (EST) on Friday, July 26, 2019. Proposals should be mailed to:

Ulster County Purchasing Department; Edward Jordan, Director of Purchasing; PO Box 1800; 244 Fair Street, 3rd Floor; Kingston, NY 12401

Agencies must submit one unbound original, six photocopies, and an electronic copy (CD or thumb drive) of the proposal in MS Word and PDF format. RFP name and number must be written on face of envelope: ULSTER COUNTY TOURISM ADVERTISING RFP-UC19-044

Questions should be forwarded to buyer Peter Esposito, 845/334-5575 or pesp@co.ulster.ny.us. Agencies planning to submit a proposal must fax a Receipt Confirmation Form (page 2 of the attached RFP document) to the Ulster County Purchasing Department (845/340-3434).

[Download the RFP, including July 5 addendum \(PDF\).](#)

EDELMAN'S BOYD MOVES TO BCW

Ben Boyd, a 14-year veteran of Edelman, will take the global chief strategy & operations officer post at BCW on Sept. 3.

Most recently chief client strategy officer at the No. 1 independent PR firm, Boyd was responsible for its client experience program and research initiatives such as The Trust Barometer. Earlier, he led the firm's global corporate practice for 11 years.

Boyd joined Edelman in 2006 from the Service Employees International Union, where he was director of communications in DC. Earlier, he was director of communications for SITA, air transport association; senior VP at Weber Shandwick and director of communications for barne-sandnoble.com.



Ben Boyd

SKDKNICK STANDS UP FOR FUR

The Fur Information Council of America is working with Democratic-leaning SKDKnickerbocker to fend off a ban on the sale of new fur garments and accessories in New York City.



Introduced by City Council president & potential mayoral candidate Corey Johnson, the measure would allow the sale of used fur garments and apparel repurposed from older clothing.

Johnson faces spirited opposition from black pastors and the Hasidic community, which oppose the fur ban on cultural and religious grounds.

New York mayor Bill de Blasio worries about the measure's impact on the city's \$400M annual fur business. NYC is the country's No. 1 fur market.

Josh Isay, SKDKnick's managing partner and former chief of staff to Senator Chuck Schumer, and Kerri Lyon, managing director & New York PA president, told O'Dwyer's their firm is focused exclusively on the fur action in NYC.

Mark Penn's Stagwell Group owns SKDKnick.

KARRAKER EXITS CAMPARI NORTH AMERICA

PR veteran Dave Karraker is leaving as VP-communications at Campari North America after a 12-year run to launch Raptor Communications in San Francisco.

In charge of corporate/internal communications, Karraker also handled brand (Campari, Wild Turkey, SKYY Vodka, Aperol) and crisis work for in the US, Canada, Mexico and Jamaica. He developed Campari NA's digital strategy unit and managed licensing, product placement, charitable giving and customer service.

Prior to Campari, Karraker was senior director of corporate communications at Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Karraker will exit Campari on July 31.

WELLS FARGO ENLISTS COGENT STRATEGIES

Wells Fargo has signed on Cogent Strategies, the firm launched by former Podesta Group CEO Kimberly Fritts, for additional Washington coverage.

It wants Cogent to handle a broad range of policy issues impacting the banking sector.



Managing directors David Oxner, former head of government relations at the Securities Industry & Financial Markets Assn., and Randall Gerard, ex-Podesta principal and staffer on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, handle the effort.

As part of its turnaround plan, Wells Fargo announced June 28 that Derek Flowers, a 21-year veteran of the company, will head its newly created strategic execution & operation office.

Flowers reports to interim CEO Allen Parker.

Wells Fargo spent \$4.3M for DC lobbying during the past year at a roster of shops that includes Ogilvy Government Relations, Resolution Public Affairs and Federal Street Strategies.

CALIFORNIA COUNTS ON MERCURY PA

Mercury Public Affairs won the competitive pitch to handle outreach and PR for the California 2020 census.

Issued March 15, the RFP called for a shop to focus on geographic areas and demographic populations that are "least likely to respond" to census canvassers.

Mercury is also expected to develop an overall campaign to encourage all Californians to be counted in 2020.

California's lawmakers approved a \$90M budget to fund overall census promotion, while Governor Gavin Newsom's 2019-2020 budget proposed an increase of \$50M.

The California Complete Count office, which issued the RFP, has allocated \$16.1M for outreach & PR. That figure has the potential to expand to \$46.1M, pending budget approval.



The 2020 census will determine the number of seats that California will hold in Congress and funding formulas for federal disaster relief, education and health and human services programs.

FINSBURY WORKS RB'S \$1.4B OPIOID DEAL

Finsbury is working media for Reckitt Benckiser Group's record \$1.4B opioid-linked settlement with the Justice Dept. and Federal Trade Commission regarding marketing practices for the Suboxone Film painkiller of its former subsidiary, Indivior.

Though UK-based RB maintains it did nothing wrong, the board opted to make peace with feds in the best interests of the company and shareholders.

The settlement "avoids the costs, uncertainty and distraction associated with continued investigations, litigation and the potential of an indictment at a time of significant transformation under RB 2.0 and during CEO transition," said RB's statement.

Laxman Narasimhan, who was chief commercial officer at PepsiCo, will succeed Rakesh Kapoor at the helm of the pharmaceuticals, personal care and "home hygiene" (Air Wick, Lysol, Calgon, Woolite, Vanish) company on Sept. 1.

RB "demerged" Indivior in 2014.

Finsbury's Faeth Birch and Philip Walters rep RB.

INTEL INSTALLS DIXON AS CCO

Intel has named Claire Dixon, senior VP at VMware, VP & chief communications officer at the \$70B semiconductor giant.

Prior to her two-year stint at VMware, Dixon spent four years as VP-global communications at eBay and held posts at GlaxoSmithKline and Unilever.

At eBay, she worked with Intel CEO Bob Swan on the spin out of PayPal.

He praised Dixon as a "world-class communications leader and team-builder."

At Intel, Dixon is in charge of corporate communications, events, product PR, employee communications and analyst relations.



Claire Dixon

5 POWER TOOLS FOR FEMALE LEADERS

Rules are meant to be broken—or at least rewritten to fit the time and circumstances. That’s particularly true for female executives, who often must challenge ways of thinking both within themselves and their organizations to get ahead.

The rules for women start early: don’t cause conflict, don’t stand out too much, don’t be too aggressive.



Clare DeNicola

Consider my daughter who is a freshman in college. She recently made the dean’s list, and the notice included an app that allowed you to share the news on LinkedIn. She decided not to share it, saying it would be showing off. Yet, two days later when she checked her LinkedIn feed, at least five male friends had shared their own dean’s list news. The fact that none of

those shares were female is no accident. It’s part of a pattern of thinking—or rules—that often starts within and is reinforced by what’s around us.

Based on our own experience in the C-suite, we’ve developed 5 new rules to help women better succeed in the workplace. We are also using them as coachable moments embedded in our VOICES leadership and communications training for women.

1) Old Rule: Always present strength.

New Rule: Go ahead, show your weakness. The perfection trap—in which women feel they have to overprepare, be 110% qualified for every promotion—can hold you back. Authenticity is in, and, frankly, it’s a lot easier to operate effectively when you admit what you don’t know, while taking credit for your strengths. When I was named head of sales (with no previous sales experience) for a technology company, the first thing I said to the new team was, “I don’t know sales, I’m looking for you to teach me that part of the job. What I do know is how to listen to customers and translate those needs into new products and services.”

2) Old Rule: Conform to specific skills set and criteria.

New Rule: Own your style—and amplify it. Many women think they need to adapt to a predefined leadership ideal. It’s just the opposite. It’s important to work with what you have naturally and build on it. If you’re quiet, it would be impossible to suddenly transform into the most outspoken person in meetings. But a quiet person can become really good at asking great questions and summarizing powerfully. A person who is great at solving problems could be volunteering to participate in company task forces and committees.

3) Old Rule: Follow a defined career path.

New Rule: Take detours to build a set of business superpowers. Successful careers don’t always follow a straight line. I recently attended a women’s leadership conference where one of the speakers explained how her unplanned lateral career move from product development to human resources gave her an understanding of the company’s cultural issues that propelled her to the C-suite a few years later. Another example is the trajectory of a woman from support desk to senior leader. Her super-

power: she understood the customers and could articulate their needs. The common denominator is that both women not only saw the value in these career detours, but they used the skills and understanding they gained to communicate their value and drive momentum for their careers.

4) Old Rule: Don’t ever violate our unwritten rules.

New Rule: Be culture-aware, but don’t let it stop you. Some companies are making progress, but most are still learning when it comes to promoting women into the most senior positions. Cultural and institutional barriers exist. But knowledge is power. Once you know what they are, don’t let them dissuade you. Work within the culture and challenge the norms where needed.

5) Old Rule: Keep emotion out of the executive suite.

New Rule: There’s no penalty for passion. Having a vision and being willing to share it is a powerful tool for female executives. Passion can expand your influence and build constituency at all levels of the organization. Successful women leaders build excitement for what they’re trying to achieve and can skillfully share that story to motivate teams. And you don’t have to be at the top of the organization to lead with passion. Setting a personal leadership mission is a great first step.

For women in the workplace, and the companies looking to promote them, the old ways of doing things, from what’s expected of leaders to how they collaborate and communicate, need a fresh look. Businesses today—more than ever before—are focused on promoting women in the workplace but that requires new ways of thinking and operating—from both women and their organizations—to open up paths to the top.

Clare DeNicola is principal at the10company, a women-owned strategic PR firm in New York. It has developed VOICES, a leadership communications coaching program for female executives.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

The **Rupert Murdoch**-owned News Group has issued a public apology for hacking the phones of **Heather Mills**, the former wife of Paul McCartney, and her sister Fiona Mills. A financial settlement over the charges filed by Mills against the company was awarded in February. The amount of the settlement was not disclosed. According to a report in the *Financial Times*, News Group has settled approximately 1,000 civil cases related to phone hacking practices since 2010, with legal costs estimated at more than \$520 million.

The Chicago Defender, a newspaper that has served the city’s African-American community since 1905, put out its last print edition July 10. Hiram Jackson, CEO of Real Time Media, parent company of the publication, told the *Chicago Tribune* that “doubling down on our digital platform” was seen as the best way for the Defender to continue reaching its audience. He said that while the print paper has been publishing 16,000 copies weekly, it reaches more than 475,000 unique visitors per month online. While access to the website is currently free, Jackson said the Defender plans to erect a digital paywall.

FTI CONSULTING BLASTS OFF WITH BRANSON

FTI Consulting is handling Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic, space tourism entity, as it plans to go public as the world's first commercial "spaceline" company.



VG, which has received more than \$1B in funding since its 2004 inception, says it has passenger reservations from more than 600 people from 60 countries, eager to blast off into space from Spaceport America, New Mexico.

The go-public scenario has VG merging with Social Capital Hedosophia Holdings, a special-purpose acquisition company.

SCHH will invest \$800M in VG for a 49 percent stake when the transaction closes by the end of the year.

FTI has Adam Davidson and Antonia Gray field inquiries about VG.

Gasthalter & Co.'s Jonathan Gasthalter, Carissa Felger and Nathaniel Garnick rep SCHH.

NRA VET TARGETS PA, CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Chris Cox, who was executive director of the National Rifle Association for 17 years before exiting the organization in June, has launched his own consulting firm, Capitol 6 Advisors.



Chris Cox

LaPierre. He has called those allegations "offensive and patently false."

Cox says that the new firm "will provide long-range strategic public policy and public affairs consulting, crisis management and brand positioning for companies and organizations with complex problems."

Cox resigned his post at the NRA after having been suspended by the organization because of charges that he participated in an attempt to oust the organization's chief executive, Wayne

A statement on the firm's website says that Capitol 6 will work with corporate clients, associations, candidates and nonprofits.

PAN PICKS UP UK'S CAPELLA PR

Healthcare and B2B technology agency PAN Communications has acquired London's Capella PR. Financial terms of the deal weren't publicly disclosed.

Capella provides communications for consumer and B2B brands in the tech, personal finance and retail sectors. It was founded in 2012 by former Brands2Life director Gareth Thomas and Porter Novelli alum Nia Evans.

The agency will be known as PAN UK in light of the acquisition. Thomas assumes the title of PAN UK managing director while Evans takes the dual roles of vice president and general manager.

PAN in a statement said the agencies' compatibility and shared experience in emerging markets as well as an ability to widen its European foothold influenced its decision to acquire Capella.

Boston-based PAN, which focused on technology, healthcare and consumer tech brands, maintains additional offices in San Francisco, Orlando and New York.

MUSEUM OF PR UNVEILS BURSON COLLECTION

Harold Burson's passion for client service, insatiable curiosity, humility and rock solid values are why the Memphis native is a PR legend, said Pat Ford, ex-vice chairman of B-M, at the July 8 Museum of Public Relations event to honor the 98-year-old executive.

He said Burson was the "most disruptive force in the room" and widely admired by the 35K to 40K Burson-Marsteller staffers that he employed during his career.

Jim Joseph, global president of BCW, introduced Ford and thanked Burson for his wise counsel and support.

They spoke at the unveiling of the Museum's collection of papers and mementos of B-M's co-founder.

The exhibit includes the 1953 press release announcing the launch of B-M; a can of New Coke, which B-M introduced; personal notes from presidents Carter through George W. Bush; PRSA's Gold Anvil Award; and the distinguished alumnus award from the University of Mississippi.

Shelley Spector, founder of the Museum, kicked off the affair that was held at the WeWork meeting space at 85 Broad Street.

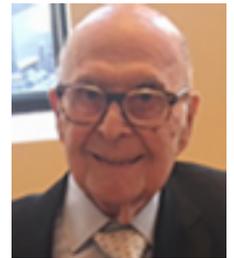
She profiled Burson's career path from stringer at the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* to combat engineer following the invasion of Normandy to covering the Nuremberg Trials for the American Forces Network to creation of B-M to crisis communications work for Tylenol and Coca-Cola.

Spector gave Burson the ultimate compliment, saying he's simply known in the profession by his first name, just like Beyonce and Cher.

More than 100 PR students (New York University, City College, New Jersey City University, Syracuse University, Baruch College) and interns (BCW, FH, Porter Novelli, M Booth) attended the event.

Burson spent about 40 minutes fielding questions from the audience from topics ranging from Nuremberg to agency life.

He also took group selfies with the appreciative audience members.



Harold Burson

CHARTWELL REPS CHINA'S IFLYTEK

Chartwell Strategy Group represents China's iFlytek, which has been linked to the police crackdown on the mostly Muslim Uighur community living in the western Xinjiang region of the country.

The *Financial Times* reported that US universities are reconsidering research ties with iFlytek, China's "national champion" in artificial intelligence, due to the mistreatment of the Uighurs.

As subcontractor to Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, Chartwell will receive from \$30K to \$50K per month for strategic communications counsel.

Chartwell may engage in political activities for iFlytek and conduct media outreach. Matt Epperly, managing director of Chartwell, and Alyse Lavoie rep the AI company.

They report to Elizabeth Moeller, who heads Pillsbury's public policy group.

GEORGIA SEEKS FIRM TO REP BIZ SCHOOL

Georgia is looking to hire a PR firm to bolster brand awareness and increase recruitment/enrollment at the J. Mack Robinson College of Business in Atlanta.

Part of the Georgia State University system of more than 51K students, Robinson College is one of the South's three largest biz schools, according to Georgia's RFP.

It features 14 master's programs in specialty areas, such as risk management and insurance, finance, accounting, computer information systems and analytics.

The selected PR firm will develop a plan to position Robinson College "in a dominant and disruptive position in the Atlanta market and strengthen its perception across the nation and world," according to the RFP.

Georgia plans to award a one-year contract with options to renew the pact annually for four more years.

Interested firms are required to register at the Team Georgia Marketplace at:

https://fscm.teamworks.georgia.gov/psc/supp/SUPLIER/ERP/c/NUI_FRAMEWORK.PT_LANDING.PAGE.GBL?&

EX-B-M COO LAUNCHES LEGEND LABS

Legend Labs, a brand and reputation management firm, has been launched by Jeff Hunt, former Burson-Marsteller chief operating officer and co-founder of digital and management consulting firm PulsePoint Group.

Joining Hunt as partners in the venture are Ahmed Khamash and James Wakefield, both of whom worked with Hunt at PulsePoint. The three have substantial experience working in professional and intercollegiate sports, as well as the higher education, cybersecurity, and energy sectors.

Legend Labs has already completed rebranding efforts for the NCAA's West Coast Conference and professional golfer Brooks Koepka. The firm also is engaged with Caterpillar, Johns Hopkins University, BioMarin and the Pac-12 Conference.



Jeff Hunt

EVOKE NAMES O'DWYER N. AMERICA HEAD

Health marketing network Evoke has named Jennifer O'Dwyer president of North America operations.

She succeeds Tom Donnelly, who's assumed the newly-created position of chief growth officer.

O'Dwyer joins the Huntsworth unit from healthcare communications agency CDM, where she was stationed for more than a dozen years, most recently as associate partner, director of client services. She previously held an account leadership role at Havas Life (formerly Euro RSCG Life) and prior to that was vice president at Interpublic unit FCB Health (formerly Draftfcb Healthcare).

At Evoke, O'Dwyer will lead efforts for clients and teams across the North America region. She'll be based in the agency's New York office.

Evoke is Huntsworth Health's umbrella platform of healthcare and medical marketing brands. Huntsworth Health is London-based PR group Huntsworth's largest division.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Uproar PR has been selected as the agency of record for **ABC Fine Wine & Spirits**, Florida's oldest and largest independent wine and spirits retailer, and **TheHumidor.com**, the second-largest cigar retailer in the nation and ABC's newest brand. Uproar will support new store openings in Marco Island, Boca Raton and Jacksonville, while highlighting customer experiences like ABC's wine, beer and spirits daily sampling stations, growler and crowler fill-ups, and in-store concierge services. Uproar will also create both press and social media buzz around TheHumidor.com for the company's commitment to offering premium cigars sourced from around the world.

French/West/Vaughan has been selected as advertising agency of record by the **Greenville-Pitt County Convention & Visitors Bureau** (Visit Greenville, NC). FWV will collaborate with Visit Greenville, NC on the development of a creative campaign for leisure audiences geared toward driving overnight visitors to the area from outside of Pitt County, along with campaigns targeting meeting planners and sports events organizers. FWV will also handle media planning and buying duties for all three audiences.

Version 2.0 Communications has added **ETQ** and **Opengear** to its portfolio of enterprise technology clients. Version 2.0 is tasked with building brand awareness for ETQ, which provides quality management solutions to more than 500 global companies, and will work to establish ETQ's executives as thought leaders on issues pertaining to quality. For Opengear, which offers solutions that deliver secure, resilient network access and automation to critical IT infrastructure, Version 2.0 is executing a strategic thought leadership campaign to drive dialogue around the importance of a resilient network. It will also support the company's growth through media and analyst relations and awards and speaking programs.

Mitchell has been enlisted by **FosterMore**, a non-profit organization that works to raise awareness about foster care, to provide public relations and earned media expertise to drive media coverage for the group's #DonateYourSmallTalk initiative. Mitchell has partnered with ad agency mcgarrybowen on the campaign, which asks people to devote the time they usually spend on small talk to spreading the word about foster care, inspiring dialogue and action around the issue. Mitchell employed wide outreach to national and regional media around the United States.

Brandware has been selected to introduce **Northfork**, a personalized shop-by-recipe platform for grocery retailers, to the U.S. market. The agency's Atlanta team will collaborate with Northfork offices in San Francisco, Sweden and the UK on brand and media strategy, including media relations and thought leadership programs. Northfork integrates grocery retailers' websites and/or apps with publishers' recipe content and lets shoppers automatically populate their grocery cart based on selected recipes and store inventories, even combining products that are shared between recipes.



COMMENTARY

The *New York Times* credits celebrity PR powerhouse Peggy Siegal with helping to rehab the image of sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Described as NYC's "most prominent professional hostess," the 71-year-old Siegal used her "gate-keeping powers to usher Mr. Epstein, a friend, into screenings and events," reported the paper.



Peggy Siegal

The unpaid relationship developed over the years with Epstein quizzing Siegal about films and other topics.

"I was a kind of plugged-in girl around town who knew a lot of people," she told the paper. "And I think that's what he wanted from me, a kind of social goings-on about New York."

The NYT showed a more aggressive side of Siegal in its Feb. 13, 2016 profile, where it branded her as "Hollywood's secret weapon in New York."

It called her "irrepressible, truncheon-blunt and forever pushing the boundaries between 'no' and 'maybe.'"

Siegal "has employed sharp elbows and inexhaustible energy reservoirs to claim a unique social position in New York and the Hamptons: as a host for clubby, insider-only film screening and dinners for the influential, she stands at the crossroads of Hollywood power and New York society (or what's left of it), functioning as a spin doctor, salonista, celebrity confidante and occasionally, bouncer."

Richard Branson gave a ringing endorsement of the power of branding when he announced his plan to launch the first publicly traded "spaceline" company.

Virgin Galactic, his space tourism venture, has received \$1B in investment since its inception in 2004.

Branson believes Virgin Galactic has a marketing edge because of "significant barriers to entry for potential competitors," such as Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and Elon Musk's SpaceX.

"These include the vertically integrated technical and operational expertise built over 15 years, and established and highly experienced workforce, and the strength of the Virgin Group's brand recognition," said Branson in his statement announcing the go-public plan.

I'm a fan of the Virgin brand and flew Virgin Atlantic from Newark-to-London in 1984, its first year of operation.

Sadly, I'm not yet jumping on the Virgin Galactic space bandwagon.

Branson has lined up 600 passengers, so far, for Virgin Galactic representing potential revenues of \$120M, or a cool \$200K per-flight.

Unless Sir Richard gives me a call, I'll have to wait a couple of years for a big drop in prices before I book a seat on Virgin Galactic, which uses FTI Consulting for PR.

"Britain humbled after Donald Trump pushes out its ambassador," noted *The Economist* on July 10 in a commentary about the "specially strained relationship" between the UK and America's president.

"We cannot have our ambassadors chosen by host governments," former UK prime minister John Major told the *Financial Times*.

Kim Darroch quit as Britain's ambassador to the US after sharing with London the consensus of the DC diplomatic corps that Team Trump is inept and dysfunctional.

As the *New York Times* reported July 11, Darroch's assessment wasn't exactly earth-shattering news. Everyone does it, said ex-French ambassador Gerard Araud.

The only difference: Darroch's cables were leaked to the *Daily Mail*.

Incoming British prime minister Boris Johnson didn't exactly cover himself in glory when he failed to support Britain's man in DC, who was leaving his post by the end of the year.

Johnson, who has vowed to pull Britain out of the European Union with or without a Brexit deal, kowtowed to Trump because he needs a trade agreement with the tweeter-in-chief to offset the loss of the Continental market.

Good luck with that. After rounds of mind-blowing negotiating sessions with our deal-making president, Boris might have second thoughts about severing ties with the EU.

Former UK PM Tony Blair was ridiculed as George W. Bush's "puppet" for supporting his bogus war with Saddam Hussein.

It looks like Boris will be Trump's puppet on a string.

Patients in the UK are turning to Alexa, Amazon's virtual assistant, to help them deal with aches and pains, according to CNBC.

The country's National Health Service is working with Amazon to enable Alexa owners to ask it for info about treating common ailments and receive "NHS-verified health information in seconds."

Matt Hancock, of the health service, told CNBC Alexa is a great way for patients to get "world-leading NHS advice from the comfort of their home, reducing the pressure on our hardworking general practitioners and pharmacists."

Sounds great though a little creepy.

Do people really want to give Amazon any more information about their personal lives?

Think of the barrage of marketing messages that a person will receive from Amazon once the online retailer finds out that she suffers from migraines.

That walk to the local drug store may not be so bad after all. The exercise might do you some good.

—Kevin McCauley